Research assistant opening: your first steps as a researcher!

Computationally Supported Metaphor Analysis

What are the facts?
- You are going to be employed with the university for 8 hours a week for a total of 10 months (September - June)
- Paid (salary depends on your current study progress)
- Weekly research meetings with the team (two supervisors and two students)
- The rest of your 8 hours are flexible

Your skills and interests:
- Currently following a (master's) program in Human Language Technology, Text Mining, or AI
- Experience with text analysis (not necessarily computational)
- Interest in computational methods
- Interest in the role of metaphor in communication
- Experience with systematic annotation is a plus
- Programming skills in Python are a plus (if you do not have them yet, we expect you to follow a course in programming in Python)
- You can read some Dutch

Why should you join us?
Student research positions are a great opportunity to find out if research is something you enjoy! You can be part of a team of researchers and experience what the day-to-day activities in this job involve. You can learn from more experienced colleagues by working side-by-side with them. If you enjoy working on the project, there is an opportunity to apply for PhD funding, so you can continue the research after your graduation.

As part of this position, you will be part of the Academy Assistants Program organized by the Network Institute. The goal of this initiative is to educate a generation of interdisciplinary researchers. The program offers a range of activities covering education in giving research pitches, interdisciplinary communication, and career orientation. It can be a great stepping stone towards a career in academia.

What is this project about?
Scientific innovations and societal developments happen in rapid succession: quantum computers, AI, the pandemic, ... When communicating about such developments with non-expert audiences, journalists often use metaphors. Metaphors describe abstract, unfamiliar concepts in terms of more concrete, more accessible concepts (e.g. AI as a friend). The metaphors we choose influence perceptions and decision-making, making it crucial to study their use in media texts. In this project, we will develop an approach for detecting metaphors semi-automatically. We will use existing computational tools to identify potentially relevant passages and words which will then be analyzed by a researcher.

What are you going to do?
You are going to work on the computational text analysis part of the project. Your tasks involve:
- Apply your first automatic text analysis skills to our datasets
- Experiment with different types of NLP technology that can support metaphor detection
- Evaluate state-of-the-art technology for metaphor detection
- Analyze and annotate Dutch texts for metaphors (with the team)
- Collaborate with an interdisciplinary team

- Present our progress and findings to other research assistants in the Network Institute Academy Assistant program
- Take part in workshops on interdisciplinary research and academic skills
- Experience what it is like to work as a researcher in an academic environment

How to apply?
Please send us a short motivation and your CV by Friday, September 6th (12:00pm - noon). We aim to hold interviews in the week of September 9th. Please submit your application to Pia Sommerauer (pia.sommerauer@vu.nl).

More information
Have a look at the project description and the Network Institute Academy Assistants Program here:
https://networkinstitute.org/project_categories/academy-projects-2024/

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us Pia Sommerauer (pia.sommerauer@vu.nl) and Gudrun Reijnierse (w.g.reijnierse@vu.nl)).