Verena Rieser

Computer Sciences, Heriot Watt University

What is your research about?

I am interested in enabling computer systems, such as robots, to understand and produce human language. I am particularly interested in spoken language, which is "messier" than written language. For example, we often repeat ourselves, hesitate, or speak ungrammatically. Holding a conversation with a computer system also means that this system needs to decide and reason about *what to say next* and *how to say it*. These two issues are at the heart of my research programme.

What do you think was crucial in making your career successful?

I have worked in many different environments: I have worked and lived in three different countries (Germany, UK, USA); I have worked in academia and industry; I have a undergraduate degree in literature and a MSc in Computer Science; and I have even spent 1.5 years working in a completely different field (from Computer Sciences to GeoSciences). For me, that is what defines my career: I enjoy learning about new things and exploring possible options.

What aspects of your career have you found challenging?

My partner and I are academics in the same field. He got a faculty position in 2009 and is currently a full professor. The biggest challenge in my career was to find a permanent position in the same city. I declined several attractive job offers. Most Dual Career programmes do not cater for a partner who is more advanced in his career.

Currently

Leads own research team of 3 PostDocs and 2 PhD students

2016

First Child

Birth of first child

2015

Promoted

Promoted to Associate Professor

2015

First Grant and Consultancy Sabbatical

First major research grant and sabbatical at Nuance Communications, Silicon Valley, USA

First Service and Elected

First service to disciplinary community (Scientific board of two Specialist Interest Groups), and elected to Young Academy of Scotland

2013

2012

Published

First book published and paper in *Computational Linguistics*

2011

PhD and First Contract

Graduated with PhD and first fixed term contract

Awarded Prize

Awarded the Dr Eduard-Martin Prize for outstanding research

2008

2009

Moved Countries

Moved to the UK for Masters

Graduated

First degree in Germany

2004

2003