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VRC Corporation
Attn: Mr. Bob Montoya
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HFES Europe Chapter Grant Programme, VRC Corporation Grant

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Dear Mr. Montoya,

my Name is Rebecca Pham Xuan and I am a student at the Technical University in Berlin. In my last semesters I got more and more involved in the field of Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCI) with Dr. Thorsten O. Zander.

Purpose of BCIs is the interaction between an electric device and a brain. After recording data (i.e. with an EEG) characteristic patterns (event-related potentials) will be examined. Even though BCI is originated in the medical field the research team around Dr. Zander focuses on the benefits of BCIs for healthy people. Now I am working on my master's thesis, which finds application in highly autonomous cars. We thought of unclear situations: While the car would have already calculated the correct behavior, it is still unclear to the other road users what is supposed to happen next. Normally communication due to eye contact and hand waving solves those situations, but the autonomous car would not give any sign. If it could be detected that the driver sees a face and has the intention to interact with this face, a signal could be given to the car to give clear signs to the other road users in order to communicate. My thesis sets in the area of face perception: In my work I investigate the face recognition in a single trial.

Within my master's thesis I got the chance to take part in an exchange program at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) together with two other students. I received financial support by the VRC which eased the time spent in USA. There I partly worked on my master's thesis as well as on a jointed project. I had the chance to weekly talk about my progress and got feedback from the colleagues. This changed my work to a different level of quality, as they had a high expertise in this field. Not only their experience impressed me but also the motivation which they had for their work. In this environment I developed a different relationship to this kind of work, a more passionate and cheerfully perspective.

It is likely that the organization of the application would be clearer if any due dates could be announced i.e. on the webpage. I am nevertheless thankful, that the application itself is uncomplicated, also any communication was fast and warm. I believe, that it is a great support for many young researchers. Therefore I am truly thankful for the grant provided by the Europe Chapter of The Human Factors and Ergonomics Society.

R. Pham Xuan

Best wishes, Rebecca Pham Xuan