NTT DoCoMo tablet-talkers explore virtual worlds (w/ Video)

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(Phys.org) -- NTT DoCoMo is showing off its prototype platform for 3-D video calls with enhanced additions. Its 3D Live Communication System is being described as a possible next step beyond regular video calls. This is a platform that allows two tablet users who are not in the same place communicate and at the same time explore virtual spaces where they can see each other in a different virtual world. NTT DoCoMo is Japan's largest mobile operator, known not only for its network and large user base but also for an aggressive R&D effort in mobile communication technologies. A platform that features the “virtual world” experience Is clearly in the cards.

The technologies are under development but a demo of the platform at the Wireless Japan exhibition in Tokyo recently fired some imaginations as having possible usefulness in educational technology, retail, and other settings. NTT DoCoMo says it has no specific plan how consumers would use this. “Regarding services actual customers could use, we’re still thinking about those, so we haven’t decided our timeline yet,” said a representative from the company.

NTT DoCoMo demonstrates its "Live 3D Communication System” by showing two users in separate rooms connected for a video chat. Their motions are captured by a video camera and projected onto virtual backgrounds, such as a city street or outer space. The users explore and talk about the virtual space together, sweeping their tablets around them to use as a window to their virtual world. This virtual space is composed in the company’s network cloud and streamed directly to each user’s

device.

One feature of this system is speech recognition technology. Users can create virtual objects just by speech This technology extracts characteristic keywords from spoken words and embodies them as objects. The keywords from the two people's conversation become images displayed in the virtual world that is being shared by the two users. Recognition comes into play, scanning the conversation between the two users for certain words and phrases. A word can appear in a balloon shape on the screens of both users' tablets. Tapping on the balloon shape can open a link or cause an avatar to appear on the screen.

Spatial-recognition technology is also deployed in the system that tracks 360-degree videos or 3-D objects as if the user is actually looking at them. If the tablet user is looking from above, the 3-D object is shown as seen from above. If the user looks sideways, they can see the object shown from the side.

More information: via Diginfo