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Fares Abawi (PhD Candidate)

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[fabawi](#)



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PERSONAL INFORMATION

PyTorch | Keras | ROS | MuJoCo | Docker | NumPy | pandas | sklearn

Nationality & Residence

Bahrain (permanent resident in **Germany**)

Languages

English (native proficiency), **Arabic** (native proficiency), **German** (intermediate proficiency)

EDUCATION

University of Hamburg, DE

July 2020 - Now

Ph.D. Computer Science

My research is focused on predicting social attention in dynamic settings & understanding the influence of robot gaze & social cues on humans. I explore different neural techniques to integrate non-verbal social cues through late & early fusion

University of Hamburg, DE

October 2016 - April 2019

M.Sc. Intelligent Adaptive Systems (Computer Science)

Courses: Human-Computer Interaction, Neural Networks, Bio-inspired AI, Machine Learning & Speech Signals

German Jordanian University, JO

September 2011 - August 2016

B.Sc. Communication Engineering

Courses: Analog/Digital Electronics, Electromagnetics, Signal Processing, Networks, Embedded Systems & OOP

Darmstadt Univ. of Appl. Sc., DE

March 2015 - February 2016

B.Eng. Electrical Engineering and Information Technology - Exchange Student

1-year scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for achieving the highest academic merits

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Hamburg, DE

April 2020 - Now

Research Associate @ Knowledge Technology Group

Developed neural attention models for multimodal scanpath & saliency prediction, implemented on robots:

- [Simulated & physical robot actuation \(iCub & Pepper\)](#) using **YARP** & **ROS**
- [Audiovisual multimodal integration for modeling social attention](#) using **PyTorch**
- [Cognitive simulation for emulating human-like crossmodal \(audiovisual\) conflict on a robot](#)

Smartmicro GmbH, DE

May 2019 - April 2020

Algorithm Engineer @ Tracking and Sensor Fusion Group

Developed neural models for traffic and automotive radar signal processing:

- **ROS** multi-camera + radar calibration & fusion for multi-object tracking
- Sequential radar signal classification & trajectory estimation using **PyTorch** & **sklearn**
- CD & MLOps pipelines with **Jenkins** & **Docker**

University of Hamburg, DE

December 2017 - March 2019

Research Assistant @ Knowledge Technology Group

Developed visuomotor grasping models & language models:

- [Robotic simulation for object grasping](#) using **MuJoCo**
- [Computer vision for object detection & grasping](#) using **Keras**
- [Language modeling with surprisal-based activation](#) using **Keras** & **Tensorflow**

Harman International, DE

September 2015 - February 2016

Internship: Speech Interaction Systems @ Spoken Dialog System Group

Developed application concepts for a spoken dialog system:

- Grammar parsing tools in **Java**, **XML** & **XSLT**
- Speech engine integration (Ivona text-to-speech & Nuance speech recognizer) in **C++**

German Jordanian University, JO

July 2014 - September 2014

Internship: Scheduling Automation @ Information Systems and Technology Center

[Developed a graph coloring optimization-based exam scheduling system using AMPL](#)

PROJECTS

University of Hamburg, DE

October 2018 - April 2019

M.Sc. Thesis: Intermediate Representations in Deep Multimodal Neural Networks

[Developed a multimodal/multitask neural network for goal-oriented grasping:](#)

- Data processing and filtration using **NumPy** & **pandas**. 3D augmentation (AR) in real scenes using **OpenGL**
- Developing object grasping models with images & linguistic description as input built with **Keras**
- Robot simulation & inverse kinematics using **MuJoCo**

University of Hamburg, DE

October 2017 - April 2018

M.Sc. Project: Designing a Personality-Driven Robot for an HRI Scenario

[Developed the spoken dialogue system for a robotic interaction experiment:](#)

- Designing a frame-based dialog system with mixed-initiative
- Speech & language engine integration (**SpaCy**, **MITIE**, **Amazon Polly** & **Google Speech**)
- **Speech signal processing** & **language modeling**

German Jordanian University, JO

February 2014 - February 2015

B.Sc. Thesis: Alerting Sounds Detection, Classification, and Localization for Assisting People with Hearing Disabilities

[Developed an alert-sound classification \(support vector machines\) & localization system \(TDOA\):](#)

- Construction of a hardware prototype with microphone arrays
- **C#**, **C** & **Matlab** development of localization prototypes
- Code development on Windows Phone, BeagleBone & Arduino
- **Speech signal processing** & feature engineering

Open Source

Wrapyfi: **Python** wrapper for multi-middleware support including **ROS/2**, **YARP** & **ZMQ** with deep learning plugins

Llama + Wrapyfi: Distributing the **Llama LLM** on multiple machines using **Wrapyfi**

ImageBind LoRA: Fine-tuning a crossmodal embedding model using **Low-Rank adaptation**

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Full list on <https://fares.abawi.me/publications>

[1] **F. Abawi**, P. Allgeuer, D. Fu, and S. Wermter. "Wrapyfi: A Python Wrapper for Integrating Robots, Sensors, and Applications across Multiple Middleware," to appear in Proceedings of The ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI), 2024. Related code: <https://github.com/fabawi/wrapyfi>

[2] **F. Abawi**, T. Weber, and S. Wermter. "GASP: Gated Attention for Saliency Prediction," in Proceedings of The International Joint Conference of Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), 2021. Related code: <https://github.com/knowledgetechnologyuhh/gasp>

[3] M. Mohammadi, N. Xirakia, **F. Abawi**, and others. "Designing a personality-driven robot for a human-robot interaction scenario," in Proceedings of The IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA), 2019.

[4] T. Alpay, **F. Abawi**, and S. Wermter. "Preserving activations in recurrent neural networks based on surprisal," Neurocomputing, 2018.