

Solutions Intermediate 3rd Edition

Audio 2.19

Testing intelligence

This conversation is between a real human and a computer programme called Mitsuku. Programs like Mitsuku are called chatbots- Mitsuku was the winner of the Loebner Prize in 2013, an annual competition to find a program that can pass the Turing Test. The test, designed to measure artificial intelligence, was invented by British mathematician Alan Turing.

Fifty or sixty years ago, computers were very simple machines, but even then scientists believed that one day machines would be able to think and that they would probably be as intelligent as humans. The question was, 'How can we measure the intelligence of a machine?' Alan Turing, who had helped to break the German Enigma code during the Second World War, came up with an answer. He said we need to ask 'Can this computer talk? Can it have a conversation like a human?' If it can, he argued, then it is intelligent and it can think. In a Turing test, judges sit at a screen and have a chatroom conversation with the chatbot program. They don't know if they are chatting with another person or with a chatbot. After exchanging messages for five minutes, the judge decides if he or she is chatting with a human or a machine.

Turing predicted that by the year 2000, the average person will not have more than a 70 per cent chance of making the right identification. In other words, computers would trick the judges 30 per cent of the time. An American called Hugh Loebner was fascinated by Turing's idea, and in the early 1990s he offered a prize of \$100,000 to the creator of the first chatbot to pass the 'Turing Test'. In order to win the \$100,000, a chatbot must convince at least 30% of the judges that it is human. Many chatbots have entered the competition but so far no chatbot has won the big money prize. Mitsuku, however, came very close. In the conversation at the beginning of this article, Mitsuku is A and the real human is B. You can tell that A is not human because at one point in the conversation, A says 'Humans are not too intelligent at times. Although Mitsuku failed to win the \$100,000, it certainly won't be long before a chatbot is able to fool the Loebner judges into thinking that it is a real person.

But is the Turing Test a good way to decide if a machine is intelligent? Critics argue that the chatbots in the competition are merely imitating humans. Humans are the only animals on Earth that can speak and that's why Turing chose to focus on it. But what is really impressive, critics say, is machines that do things that we can't do. For example, it is amazing that Google can search hundreds of millions of websites for a single word in a matter of seconds, or that a NASA computer can control a rocket on a journey from Earth to Jupiter. Even some of the things that smartphone apps can do are extremely impressive. Those achievements are far more interesting and useful than chatbots. A chatbot is really nothing more than a successful liar, so the argument goes.

Fans of the Turing Test, on the other hand, feel that humans are themselves machines. It's just that our brains are far more complex than computers. As philosopher and scientist Daniel Dennett said in a recent interview, 'It's not impossible to have a conscious robot. You're looking at one.

Solutions Upper Intermediate 3rd Edition

Audio 1.07

Stars of the vlogosphere

Helicopters circled the sky above Piccadilly Circus as the police officers below struggled to control the thousands of fans on the streets outside the bookstore. A few weeks earlier seven hundred people had been waiting at the same store the day David Beckham arrived to sign copies of his autobiography, so little public interest was expected for someone that nobody over twenty had ever heard of. So who were the thousands of young fans waiting for? The latest pop sensation? A celebrity from a reality show? No. the young man causing so much excitement was a Mogger - a video blogger.

Twenty-one year-old Atle Deyes was in London to promote a book based on his extremely successful vlog Pointless. With over four million subscribers, Alfie had become famous by making and uploading videos of himself and his friends taking part in games and activities that have no purpose hence the name of the vlog. But he is just one of a small army of vloggers with large followings that have become much bigger stars than actors and pop singers, and now the mass media want to know what makes them so attractive.

The answer of course is not simple, but successful vloggers do share some common characteristics. They are outgoing quick witted and spontaneous in front of their webcams, which enables them to create a close relationship with their viewers. There is also lot interaction with the audience and vloggers ask their followers for feedback on their videos. This means vloggers can adapt the content of their videos to keep their viewers happy. It is material that is made by young people for young people without any intrusion from media corporations. What is more, the accessibility that modern technology offers means that the vlogs can be watched anywhere and at any time. All these ingredients put together have created a two-way relationship between vloggers and their fans, based on shared interests and trust, that cannot be found between the providers and users of other media.

However, it appears that those shared interests and that trust might be negatively affected by something that has existed for a lot longer than vlogging: money. Some of the big-name vloggers can earn up to £20,000 for displaying an advertisement on their channel or for showing advertisements at the beginning of their videos. They can also earn a lot of money for mentioning a product in a vlog and even more money for reviewing new products. About 1,000 vloggers around the world earn at least £100,000 a year from their YouTube income. Furthermore, when a vlogger has more than 10,000 subscribers, they can use the hi-tech facilities at YouTube Creator Spaces in cities such as London and New York and produce very professional, and some would say commercial, vlogs for the platform. So, will vlogs go the way of many TV programmes and films and become simple vehicles for selling products? Not according to the vloggers, who say that their creative independence is far more important than making money. However, Zoella, one of the few vloggers in the public eye in Britain, caused a scandal after following Alfie Deyes' example and publishing a book. At the book launch, Zoella claimed that it had always been her dream to write a novel, but just a few weeks later, she had to admit that she hadn't written it alone and had had help with it. Her name was just being used to sell it. Most of her fans forgave her, but many media experts saw it as a sign that vlogging had lost its innocence and that the media corporations were taking control.