

Intelligent Assistants in Education: Capabilities and Limitations

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ABSTRACT

This workshop provides an opportunity to consider and to explore, collectively and critically, the advent of Intelligent Assistants (IAs) from the user perspective in the context of teaching and learning. IAs such as Siri, Google Assistant, Alexa, etc. are available on smartphones and many other devices and offer a range of services. Some are being developed to support specific aspects of learning. What claims are being made about their capabilities, and what do we know of their limitations? The workshop will (a) offer an overview of this rapidly growing field, based on an extensive literature review and some interviews with developers; (b) engage participants in several short activities to explore and discuss IAs' capabilities and limitations; (c) encourage participants to consider how IAs can best support a group of learners (e.g. their own students).

Author Keywords

Intelligent personal assistants, smart assistants, chatbots, conversational agents, virtual assistants, voice-activated assistants, avatars

RATIONALE

Intelligent Assistants can be regarded as an extension of increasingly mobile means of access to learning support beyond the classroom. IAs are also part of contemporary discourse surrounding the impact of artificial intelligence on teaching and learning. Voice-activated and text-based IAs present new possibilities, yet there might be a fine line between specific assistance and smart technologies acting (inadequately) as teachers. IAs might also cleverly assist learners with undesirable activities such as cheating. An IA might amplify human capabilities, yet it could have negative consequences that we are only just beginning to recognize. Both the capabilities and limitations of IAs need to be understood by all involved in education.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The workshop is intended for teachers at any level and in any discipline, support staff, education managers, and researchers who need to be aware of how the advent and increasingly widespread use of IAs might (or might not) change how we design and evaluate mobile applications. Interaction in the workshop will be encouraged through a series of collaborative activities accompanied by questions for discussion and feedback, and a template to help participants plan how to support learners with IAs.

ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

No special requirements.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This workshop is based on the results of a small project funded by the Open University's OpenTEL Priority Research Area, including literature searches and analysis contributions from associated researchers Gabi Witthaus and Helen Lee.

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