

Robots attend nursery school

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Two robots are attending a nursery school at the University of California San Diego so they can learn to play well with the group.

RUBI (Robot Using Bayesian Influence) and QRIO (Quest for Curiosity) are being used for research into the use of interactive computers in education and using robots in real-time social situations.

The children range in age from 10 months to 2 years and have an average vocabulary of about 50 words. Researchers say they make great test subjects for interactive robots because they are quick to use behavior and body language to announce they are bored.

"Our team is working on understanding what it takes to have a natural interaction between robots and humans," said Javier Movellan, director of UCSD's Machine Perception Lab and a developmental psychologist. "It is our belief that to be useful to people ... robots will have to get better at what humans do brilliantly without thinking -- recognizing a voice, for example, or smiling back at just the right time."

RUBI was developed by the lab and QRIO by the Sony Corp., which is collaborating in the research. Preliminary findings are to be reported in July at the IEEE Conference on Development and Learning in Japan.

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