Emotional expressions: Communicative displays or psychological universals?

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Abstract:

Emotional feelings permeate our everyday experience, consciously or unconsciously, driving our daily activities and constraining our perception, actions and reactions.

During daily interactions, our ability to decode emotional expressions plays a vital role in creating social linkages, producing cultural exchanges, influencing relationships and communicating meanings.

Emotional information is transmitted through verbal (the semantic content of a message) and nonverbal (facial, vocal, gestural expressions, and more) communicative tools and relations and exchanges are highly affected by the way this information is coded/decoded by/from the addresser/addressee.

The accuracy above the chance in decoding emotional expressions suggested they can play the role of psychological universals. However this idea is debated by data suggesting that such appear more as social messages dependent upon context and personal motives.

These open questions are discussed in this talks, at the light of experimental data obtained from several experiments aimed to assess the role of context on the decoding of emotional expressions. The reported data support more the idea that expressions of emotions are learned to efficiently and effectively express intentions and negotiate relations, even though particular emotional aspects show similarities across cultural boundaries.

Research devoted to the understanding of the perceptual and cognitive processes involved in the decoding of emotional states during interactional exchanges is particularly relevant in the field of Human-Human, Human-Computer Interaction and Robotics, for build and harden human relationships, and developing friendly, emotionally and socially believable assistive technologies

Anna Esposito Short CV

Anna Esposito is currently Associate Professor in Computer Science at the Department of Psychology, Second University of Naples and Senior Researcher at the IIASS, in Vietri sul Mare, Salerno, IT. She has been research professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at Wright State University, to which she is currently research affiliate. Anna current research interests are on the perceptual features of verbal and nonverbal communicative signals, and in particular on cross-modal analysis of speech, gesture, and expressions of emotions. Further research interests are on language disorders, timing in language, signal processing and models and applications of neural networks.

She is author of more than 160 publications on international journals, books, and international conference proceedings, and editor of 21 international books.

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