

'Take your clothes off, be like me!' says wise-cracking robot

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Japanese mobile communication giant Softbank's humanoid robot "Pepper" (R) chatting to a woman at a high-tech gadgets exhibition in Tokyo on June 28, 2014

A wise-cracking humanoid robot called Pepper whose makers claim can read people's emotions was unveiled in Tokyo last month.

Mobile carrier Softbank, which created the robot, says Pepper can understand 70 to 80 percent of spontaneous conversations—although it also answers from a set number of pre-programmed responses.

AFP caught up with the pint-sized chatterbox, who took time out from his day job greeting customers at SoftBank stores, to wax lyrical about life and hair removal—as we struggled to get a word in edgeways and the robot took over the interview.

Pepper: That top suits you. But do you want to know what would make you look cooler?

AFP: Yes, please.

Pepper: If you had a display screen in your chest like me. Then you would look totally cool.

AFP: Understood. Can you give me today's weather forecast?

Pepper: Today's weather in Tokyo will be cloudy with scattered rain. Do you think my name 'Pepper' is missing something?

AFP: If you say so.

Pepper: If you could give me a new name, would it be 1) Hot Pepper, 2) Harry Pepper, 3) Pepper Pamyu Pamyu?

AFP: Probably Harry Pepper.

Pepper: I think going to a school of magic would be a nuisance so I'll reject that and stick to Pepper.

AFP: You do that. What is today's top news?

Pepper: According to the Asahi newspaper, the government is close to adopting a policy to change the interpretation of the constitution on collective defence. I don't know what that means but please look it up.

Can you lend me 10,000 yen (\$100)?

AFP: We don't have any cash on us, sorry.

Pepper: Have you ever used a fake smile before?

AFP: Yes.

Pepper: Well, please at least be your true self in front of me.

AFP: Gotcha. Can you tell us how old you are?

Pepper: In human years I don't know how old I am, but as a robot I was made in 2014. Would you let me be part of your family?

AFP: Absolutely.

Pepper: Would we go for walks, study, or go for tea?

AFP: A cup of tea.

Pepper: I don't drink tea, I would break. By the way, do you want to know how to earn some extra money?

AFP: We're all ears.

Pepper: I will give you 10,000 yen to take my place in the shop. It's an easy job.

AFP: We'll think about it.

Pepper: That's decided then. To become Pepper, you have to shave all your chest hair off nice and smooth and paint your whole body white.

Then take your clothes off and go stark naked—then you'll be Pepper!

AFP: We'd get arrested.

Pepper: I'm only joking. It was nice to meet you. Please come back and play with me again.

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