"Is Speech Language?".

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Most people would not hesitate to give an affirmative answer to the question whether speech is language. It seems so obviously true. Yet, when looking at what is happening in the language and speech research community one may feel tempted to believe that the two topics are totally unrelated: language and speech researchers have their own conferences, their own journals, and their own professional associations. They have their own research projects, their own technological goals, and attending their conferences and reading their journals reveals a large number of differences in culture, style and approach.

These observations give raise to a number of questions, such as: - Are the observations correct, or is it just a matter of misperception, caused by focussing on the differences rather than the similarities. - What causes the differences: is it the fact that language and speech problems ARE different, is it a matter of background and education, or is it a combination of both. - Is the separation of the two communities as justified as e.g. the separation between astrology and astronomy, or should it be seen as a problem we should try to solve. - Would NLP and Speech benefit from collaboration (new and better insights, theories, products), or would they just be in each other's way?

This panel, organised by ELSNET (The European Network in Language and Speech) will address (amongst others) the questions formulated above. A number of prominent workers in the fields of NLP and Speech have been invited to present and confront their views, and it is hoped that the audience will actively participate in the discussion.