

Digital friendship

Dieser Vorschlag bezieht sich auf Dave Eggers: The Circle.

Aufgaben

Der vorliegende Vorschlag enthält in Aufgabe 3 alternative Arbeitsanweisungen.

- 1 Outline the purpose of the app and the way it works. (Material) **(30 BE)**

- 2 Compare the use of technology in the excerpt (Material) to the way technology is used in Dave Eggers' "The Circle". **(40 BE)**

- 3 Choose one of the following tasks:

- 3.1 Referring to the app presented in the excerpt (Material) and another social media app of your choice, discuss their impacts on the users' lives.

or

- 3.2 "Part of what social media does is allow us to see a reality that has been entirely visible to some people and invisible to others. As those injustices become visible, meaningful change follows." (Omar Wasow, an assistant professor at the University of Berkeley and co-founder of BlackPlanet.com, a social network which focuses on the "black experience".)

You are participating in an international youth forum on social justice. Taking the quotation as a starting point, write a blog entry for the forum's website assessing the usefulness of social media in fighting social injustice.

(30 BE)

Material

Dave Eggers: *The Every* (novel, 2021)

The excerpt is taken from Dave Eggers' sequel to "The Circle". The protagonist, Delaney, tries to get a job at The Every (the company The Circle has turned into). She is interviewed by Carlo and Shireen, two Every employees who are supposed to decide whether or not Delaney will get the job.

[...] "For years now, we've counted our friends here at the Every..."

Delaney paused momentarily to see if her use of *we* had registered and had met with approval – it had. "But is that really the most important measurement? If scientists tell us that the depth of our friendships is the most important thing, shouldn't we be measuring not the *quantity* of friends, but the *quality* of those friendships?"

Carlo and Shireen were listening with mouths slightly agape. Delaney assumed she was hired. Now she only had to get through the presentation without unforced error.

"So I was sketching out an app," she said, "that brings some certainty to what's always been vague and frankly a bit chaotic. Can I show you? I'm assuming this is ready?" She pointed to the wallscreen, which she tapped to activate. "Guest," she said. "Seven-Oh-Eight-Eight-Nine." A small box appeared on the screen and Delaney pressed her thumb to it. Her fingerprint connected her to her account, and soon the screen came alive with the life-size face of Wes, his closed-mouth smile seeming, Delaney thought, a bit too amused. Wes's resting face appeared mocking, and he knew this, so he tried, always, to pepper his speech with words of unmistakable gratitude and sincerity.

Delaney turned to Carlo and Shireen. "I hope you don't mind, but I asked Wes, an old friend of mine, to be ready today."

Shireen looked doubtful and Carlo flashed an unhappy grimace.

"It's fine," he said finally. "Hi Wes. How are you?"

Delaney turned back to Wes. Until this moment, she'd assumed he was in their kitchen, but now she saw the distinct outline of a toilet tank. He was sitting on the can¹. This was his idea of a gag.

"Wes, can you hear us?" Delaney asked.

"I can!" he said, and added, "I'm so grateful to be with you!"

"Do you think you might be more comfortable elsewhere?" Delaney said. "I have a sense the connection would be stronger in another room."

"No, it's super-strong here. Potent, actually," he said. "How is *everyone*?" he asked. *Idiot*, Delaney thought. He'd specifically promised not to make this joke.

A few more pleasantries were exchanged before Delaney tapped a code on her tablet and a digital frame, embedded with icons, surrounded Wes's face.

"Tell me about your day, Wes." Delaney said.

Wes began talking, telling the tale of a day filled with average social calamity and embarrassment, while Delaney made sympathetic sounds and asked well-timed questions. As she spoke, the icons, sixteen of them, appeared in the frame, just below Wes's chin, and began flickering with activity.

"As you can see," Delaney noted, "as we talk, our AI is analyzing Wes's facial expression, eye contact, and vocal intonations. I know emotion detection is a big interest for the Every now. Obviously

¹ can – toilet

**Englisch
Grundkurs****Thema und Aufgabenstellung
Prüfungsteil 2 (Schreiben) – Vorschlag B1**

35 the tech exists and will only get better.” Nine of the sixteen indicators below Wes’s chin were green, seven red.

“Looks like Wes is being truthful, as you can see here,” Delaney said, pointing to the first green indicator. “Over here, though, this facial sensor is red, indicating that he’s tense. If he were relaxed, this indicator would be green. The rest of the sensors are tracking things like candor, humor, sincerity
40 and warmth. Wes has always been very funny, so you can see that the humor sensor reflects that.”

“Whoa,” Shireen said.

“Meanwhile,” Delaney continued, “our conversation is being transcribed and algorithms are analyzing the text, looking at the actual words spoken for keywords and phrases that are commonly used between authentic friends. So we have the facial rec² analyzing surface indicators, the text being
45 examined, and these two measurements are collated³ with Wes’s vitals, heart-rate, blood pressure and glucose levels, which are being monitored of course through his oval⁴.”

Shireen and Carlo nodded earnestly. The best thing to do, Delaney knew, was to include Every tech in her own, implying she was not replacing theirs, but was simply adding on.

“Here you can see some of the aggregate numbers⁵ at the bottom. The conversation so far is rated 86.2,
50 which is decent, and I think reflects the fact that Wes and I have an easy friendship. Anything over 80 is genuine. Over 90, though, is extraordinary.”

“And Wes is seeing the same numbers on his screen?” Carlo asked.

“For this demonstration, yes,” Delaney said. “But there would be times you’d want the data travelling just one way. For example, if I was unsure if Wes was being truthful on a specific topic, or if I wasn’t
55 certain he was an authentic friend generally, I could set the tech up to deliver the metrics only to me.”

“I love this,” Shireen said, her eyes wide. [...]

(783 Wörter)

Dave Eggers: The Every, New York, 1. Aufl. 2021, S. 49–52.

² rec – short for recognition

³ to collate – to compare critically

⁴ oval – a device looking like a wristwatch that allows monitoring one’s heart-rate and other data

⁵ aggregate numbers – all the data collected by the app are turned into one number