

Interview 2

D: Why do we start off by you describing your general thoughts and experiences and feelings about the sleepyWhispers system?

L: It was OK... it was just a bit of a faff really... like, I don't know... it was too much work for it to be something I would use to communicate. I know there were obviously technical problems but it's just the fact it didn't fit in to how I kind of normally do things... so like, I know it's meant to simulate talking to someone just before you go to sleep but I wouldn't normally have my computer on – so it could never happen just before I go to sleep because I can't have my computer by my bed so I'd have to go and turn it off... so it's just...

D: So the listening side of things was too much faff... the recording side of things was ok?

L: It was still more work... In an ideal world, obviously it was prototype technology, but in an ideal world, and it was all done through the photo frame it would be different. But the fact that there were multiple things you had to plug in, lots of wires, lots of bits, you couldn't get what it would actually be like... and I think the most important thing is, the biggest problem we have is finding time to talk to each other and sometimes... which is why we phone each other, we find it the easiest thing and I can do other stuff at the same time... as we talk to each other every night, it's just, finding the time to do that, anything we'd use would have to be easy and take as little effort as possible...

D: Do you think that made a significant difference to how you used it... because it wasn't as simple as just pressing the button and it working?

L: Yeah, I felt I had to use it because... as for the trial rather than because I wanted to...

D: do you think that would change if you didn't have to go through the faff of setting everything up?

L: I guess I'd be more likely to use it... but the other problem I had with it was, and this is a personal preference, I hate the sound of my own voice... and you had to listen to yourself back to make sure you'd recorded the message right, I hated that process of it... and I don't know, just recording answer phone messages are horrible so I just didn't like... that's why I didn't really want you to listen to the messages, it's just cringe-worthy... so I didn't enjoy that experience of recording even, even though I enjoyed [P:K]'s messages, having to, and I'm sure he liked listening to mine, but because you can't just expect people to send you stuff and not send something back, I'd rather... I think generally, in our relationship, we'll write nice cards to each other but we wouldn't necessarily say it... so I think I feel more comfortable communicating certain things through text rather than saying it.

D: Did you develop certain usage patterns in the way you used it? Were there certain times or things which made you want to record a message?

L: Not necessarily but I think it was because of the circumstances, because of me going home and then coming back, over that period of time, my routine wasn't a regular routine so there was no regular usage pattern but I think that was just the circumstances...

D: What about on the listening side? Did you listen at a particular time?

L: I think we ended up having to remind each other to listen... it was more prompting... or when I did check it, there was nothing there [laughs]

D: sure, sure... did it fit into how you normally communicate? So obviously we've talked a lot about how you tend to use the phone; im assuming it didn't replace that in any kind of way...

L: I guess because we normally communicate by talking, it didn't seem to fit in... because we're talking everyday we'd already kind of said everything we wanted to say on the phone... I would just talk to him just before you go to bed, so that's when I'd be most tempted to use it... it wouldn't really fit in with how we normally do things.

D: How do you think it compared to ways you have communicated in the past?

L: I suppose the only, one thing which is good about it is sometimes the phone wouldn't... we're not both available to talk at the same time so you could just leave a message...

D: Did you ever do that?

L: I think so, yeah... obviously to communicate you both have to be free to talk at the same time.

D: That's on a practical level... what about on an emotional level? Did it feel different to talking on the phone?

L: Like I said before, I'm happy talking to [P:K] on the phone but recording something just made me feel uncomfortable...

D: Was part of that not wanting people to listen in or was it the playing back or...?

L: I guess one issue is if you record it, there's a potential other people could listen to it... obviously at [P:K]'s end, you don't know, you don't have any control, you've sent this thing out there and now it's... so then that would make you think about what you've recorded...

D: So almost a self-censor...

L: yeah... and also, the whole listening to myself back...

D: You never just recorded it and sent it then, you always checked?

L: yeah...

D: was that checking for technical

L: Yeah, checking that it had recorded and you could hear the message...

D: So it wasn't checking what you'd said in the message?

L: I suppose that as well... but mainly technical

D: And that happened all the way through, you never got to the point where you thought, I'm happy this is recording...

L: well I don't think I sent 10 so... no.

D: So that's general stuff then; can we talk a little bit about the messages... what were the messages you sent about?

L: It's written down here... 1 was to tell him to do something... both of us sent a song we were singing, just like a silly song, one of the theme songs to a program we were watching... I sent a quote from a TV show we'd watched... I sent a few just like funny messages, adding the different special effects... sent some answerphone type messages, something you'd just send

D: like the one's where you can't talk to him

L: yeah, yeah... and one was just to ask a question, I think that was "what do you want for dinner" ...

D: just to clarify... the singing one and the quote... it was a show you'd watched together?

L: yeah...

D: What was the thinking behind sending those kinds of messages?

L: Just like mainly, for it to be funny or amusing...

D: I think we talked before about how you don't view yourselves as not being a lovey-dovey couple...

L: Yeah, we used it more for in-jokes and things

D: Do you think you would have sent different or less messages if we had been recording a copy? Do you think you would have...

L: If someone was going to listen to it then yes

D: Was there any pattern to.. .there was no kind of routine due to changes in circumstances... was there any kind of pattern to when you wanted to record or send a message? What sparked you off in sending them?

L: I guess it would be more in the evening, when I'd normally talk to him and be home... I don't tend to think about him much, unless I need to ask [P:K] something, I don't tend to think about him when I'm doing stuff... I'm just thinking about work and I'm thinking about what I'm doing during the day, so it's only really in the evening that I think about that more... so that's why I wouldn't think about sending a message during the day necessarily.

D: And you listened to the messages at night-time?

L: Mainly, yeah

D: How did you find the whole, you can only listen one part of it?

L: I found it a little bit "Oh, I better make sure I can hear this" or "I better make sure the sound's on" sort of otherwise I might not be able to hear it again... so it made me feel a little bit of pressure I guess, because if it was a good message or something you might miss out on it because of the technology I suppose...

D: So that was kind of uncomfortable sensation?

L: Yeah... I guess, in a way, from one side, the fact that it could only be listened to once, say it was completely deleted and that was it... I know it wasn't but in the real system, if it was, then maybe you'd be more comfortable sending it because someone couldn't keep... but on the otherside, it's like, I've only got one chance to listen to this... and if I didn't have the volume up high enough, or if someone else came in when you were listening to it and they started talking to you and you didn't hear it, then you might miss something really important that they were telling me so...

D: Did you download any of the messages?

L: What do you mean?

D: It had that option that after listening, you could save the message

L: Oh, I didn't know there was that option...

D: How do you think the use of sleepyWhispers affected your relationship if at all?

L: I don't know... it caused a little bit of stress! In general, once we got going, it was positive... it was novel... I don't know whether that would've worn off after a while...it was nice. We wouldn't normally sing songs down the phone to each other so it was a different way, it wasn't just, it did introduce a different way of communicating rather than just chatting on the phone... but I think because of the effort, that just had a massive impact on it, it took some of the enjoyment out of it...

because your like "Oh, I have to plug in the computer" [grumbles]... it's hard to know without that if it would be "Oh I'll just quickly record that"... like on the phone, take a picture and quickly send it kind of thing...

D: Do you think it had an impact on how close or connected you've been or do you think it's not worked on that deep a level?

L: I think... it's quite a short time frame really... especially considering how long we've been together so it's like, no I don't think you can say it would have...

D; How did you feel when you were recording a message and how did you feel when you were listening to them?

L: well I guess, slightly uncomfortable when recording it... and yeah, I guess it was appreciative that someone had gone... in a way, you know how much effort it was to do, if someone else has done that for you, then you do appreciate that they've made that effort, made the effort to send it... I guess that means you'd appreciate the message more than if it was easy...

D: but you might use it more?

L: yeah, yeah...

D: We fall into the more generic questions now... is there anything you would change about sleepywhispers? If so, what?

L: I guess it's what I said- less parts to it, with all the wires and that kind of thing, that wasn't ideal... not having to link it to your computer, for it just to be on all the time...

D: What about recording through the frame... with the camera photo, you take it and send it all from the phone, but it's also the place that the messages come back to...

L: If you do it through the frame, yeah, that's what I was thinking

D: So take out everything else

L: and it would be wirelessly connected between the frame and the pillow...

D: yeah... can you get wireless speakers?

L: yeah, you must be able to...

D: Do you think that might mitigate some of the anxiety of the messages "escaping", of anyone else hearing them...

L: yeah, I suppose if you can't access them through a computer, if you can only get access through that specific piece of equipment then yeah...

D: Having used it, do you think you'd want to send messages to anyone else?

L: No, I don't think so; not by sending voice messages...

D: and that's because...

L: I guess [P:K]'s the only person I wouldn't mind listening to my voice!

D: Was there anything else you would have liked to have done with the system that it didn't support, that you couldn't do, or not...

L: I guess, in a way, what would be nice is a digital photo frame and you could attach an image to the sound...

D: Do you think you'd be more tempted to send the photo part more than the sound... what do you think, what kind of messages would you anticipate sending with that?

L: I guess you see something, like a "I saw this and thought of you" but with you actually saying it... would be nicer than just texting it... or you could, send some music or something associated with it, not necessarily something you'd recorded yourself... I think that would be good with the digital photo frame...

D: If possible, would you like to continue using sleepyWhispers... as it is but take away all the wires and record on the frame...

L: Probably not... just because we've got into the habit of communicating in a certain way and it works... it's like, we haven't started using skype either, now [P:K]'s got a computer, we could start using it but this is just what we do... and that works...

D: do you think that would be the case for the digital photo frame version too?

L: I guess I'd have to try it, to trial it, to see but again it's... when it's something you have to remember to check, whereas the phone demands that you answer it... sometimes... obviously if you got into the habit of doing it, it would be fine... like my facebook notifications stop but I'm in the habit of checking it... I think it's just, you establish a routine for doing things... it's just the effort of doing something different – the initial effort, invested in doing something differently, when what you're doing works...

D: presumably in this case that's exacerbated by you knowing that you can't keep using the system

L: yeah... I think it's difficult... especially because of the technical difficulties, and the fact that I was at home, that wasn't a typical situation I'd use it in either...

