V01CE

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For my paper, I want to focus on language; a thing most of the human populace takes for granted as an everyday part of life. We talk to our colleagues, our friends and family. We even occasionally talk to the technology we interact with on a daily basis, and sometimes it attempts to respond.

What I want to focus on in this assignment is how computers and other pieces of technology attempt to emulate the spoken language, and, specifically, why and how they fail at giving a convincing performance. Most people are familiar with the moment when you are driving and a static, female voice from the GPS system suddenly tells you to make a turn down a road that is closed down due to construction.

The paper will aim to analyze the progress technology has made in their ways of communication, and explore the possible reasons as to why so many resources are being used to improve on this, currently flawed, communication system found in modern technology. The difference between the human language and the language of computers is so vast that making them work together can, by some, be considered an impossible task.

The articles I go on to mention are susceptible to change, and there will be added more as I begin the process of writing the paper. These are the articles where I have found the inspiration for my concept, and they serve as the foundation for the paper.

I'll use the article *Vocable Code* by Geoff Cox and Alex McLean as a means to clarify the parameters needed for creating a convincing piece of communicating technology. I find this is a very important step in understanding exactly why it feels like technology is "failing" at communicating in a manner that is convincingly human.

I will also make use of *Language* by Florian Cramer, *Variable* by Derek Robinson, and *Code (or How You Can Write Something Differently)* by Friedrich Kittler to support the statements made in the Cox-McLean article. These will be used to bridge into an analysis of why responsive communication with technology is becoming increasingly important in the modern age, and how it might change how we perceive technology.

I will also make use of the 1994 article *CHATTERBOTs, TINYMUDs, and the Turing Test Entering the Loebner Prize Competition* by Michael L. Mauldin to bring in an example of a piece of

technology attempting to have an unrestricted conversation with a human being. This article will help highlight some of the restraints, and shortcomings of computers when discussing direct conversational communication between technology and a human being.

The discussion of how this communicating technology is perceiving, and responded to will be based much on the aforementioned articles, but I will also include statements and viewpoints from *Artificial Rhetorical Agents and the Computing Phronesis* by Jennifer Maher, and *Out of Bounds: Language Limits, Language Planning, and the Definition of Distance in the New Spaces of Linguistic Capitalism* by Warren Sack. These articles will offer means of debating the utility of conversational communication technology, and offer up useful perspectives for a paper discussion.

What follows from this synopsis is narrowing my thoughts down. The questions I have stated are quite broad, and they will need to be scaled down to a manageable level. I will need to study the articles I have selected thoroughly, make notes of comparison between them, and set up opposing viewpoints, as well as likeminded ones to build the foundation of my paper. I would also like to further investigate the notion of phronesis, as mentioned by Jennifer Maher in her article, in conjunction with computers and technology, as the idea of phronetic agents could be very beneficial to what I want to investigate.

The focus of my paper will continuously be why communication with technology has taken a conversational twist over the later years and why people are so fascinated with communication with technology in this way. From this thought comes the clarification of the difficulties in properly emulating human traits in a piece of technology, as well as some of the problems that may arise from entering this uncanny valley of semi-consciousness. I find the idea of why computers don't quite sound right when they try to communicate fascinating, and I really want this to be the main theme, and maybe the sole focus of the paper.

This paper will not aim to explore the nature of artificial intelligence or computer sentience, however. The idea of actual, intelligent, emotion-based communication between humans and computers will not be touched on. It will instead investigate how code can attempt to emulate sentience, and why we as consumers might be interested in this exact sort of technology. Tech that is not conscious, but just appears to be. A voice that might try to sound human, but is really just 1s and 0s.

References:

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3. Cramer, F. (2008). Language. In: M. Fuller, *Software Studies.* Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, pp. 168-174.
4. Maher, J. (15 January 2016). Artificial Rhetorical Agents and the Computing of Phronesis. Available at: http://computationalculture.net/artificial-rhetorical-agents-and-the-computing-of-phronesis/ [Accessed 1 Apr. 2018].
5. Sack, W. (28 November 2017). Out of Bounds: Language Limits, Language Planning, and the Definition of Distance in the New Space of Linguistic Capitalism. Available at: http://computationalculture.net/out-of-bounds-language-limits-language-planning-and-the-definition-of-distance-in-the-new-spaces-of-linguistic-capitalism/ [Accessed 1 Apr. 2018].