

Empathic Agents in Learning Environments

Ana Paiva (Full Professor in the Department of Computer Engineering, IST (“Instituto Superior Técnico”) from the University of Lisbon and Coordinator of GAIPS – “Intelligent Agents and Synthetic Characters Group” at INESC-ID.)

For a teacher to be accepted, to motivate, to engage, and to fully be inspirational, empathic qualities are needed. Empathy is essential for the establishment of social relationships, for promoting engagement, collaboration, and thus sustaining the social structure we find in our society. In fact, empathy is seen as one of the pillars of morality and without empathy we wouldn't function in society. Therefore, it should not be a surprise when we argue that empathy must also be an important element in the interaction between humans and machines. Humans not only feel empathy for other humans but also for artificial entities, game characters and even robots. In turn, our machines are still limited in their empathic responses to humans. In this talk I will describe how to endow machines with empathic behaviour and in particular, in intelligent learning environments where the role of empathy is essential for sustaining motivation and engagement in learners. To do that I will present some cases where empathy was explored in the relation between learners and artificial characters (agents and robots), and where these empathic agents are used to promote learning not only by playing the role of tutors but also as artificial learning companions.



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