How do people with dementia and their carers use Alexa-type devices in the home? An interactional study
ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

Loughborough University and The Alzheimer’s Society

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

Loughborough as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner The Alzheimer’s Society to commence in October 2020.

**Topic.**
The successful applicant will study how people with dementia and their formal and informal carers use consumer AI-based voice technologies such as the Amazon Echo or Google Home in practice. The project involves analysing video of people in domestic and institutional care settings to understand how people collaborate to accomplish everyday care tasks. Our special focus will be on how they use and interpret AI and voice technologies.

**Studentship**
The successful applicant will work with our colleagues in the Alzheimer’s Society to arrange field visits, identify relevant initiatives, and to build a research support network spanning technology, policy, healthcare, disability and dementia advocacy. We will guide the student towards developing their own research-focused area of study over the course of the PhD. We especially encourage applications from people who have experience of any form of disability, as users of care services, and/or as formal or informal carers.

**Research Method**
The methodological core of this project will involve recording video of people interacting while using these technologies in a variety of domestic and institutional settings, then doing detailed technical transcription and video analysis of their talk and embodied conduct. Some familiarity with conversation analysis is preferred, but not required, as the student will receive comprehensive training in methods for interaction analysis.

**Partners: Loughborough and the Alzheimer’s Society**
The Alzheimer’s Society works with a large group of nationwide partner organizations via the Dementia Choices Action Network (D-CAN) and can provide opportunities to do fieldwork in a
wide variety of settings, and to explore a range of policy, technology and governance issues related to this research topic.

The student will be based within the very active and supportive Centre for Research in Communication and Culture at Loughborough and will be welcomed into the Discourse And Rhetoric Group (DARG). Their work will also be supported by membership of a team of researchers working on complimentary projects investigating dementia and communicative impairments run by Prof. Charles Antaki, Dr. Saul Albert and Prof. Elizabeth Peel. No prior knowledge of AI/voice technologies is required.

**Application Process**

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#), and email this along with your CV to Denise Wade (d.j.wade@lboro.ac.uk). Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide two references.

**Application deadline:** *Friday 6th March.*

**Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP**

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit: [www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/](#)

Informal enquiries about the research or The School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Loughborough prior to application can be directed to Dr. Saul Albert: s.b.albert@lboro.ac.uk