



Vocabulary: technology 词汇: 技术

It's good to have friends that we can talk to and share our thoughts and opinions with. More importantly, they're people we can ask for help or advice. But recently it seems, many of us are developing a new relationship with a mystery person that we'll never meet!

I'm talking about **virtual assistants** or **bots**. These are pieces of **software** that we can talk to and it can talk back to us. Examples include Apple's Siri, Google's Assistant, Amazon's Alexa and Microsoft's Cortana. It might be on your phone or computer or even a **smart speaker** in your home. They are changing the way we **interact** with technology - instead of typing on a computer keyboard or tapping on a tablet, we can now speak and a voice will answer.

The people behind these voices are called **conversation designers**. Tom Hewitson is one of them. He told the BBC "this is kind of changing [computers] into like an **agent**. They're an active participant in the interaction and in guiding you to make the right decision." So he's saying this **cutting-edge** technology has the ability to **think for itself** and make its own decisions.

It is a scary thought that this virtual voice can think for you – will it stop us using our own brains and will we lose the ability to write things down or type? They are certainly clever, helping you to book train tickets, give you the latest weather news or even tell you a joke. But are they really your new best friend?

One thing we can't do yet is to make **chit-chat** or **small talk** with it. We have to alter the way we speak. As Tom Hewitson says "We will develop our own kind of **vernacular** for speaking with machines that will be subtly different from how we speak to other people... It can be much more **brusque** and to the point."

But there's no doubt this technology will soon be **commonplace** in our lives. This year Google Duplex was revealed, described by the company as **artificial intelligence** "for accomplishing **real-world tasks** over the phone". It's a type of **chatbot** that will allow you to, for example, chat to your hairdresser about when they can fit you in for a cut. Other companies are working on similar things. But before they perfect this new technology, don't forget who your real friends are!

词汇表

virtual assistant	虚拟助手
bot	(能自动执行搜索任务的) 网上机器人程序
software	软件
smart speaker	智能扬声器
interact	交流, 互动
conversation designer	对话设计师
agent (=something that causes change)	作用剂, 动因
cutting-edge	最新的, 尖端的
think for itself	独立思考
chit-chat	聊天, 闲谈
small talk	闲聊
vernacular	方言, 白话
brusque	无礼的, 唐突的
commonplace	司空见惯的事情
artificial intelligence (AI)	人工智能
real-world task	现实生活中的真实任务
chatbot	聊天机器人

测验与练习

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. How do you communicate with a virtual assistant?
2. Give an example of something, mentioned in this article, that this new technology can do for you.
3. True or false: *We can talk to virtual assistants the same way we talk to our friends.*
4. Why does the author fear that we may eventually stop using our brains?
5. Which verb used in the text means 'make something completely free from faults'?

2. 请在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. It's hard to _____ with the teacher because I have to sit at the back of the class.

inactive	interact	interacted	interacting
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2. Making contactless payments used to be quite unusual but now it's _____.

real-world	agent	commonplace	cutting-edge
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3. The train information screens are not working today because there is a problem with the _____.

software	artificial intelligence	agent	chatbot
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4. This new driverless car really demonstrates _____ technology.

edge-cutting	cutting-edges	cut-edges	cutting-edge
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5. The local _____ was very different from what I had learnt at school so I couldn't understand what people were saying.

vernacular	chatbot	brusque	chit-chat
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答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. How do you communicate with a virtual assistant?

You talk to it / you use your voice.

2. Give an example of something, mentioned in this article, that this new technology can do for you.

They can book train tickets, give you the latest weather news or even tell you a joke.

3. True or false: *We can talk to virtual assistants the same way we talk to our friends.*

False. Tom Hewitson, conversation designer, was quoted as saying "We will develop our own kind of vernacular for speaking with machines that will be subtly different from how we speak to other people.

4. Why does the author fear that we may eventually stop using our brains?

Because the new virtual assistants are able to think for themselves and make decisions.

6. Which verb used in the text means 'make something completely free from faults'?

The word is 'perfect'. "Other companies are working on similar things but before they perfect this new technology, don't forget who your real friends are!"

2. 请在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. It's hard to **interact** with the teacher because I have to sit at the back of the class.

2. Making contactless payments used to be quite unusual but now it's **commonplace**.

3. The train information screens are not working today because there is a problem with the **software**.

4. This new driverless car really demonstrates **cutting-edge** technology.

5. The local **vernacular** was very different from what I had learnt at school so I couldn't understand what people were saying.