How has the improvement of technology (better graphics and visuals, increased story branching...) pushed story/narrative-based games to evolve into what it is nowadays

All the groundbreaking improvements that have been done to gaming technologies from improved graphics and visuals to increased story branching have only helped the game feel more and more real. The gamer no longer visualize himself in a different alien world or a parallel dimension buy rather in a world very similar to the one he actually lives in, our world, a world in which he feels real. Now this, it has clearly taken the gaming experience toa whole new level. While gaming once counted as a way to entertain one’s self, today it has become a part of us and especially, a part of the people who play. Now, when I think of all the ways technology has been improved and developed to offer a better gaming experience, I think of “Interactive Storytelling”. I think that this by far one of the coolest and most interesting features of gaming. To answer the questions of how the improvement of technology pushed story or narrative-based games to evolve into what it is nowadays, I think the best thing to do is talk about interactive story telling to show how the story itself and the way it is told has changed drastically and how this extreme change’s main instrument was the way technology has turned out to become.

Interactive storytelling’s main purpose is to transform the player’s experience and making him interact with the events. This has transformed the gaming experience from a some-how passive activity, in the sense that all the gamer had to do is sit in front of a screen for example and receive messages from the game telling him, whether directly or indirectly, what to do and when to do it since it has all been already written and not a single thing the gamer would do could influence any event or really make any meaningful decision at all to a more active, or better yet, interactive activity in which the player now feels more involved than ever with all the decisions he has to make, all the choices he is offers and all the steps he is offered rather than told to make. With interactive storytelling, gaming will become more that an entertaining activity. Usually, a player would not take a game seriously and to prove it I can easily cite the famous saying: “It is only a game”. It is fair to think so when a game is all fiction of if a game only dictates its rules on you and you have no role whatsoever in the succession of events or even how the events happen. After all, one day, you could memorize the events and steps by heart and get sick of playing some stupid, unreal game. With this new technology, the first thing to say is that the most important impact it will have will be on story and narrative based games since it directly affects the way the game’s story is told. It is a huge step forward in the gaming sector. As small as it may seem, it truly offers amazing features. For example, the first thing to say here is, the gamer will not be “playing” a game but rather living the events as truly as possible. In short: “Interactive storytelling is a medium where the narrative, and its evolution, can be influenced in real-time by a user” (Porteous, Cavazza, & Charles, 2010). This means that this technology allows the player to merge with the game or the character representing him and feel as though the events happening are his life from now on and everything he does and every step he takes will directly affect his life. The player will interact with the game and the story it tells and the narrative in it since he will no longer be following steps to complete the story but he’ll rather be creating his own story.

Now the reason I have mentioned interactive storytelling is to merely cite it as an example of how technology would affect a game’s story, how better the story will become and most importantly, how important it will become. In normal games, the purpose of each level or mission for example is to overcome it since it is the only possible thing to do, but with integrative storytelling, the purpose will transcend into the story itself as it will become the bigger picture and the purpose of each level will be to fulfill the player’s purpose.

Now all this, everything I have discussed, will in no way be possible if it wasn’t for the improvements gaming technology has witnessed. To be a bit realistic, imagine playing a game in which you have to make the biggest most important decision and the visuals are acting like a 1990’s video. How could you even take the decision, let alone yourself seriously? No matter how good is the story, no matter how involved the player is, no matter how involved the player is in the story, it all goes back to the technology used in the game. No improvement will ever be possible in gaming if it is not firstly done on the technological level of the game. And of course, the base behind any interesting game will always be a compelling story. A compelling story’s elements may vary from new ideas, different succession of events, amazing turn of events. But by far, I think one of the primary elements is and will always be the graphics and audios used. You just cannot tell an interesting story that will succeed all others with lagging visuals for example. You cannot offer the player an amazing, once in a lifetime experience if you do not offer him graphics and visuals, he will never be able to find in any other game.

Nowadays, gaming companies are fairly aware of this which is why we can see that most of the successful games are divided into two categories. The first category includes the games that try to be as realistic as possible, telling real stories or events that happen in our daily live, and no better way to do this than offering impeccable visions of the real world. The second category is the one that includes games that try to be as different and unique as possible, telling new and different stories that have never been offered before. And, again, what better way to do this that by offering new, exotic and different graphics? With everything I have told above, I mainly gave the example of improved graphics and visuals. Now imagine all the aspects and element of gaming have been drastically improved. Imagine how better the gaming experience will become, how better the story will be told. It will have an endless potential of amazing the player.