Embodied agents from a user's perspective

The aim of this dissertation is to better understand how computer users respond to embodied agents – software that appears on the computer screen with a human- or animal-like appearance. The central idea is that when computer users interact with an embodied agent, they respond to both the agent's function and its outer appearance. In this dissertation, this idea is further developed and then used as the starting-point for several empirical studies. This dissertation reveals, between other results, that function does not only affect intentions to use the agent, but also how one feels emotionally about the agent. The function of an agent is even more important than its outer appearance. A beautiful appearance can also not compensate for badly functioning software. The conclusions that can be drawn from the studies were combined to develop a model that describes how users perceive and respond to embodied agents. This model is called the Revised Inter-active model on Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters (Revised I-PEFIC).

Revised I-PEFiC may inform agent design decisions and may serve as a framework for future research activities both in the embodied agent domain and in related domains such as robotics.

Henriette van Vugt was a Ph.D.-candidate in the Department of Communication Science and in the Department of Computer Science, VU University Amsterdam. Currently, she is a senior researcher at Philips Research, Eindhoven.

Henriette C. van Vugt

Embodied agents from a user's perspective

Embodied agents from a user's perspective

Henriette C. van Vugt

VU University *Amsterdam*