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VUI vs. GUI

Voice user interface and Graphical user interface are two very different ways to communicate with technology. Graphical user interface was first implemented successfully by Apple in 1984 with the Macintosh 128k computer. It allowed a user to communicate with the computer using a device that plugs into the computer and controls a pointer on the screen used to select things; this is called a mouse. This was a huge improvement and innovation from the command line interface computers of the past decades, in which one would have to learn thousands upon thousands of commands just to complete simple processes. Compared to voice user interfaces of the twenty first century, however, graphical user interface seems old and obsolete. With voice user interface, one can simply speak and the device will hear, and respond accordingly. This along with great leaps in RAM and memory storage capacity makes these new devices cutting edge in comparison to old computers. There are some down sides, though to this new form of interface, such as: the misinterpretation of one's voice or the fact that your computer is constantly listening to your conversations. On the other hand, graphical user interface also has its pros and cons. The user does not have to learn countless commands to operate it, they can easily interact with the pointer on the computer’s screen using the mouse. Compared to the VUI’s, though, it has some inconveniences such as, the user must be sitting in front of the computer to use it, the user must physically interact with it and the user must be looking at the screen in order to know what exactly they are doing, which may seem unavoidable but many modern-day VUI’s like Alexa, or Amazon echoes do not have screens or keypads.

Obviously there is a large jump between these two types of interfaces but there are some things that have not changed over the many years of development. For example, both require some kind of input by the user to derive a response. Also, neither of them require the user to understand the way computers work, they are geared towards the common person.

The future of UI

Technology has come along way since first discovering fire and inventing the wheel but I do not believe that mankind is anywhere close to the pinnacle of technological development. Today it is very common for all different types of people to have complex technology in their homes, cars, offices, and pockets. In fact, its is quite rare to find a person who does not carry around a computer that once would have filled a twenty story office building, in their jacket pocket. But what will technology look like in the future? How will it develop from here on out? What new types of user interfaces will be invented or innovated? I believe that the next step in computer interfacing will be the Cognitive User Interface or CUI. This new form of user interface will not use any external action to perform functions through a computer but the electrical impulses of the user’s brain. With this, the user would simply have to think about what he wants the computer to do and it will happen. Obviously this is only a prediction of the next 25 to 50 years but it is possible.