

Lancaster University
Lancaster

Senior Research Associate, Public Discourses of Dementia, Grade 7,

Further Particulars

The Project: Public Discourses of Dementia

The word *dementia* refers to groups of disease processes that involve a range of cognitive impairment symptoms, including memory loss and problems with reasoning, perception and communication skills. There are estimated to be around 50 million people living with dementia in the world today and this number is expected to triple by the year 2050. People receiving a dementia diagnosis not only live with dementia, but many must also live with the stigma that surrounds it. Dementia stigma can negatively impact the lives of people living with dementia and their families in a wide range of ways, such as creating feelings of shame and making them less likely to seek medical support and take part in research.

The aim of this project is to challenge dementia stigma by changing the ways in which dementia is discussed in the public domain, focusing in particular on the mainstream media, public health bodies and charities in the UK. This project will explore the language and imagery that are used to represent dementia in texts produced by these organisations and compare these against those used by the general public to talk about dementia on social media and by people living with dementia when giving first-hand accounts of their lives with the syndrome. Understanding how the language and imagery associated with communication about dementia in these contexts relate to, but also vary between, one another can help us to assess the potential effects of dementia representation in one situation on another. In light of the findings, the project team will work closely with media, public health and charity organisations to implement changes to communicative practices around dementia in ways that challenge stigma and promote personhood, through the development of communication guidelines and the delivery of training to public communicators from charities, the media, research and public health. Crucially, the project team will collaborate closely with people with dementia themselves to ensure that their voices are heard and valued not only in future public discourse but also in the research process itself.

The Project team will be led by Dr Gavin Brookes and supported by Professor Tony McEnery. The project will also be supported by an externally based academic advisory committee. Interviews for shortlisted candidates will take place on 23rd November 2021.

The Post

We are seeking to appoint a full-time (1.0 FTE) Senior Research Associate (post-doctoral) to undertake the day-to-day delivery of the project. The duties of the post focus on collecting, analysing and interpreting a wide range of datasets representing public communication around dementia, and sharing findings with academic and non-academic stakeholders.

You will have a PhD in linguistics or a closely related area (or will be in the final stages of writing up). You will have demonstrable experience utilizing corpus linguistic and/or multimodal approaches to discourse analysis (e.g. of the interaction between text and image), and experience or interest in the

field of health communication. An excellent communicator, with good interpersonal skills, and sound judgement, you will be adept at working as part of a small team and in a virtual setting.

The institution

Lancaster University

Lancaster University has a strong profile in the social sciences, covering areas including accounting, economics, educational research, geography, law, linguistics, psychology, social work and sociology. The University has a strong ethos of interdisciplinary working, with the social sciences making valuable contributions to the sciences at the University, notably in the Lancaster Environment Centre. This project is directly linked to the department of Linguistics and English Language, a world-leading department with strengths in applied linguistics and the quantitative analysis of large linguistic datasets.

Contact

For more about the Department of Linguistics and English Language, see <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk>. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the post, please e-mail Dr Gavin Brookes, at g.brookes@lancaster.ac.uk