
 (+49) 152-XXX-XXX80 (DE)
 [fares \(At\) abawi.me](mailto:fares (At) abawi.me)


Fares Abawi

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AI Frameworks: PyTorch | Keras | ROS | ZMQ | MuJoCo | NumPy | pandas | sklearn | Docker | Jenkins
Web Technologies: Typescript | React | WebRTC | Yjs | Codemirror

Personal Info

Location Germany 
Languages English (native proficiency), Arabic (native proficiency), German (intermediate proficiency)

Education

University of Hamburg, DE Dr. rer. nat. Computer Science **July 2020 - December 2024**
University of Hamburg, DE M.Sc. Intelligent Adaptive Systems (Computer Science) **October 2016 - April 2019**
German Jordanian University, JO B.Sc. Communication Engineering **September 2011 - August 2016**
Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, DE B.Eng. Electrical Engineering and Information Technology - Exchange
1-year scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for outstanding academic achievements. **March 2015 - February 2016**

Professional Experience

University of Hamburg, DE Research Associate @ Knowledge Technology Group **April 2020 - December 2024**
Research focused on predicting social attention in dynamic settings, as well as understanding the influence of robot gaze & social cues on humans by conducting user studies.

- Developed neural social attention (early fusion & late integration) models for multimodal scanpath & saliency prediction, embodied in robots.
- Created a framework for multi-middleware and multi-robot integration.
- Designed a cognitive robotic simulation paradigm for emulating human-like crossmodal (audiovisual) conflict on a robot.

Skills: Simulated & physical robot actuation (iCub & Pepper) using YARP & ROS. Eye tracking data collection and analysis. Teaching & presentation.

Smartmicro GmbH, DE Algorithm Engineer @ Tracking and Sensor Fusion Group **May 2019 - April 2020**

- Devised a technique ROS multi-camera + radar calibration & fusion for multi-object tracking, significantly reducing the calibration time.
- Developed sequential radar signal classification & trajectory estimation neural models for traffic & automotive applications.

Skills: Sensor fusion models using PyTorch & sklearn. CI/CD & MLOps pipelines with Jenkins & Docker. Radar signal processing.

University of Hamburg, DE Research Assistant @ Knowledge Technology Group **December 2017 - March 2019**

- Developed visuomotor robot grasping & computer vision models.
- Implemented a language model with surprisal-based activation.

Skills: Robotic simulation using MuJoCo. Computer vision for object detection & grasping using Keras. Language modeling with TensorFlow.

Harman International, DE Internship: Speech Interaction Systems @ Spoken Dialog System Group **September 2015 - February 2016**

- Designed and implemented application concepts for a spoken dialog system.

Skills: Grammar parsing tool in Java, XML, & XSLT. Speech engine integration (Ivona text-to-speech & Nuance speech recognizer) in C++.

German Jordanian University, JO Internship: Scheduling Automation @ Information Systems and Technology Center **July 2014 - September 2014**

- Developed a graph coloring optimization-based exam scheduling system using AMPL, automating the exam scheduling process. This reduced the time needed to schedule exams for all students at the university from hundreds of human hours to approximately 10 hours.

Skills: Mathematical programming with AMPL. Front-end development with JAVA servlets, HTML, & CSS.

Projects

University of Hamburg, DE Dr.rer.nat Dissertation

July 2020 - December 2024

Multimodal Social Cue Integration for Attention Modeling and Robot Gaze Control

- Developed social attention models for predicting saliency and scanpaths.
- Embodied the models in robots to conduct cognitive robotic simulation studies.
- Conducted human-robot interaction studies to assess the impressions of humans towards robots displaying social cues.
- Developed a multi-middleware framework for simplifying the setup of human-robot interaction and cognitive robotic simulation studies.

Skills: Data processing & filtration using NumPy & pandas. Robot simulation & inverse kinematics using MuJoCo. 3D object augmentation using OpenGL.

University of Hamburg, DE M.Sc. Thesis

October 2018 - April 2019

Intermediate Representations in Deep Multimodal Neural Networks

- Developed a multimodal/multitask neural model for robot grasping. The model received images & linguistic descriptions as input, allowing target grasping specification.
- Created an augmented reality dataset with domain randomization to train the models.

Skills: Data processing & filtration using NumPy & pandas. Robot simulation & inverse kinematics using MuJoCo. 3D object augmentation using OpenGL.

University of Hamburg, DE M.Sc. Project

October 2017 - April 2018

Designing a Personality-Driven Robot for an HRI Scenario

- Implemented a near real-time spoken dialogue system for a robot interaction experiment.
- Designed a frame-based dialog system with mixed-initiative.

Skills: Speech & language engine integration (SpaCy, MITIE, Amazon Polly, & Google Speech) in Python. Speech signal processing & language modeling.

German Jordanian University, JO B.Sc. Thesis

February 2014 - February 2015

Alerting Sound Detection, Classification, and Localization for Assisting People with Hearing Disabilities

- Developed an alert-sound classification (support vector machines) & binaural localization (TDOA) system.
- Constructed a hardware prototype with microphone arrays for localizing sound.
- Implemented localization algorithms on the Windows Phone, BeagleBone, & Arduino.

Skills: C#, C, & Matlab development of localization prototypes. Speech signal processing & spectral feature engineering.

Open Source Projects

TeXlyre: Local-first LaTeX web editor with real-time collaboration <https://github.com/TeXlyre/teXlyre>

Wrapyfi: Python wrapper for multi-middleware support, including ROS/2, YARP, & ZMQ with deep learning plugins <https://github.com/fabawi/wrapyfi>

Llama + Wrapyfi: Distributing the Llama LLM on multiple machines using Wrapyfi https://github.com/modular-ml/wrapyfi-examples_llama

ImageBind LoRA: Fine-tuning a crossmodal embedding model using Low-Rank adaptation <https://github.com/fabawi/ImageBind-LoRA>

Selected Publications

(Full list on fares.abawi.me/publications)

Abawi, F. & Fu, D. "HRI-Free: Cognitive Robotic Simulation for Evaluating Embodied Social Attention Models," in Proceedings of The RAS/IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA), 2025.

Abawi, F., Fu, D., & Wermter, S. "Unified Dynamic Scanpath Predictors Outperform Individually Trained Neural Models," arXiv.2405.02929, 2024.

Abawi, F., Allgeuer, P., Fu, D., & Wermter, S. "Wrapyfi: A Python Wrapper for Integrating Robots, Sensors, and Applications across Multiple Middleware," in Proceedings of The ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI), 2024.

Fu, D., **Abawi, F.**, et al. "A Trained Humanoid Robot can Perform Human-Like Crossmodal Social Attention and Conflict Resolution," International Journal of Social Robotics, pp. 1325–1340, 15, 2023.

Kerzel, M.*, **Abawi, F.***, Eppe, M., & Wermter, S. "Enhancing a Neurocognitive Shared Visuomotor Model for Object Identification, Localization, and Grasping With Learning From Auxiliary Tasks," in IEEE Transactions on Cognitive and Developmental Systems, 2022.

Fu, D.*, **Abawi, F.***, & Wermter, S. "Judging by the Look: The Impact of Robot Gaze Strategies on Human Cooperation," in IEEE International Conference on Robot and Human Interactive Communication (RO-MAN) Workshop on Machine Learning for HRI, 2022.

Abawi, F., Weber, T., & Wermter, S. "GASP: Gated Attention for Saliency Prediction," in Proceedings of The International Joint Conference of Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), 2021.