

## **From Anime to the Vocal Arts: Programming Kawaii Vocalics**

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### **Keynote abstract**

Elements of Japanese culture, like anime characters and kawaii, the Japanese instantiation of cuteness, have crossed cultural borders and entered digital spaces outside of Japan. In this talk, I introduce the science of kawaii vocalics, a field of study I coined. Kawaii vocalics focuses on how the vocal medium and paralanguage of cute voices can be studied and applied, especially programmatically within computer applications. I cover the underlying theories, from cuteness as baby schema to Nittono's two-layer model of kawaii, as well as methods by which to manipulate the kawaii-ness of voice, including the "super kawaii vocalics" method myself and my collaborators created. I touch on interlinking factors like Japanese first-person pronouns (of which there are many that connect to various facets of social identity, relations, and power structures) to demonstrate how character archetypes like "bokukko" can be elicited through voice and text choices in computer agents. I demonstrate subtle and full-on applications of kawaii vocalics in a game interface and collaborative soundboard drum circle.

### **Speaker bio**

Katie Seaborn is an Associate Professor of Human-Computer Interaction and Critical Computing in the Department of Computer Science and Technology (CST) at the University of Cambridge. They are also an Associate Fellow in the Centre for Human Inspired Artificial Intelligence (CHIA) and Visiting University Associate Professor at Institute of Science Tokyo (formerly: Tokyo Institute of Technology). They are Director of the Aspirational Computing Lab (established April 2020). They received their Ph.D. in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering from the University of Toronto (2016) with a Major in Human Factors and a Collaborative Specialization in Knowledge Media Design. They also hold B.A. and M.Sc. degrees from the School of Interactive Arts and Technology (SIAT) at Simon Fraser University.