



Smart speakers with voice user interfaces in private households

Verbal interaction and hybrid exchange
as a means of media domestication

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Vortragssaal des IDS



Kick-Off-Vortrag zum internationalen Workshop „Interacting with everyday technologies across the lifespan“ (Organisation: Prof. Dr. Florence Oloff, Dr. Silke Reineke)

Abstract:

When Apple introduced a voice assistant called “Siri” in 2011, which was supposed to be able to understand questions and commands in spoken language (initially in German, English and French) and respond to them like a conversation partner, there was great fascination with the talking technologies that were supposed to make everyday life easier as “intelligent personal assistance systems” (IPA). Since then, in addition to smartphones, voice assistants have been finding their way into various everyday devices, such as smart speakers, smart TVs, smart watches or the media interfaces of digitally connected cars. In recent years, in light of new language processing technologies such as text generating ChatGPT, assessments of the older voice assistant technology have become reluctant, and companies are trying to integrate modern AI into older voice assistance systems.

In the research project “Un/desired observation in interaction: Intelligent Personal Assistants” within the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) “Media of Cooperation” at the University of Siegen we investigate media practices with smart technologies in private households as crucial technologies in the field of data-intensive digital media on an empirical basis. In the second phase (2020–2024), the focus was on the use of smart speakers. As with other media, it is an open question how users adapt to these technologies and how they make them adapt to the circumstances of their everyday lives. Media and data practices differ in sociocultural dimensions, such as age or milieu. The process of media domestication is not least mediated linguistically, both through the HCI dialogues with the VUI and through their integration into social interactions in multi-party user constellations. In the process of linguistically mediated domestication, everyday routines are changing, and new practices are emerging. First of all, these serve the task of getting the new devices and services to work at all. Then they serve again and again to overcome their technical unwieldiness and resistance. Additionally, new usage practices intervene more or less deeply in everyday life. The lecture presents selected findings from the Siegen project based on Video and Audio data.

Stephan Habscheid, Tim Hector, Dagmar Hoffmann & David Waldecker (eds.) (forthcoming): Voice Assistants in Private Homes. Media, Data and Language in Interaction and Discourse. Bielefeld: Transcript. Scheduled for release in December 2024.



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