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Title: The Impertinent Oddity of Describing a Social Robot as Social: Infringements and Threats for Social Sciences

Abstract

As any other interaction also human-robot interaction (HRI) is depending on the interaction partners' framing of the situation. In this respect, the framing context is also crucial for the findings based on the application of breaching experiments. As in HRI the acceptance of the interaction partner is not as clearly defined as in human-human interaction, I'm interested in the context in which repair mechanisms can be applied and why in other cases the failure is accepted without any attempt to repair the interaction by the human. The data is taken from two case studies: (a) robots interacting with humans in a real-world scenario in a care facility for the elderly, and (b) in an experimental setting in the lab. The data shows that the context of the interaction determines the (un-)ambiguity regarding the state of the robot as an artefact which in turn significantly influences if a repairing strategy is carried out by the humans. If the context is experimental, the user is mostly willing to apply them. However in a non-experimental scenario, he is not. I assume that, if the state of the interaction partner for the human is ambiguous, no repair strategies will be applied. The consequences of these observations and assumptions are quite hypothetical and arguable. Nonetheless they could point out a crucial insight about the constitution of the social in terms of strictly relying on 'pure human' interaction. Within these assumptions also hints toward the necessity of naturalization strategies within the 'social construction of reality' could be discussed, leading to all sorts of inequalities.

Biographical Endnote

Diego Compagna is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Duisburg Essen in Germany and a Consultant in the Department Demographic Change and Futures Studies of the VDI/VDE Innovation + Technology GmbH in Berlin, Germany. His research interests in the field of Science and Technology Studies focus on the area of theory-building, sociological actor-models and the politics of innovation strategies for special target groups.