Tommy (Xiuqi) Zhu

HCI Researcher & XR+AI Developer

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A HCI researcher with a strong background in designing and understanding conversational contextually-aware XR+AI solutions. Vision: Designing seamless multimodal AI smart glasses to enhance everyday collaboration without disrupting social interactions.

Education

Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Design and Media Expected May 2028
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Advisor: Dr. Eileen McGivney | Thesis: Enhancing Everyday Human Collaboration through Smart Glasses

B.A. in Digital Media Arts May 2023
Communication University of China, Beijing | GPA: 3.6/4.0
Advisor: Dr. Min Fan | Thesis: Designing Collaborative Tangible Interface for Children with Autism

Professional Experience

Graduate Research Assistant Sept 2024–Present
Northeastern University – XR ED Lab, Boston, MA

- Designed a VR+Embodied Conversational AI project as promising solutions for health profession students [P2]
- Leading and conducting a mixed-method user study with 50+ health-profession students to evaluate usability, agency, and learning outcomes of the VR+AI system via surveys, interviews, and biometric measures
- Designing and conducting an autoethnography + speculative design research project to investigate breakdowns and success factors in everyday collaboration between users and vision-powered AI through Meta Ray-Ban glasses, informing next-generation interaction models for AR eyewear [P1]

User Research Intern Spet 2022–Jan 2023
ByteDance, Lark Design – People Systems, Beijing, China

- Ran 30+ interviews to revamp HR system for 7K+ internal employees, significantly increasing user experiences
- Field-researched 8 organizations to integrate Lark into existing workflows, yielding 5+ official case studies
- Interviewed with 10+ North American real-estate professionals, synthesized insights into 2 design opportunities to explore Lark's potential overseas expansion

HCI Research Intern (Top 5%) Sep 2021–May 2023
The Future Lab, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

- Interviewed 20 blind and low-vision(BLV) students and organized a workshop with 9 BLV students to understand how non-inclusive environments impact their daily learning and how they leverage assistive technologies [P3]
- Served as student lead on a national-level Winter Olympics VR project, identifying and designing dynamic camera movements that significantly enhanced user experience in VR [P4]

Selected Academic Publications (All first-author; Full list at xiuqizzzz.github.io)

[P1] Reimagining the Smart Glasses (CHI 2026 Submission): Conducted a two-phase empirical study on conversational successes and breakdowns in Meta Reyban glasses, providing design insights for future human–smart glasses collaboration in everyday activities [Paper]

[P2] Virtual AI Patient Simulator (CHI 2025 LBW and CHI 2026 Submission): Designed LLM-powered embodied conversational agents for simulating difficult clinical communication scenarios in VR. [Paper]

[P3] Assistive Tech for BLV Education (IJHCI): Explored challenges and adaptations of blind or low-vision students using accessible tech in isolated college settings. [Paper]

[P4] Can You Move It? (ISMAR 2023): Investigated VR camera design and viewing experience in broadcast [Paper]

Technical Skills

Research Methods: Interviews, Contextual inquiry, Surveys, Co-design, Controlled experiments, A/B testing, Usability testing, Field studies, Qualitative coding, Quantitative analysis and statistics

Programming Languages: Python, Swift (SwiftUI and UIKit), JavaScript, C#, HTML/CSS

Platforms and Development Tools: XCode, Unity, ARKit, AFrame, Flask, Firebase, PyTorch, TensorFlow, JAX, Hugging Face Transformers, Machine learning integration (GPT, Claude, etc.)

Design & Prototyping Tools: Figma, Adobe Suite (PS, XD, Illustrator), Miro, Blender