

(9) Connectedness, Awareness and Social Presence.

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Abstract

Introduction

This paper discusses the concept of 'connectedness', exploring its relationship to the concepts of 'social presence' and 'awareness', and arguing that although 'social presence' and 'awareness' have received most focus in previous research, 'connectedness' is in fact a more fundamental concept. 'Connectedness' is potentially a key concept in the analysis of communication and the development of interactive devices.

Discussion

The concept of 'connectedness' is related to the concept of 'social presence', but it is not equivalent. Social presence is a judgement of the perception of the other participant and/or of the medium, whereas connectedness is an emotional experience, evoked by, but independent of, the other's presence. Connectedness relates to the sense of social presence classified by Biocca et al. (2001), as psychological involvement. In awareness systems there may be virtually no social presence, i.e. little salience of the other person, and no access to their intelligence, intentions or sensory impressions, however, at the same time there may be a feeling of psychological engagement and experience of connectedness. Awareness here is not used in the sense of having heard of as in, 'I am aware of President Bush', nor in the sense of thinking about someone, but in the sense of experiencing what is believed to be an external perception, whether synchronous or asynchronous.

The paper analyses the logical relationships between the three concepts. Connectedness usually coincides with awareness, because the awareness triggers the experience of connectedness. The paper discusses whether connectedness can occur without awareness or whether connectedness implies awareness of the other person. It is suggested that connectedness may be stimulated by the awareness of objects, although the meaning embodied in the experience is derived from the other person. In this case, connectedness occurs without awareness of the other person; for example, a stored text message in a mobile phone evokes the experience of connectedness without awareness of the presence of that person.