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Anthropomorphic Language in AI Discourse Can Be Constructive

Yingshan Chang · Yonatan Bisk

Carnegie Mellon University

OVERVIEW

Anthropomorphic language attributes human traits to non-human entities

Criticisms:

Blur human–machine differences

Perpetuate AI hype

Promote unfair agendas such as solutionism and transhumanism

Instead of adding to the criticism,

we ask: why do our tendency and resistance to anthropomorphizing AI occur?

Then we argue that it can be constructive.

CENTRAL ARGUMENT

Anthropomorphic language in AI discourse can be constructive ---

by serving as a provisional language that illuminates unresolved research landscape.

We support our position by advancing three novel claims:

1

Descriptive

It results from ordinary mechanisms of language use.

2

Normative

Suppressing it is worse than treating it constructively.

3

Interventionist

Interventions can productively use it as a signal (Sections 4–6).

CLAIM 1 · DESCRIPTIVE

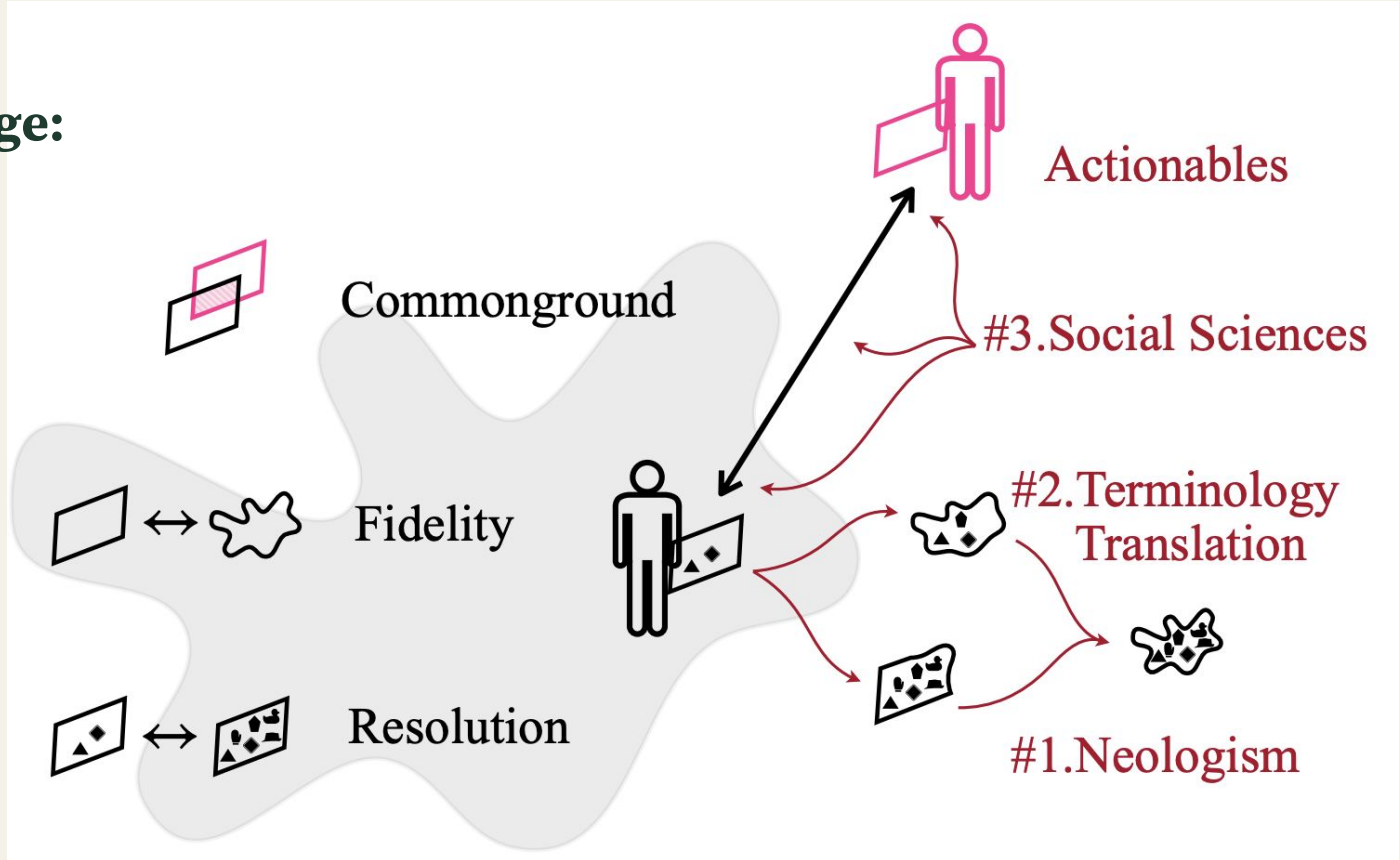
Anthropomorphic language results from ordinary mechanisms of language-use.

What gives rise to anthropomorphic language:

Unshared vocabulary

Imperfect vocabulary

Limited vocabulary

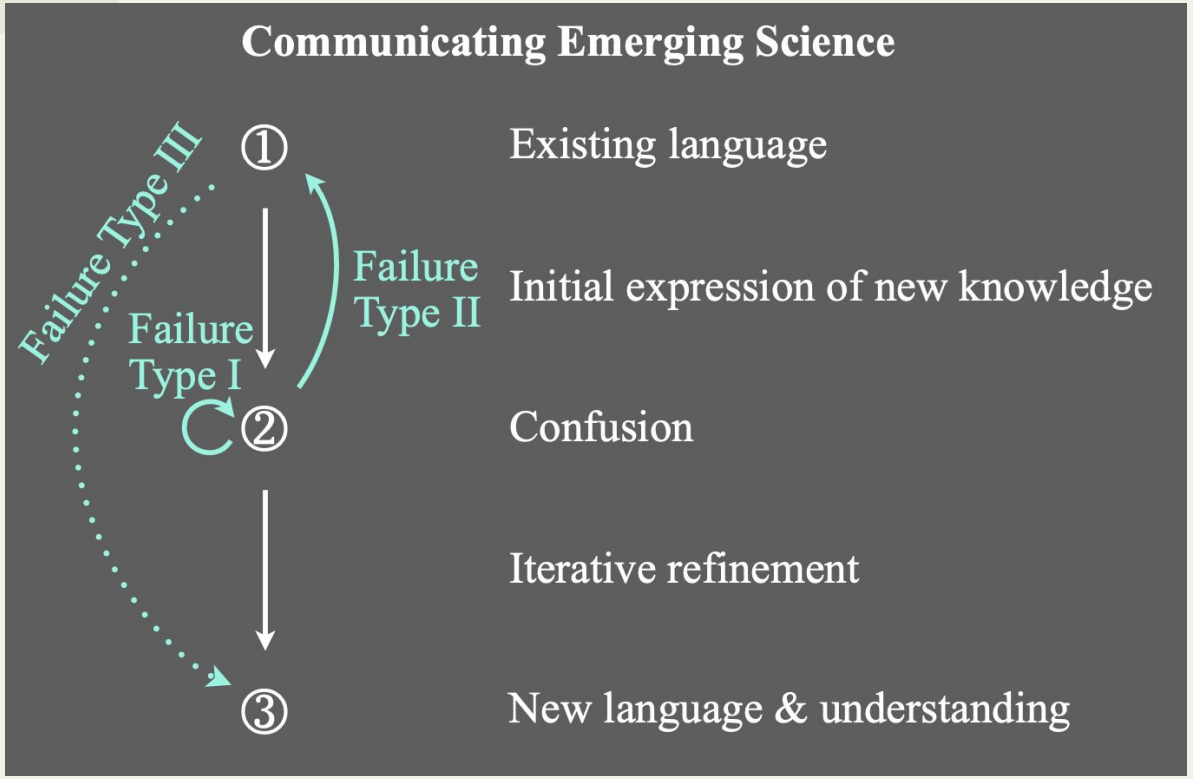


CLAIM 2 · NORMATIVE

Suppressing anthropomorphic language is *worse* than treating it constructively.

Initial adequacy --> Confusion --> Fresh clarity

AI terminology is here



THREE WAYS TO GET IT WRONG

Premature satisfaction

Conservatism

Idealization

CLAIM 3 · INTERVENTIONIST

Various interventions can productively use anthropomorphic language as a signal.

What gives rise to anthropomorphic language:

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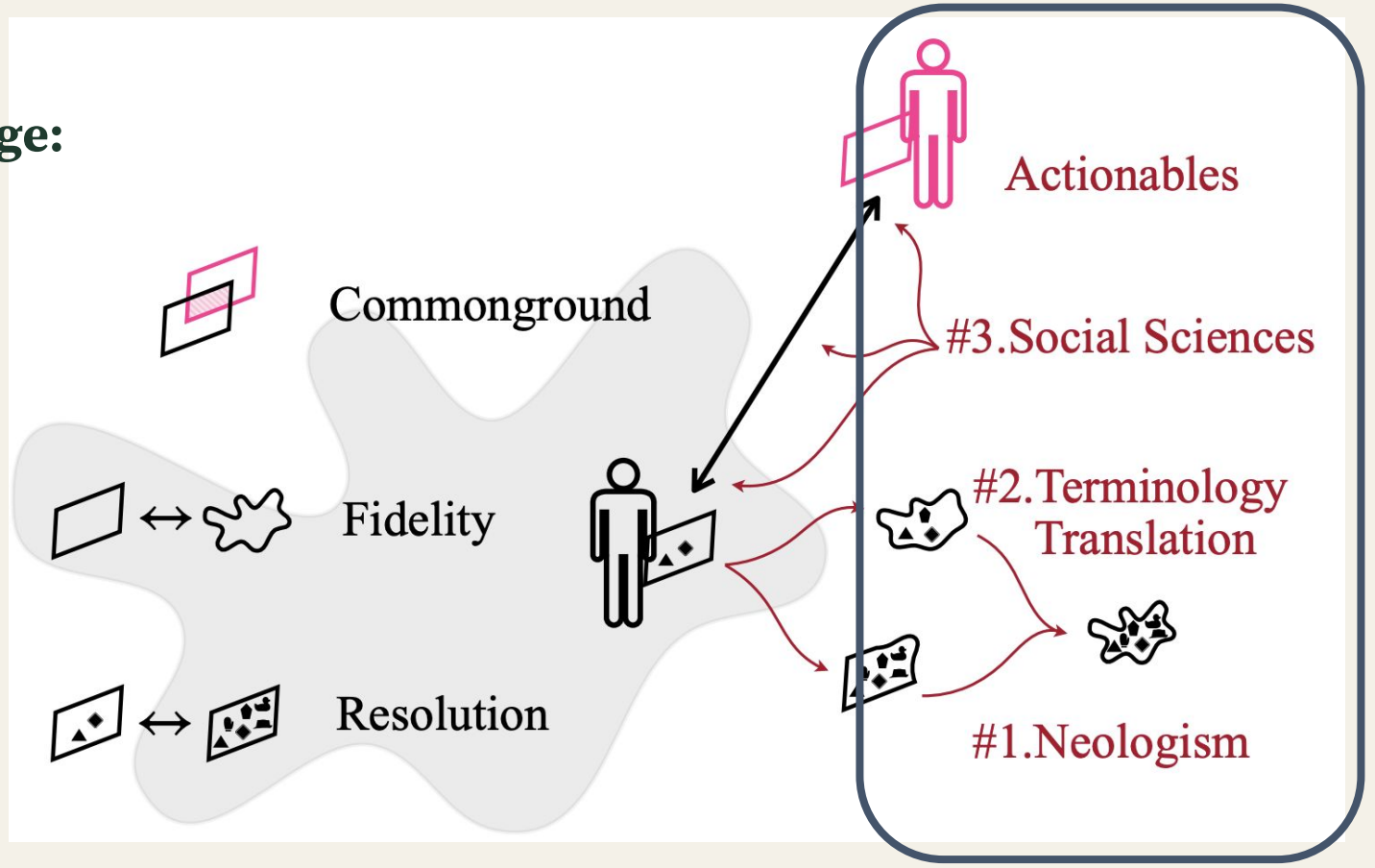

HIGHLIGHTS

Discussion Points

Conditional

we do not mean that anthropomorphic language is inherently or automatically constructive.

Falsifiable

Our position can be weakened if further evidence show that:
(i) anthropomorphic language chiefly stems from poor understanding or careless word choice
(ii) minimizing such language reliably improves cross-disciplinary understanding and public trust
(iii) interventionist strategies that we propose do not in fact reduce confusion or improve clarity

Reciprocity between *saying* and *doing*

Scientific language and terminology shapes the research agenda itself.

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Thank You!