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Introduction to Language and Technology

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Abstract

Technology has played an absolutely huge role in my life, and while I do feel that I take some aspects of technology for granted, I do make my best effort to understand and appreciate many things because of it. I try to understand how things worked before the advent of technologies that exist in my life. I also try to understand how the technologies that I utilize work, and admire the innovations of the trailblazers who laid down the road for both the people who create new technologies today, as well as those creators who are to come. While I do feel that, of course there have been some negative effects on my life to due to the fact that so much of it is connected to the digital world and the world of technology as a whole, I also feel that technology is what helps me to be the best version of myself that I could possibly be. I try not to change or adapt to the advent of new technologies, on the contrary I figure out how new technologies can fit into my life as it already sits. It may sound absurd, but I think I’m a technophile that had found a good balance between utilization of technology, and an appreciation for the aspects of life that aren’t directly related to technology.

“A Tech Enthusiast’s Interaction With Orality and Literacy”

Throughout my life there have been several paradigm shifts in the world of technology, and as a result a shift in the way that I viewed the world around me. The first of which is more of a personal experience, due simply to my change of interests. The second major shift can be attributed to the change from analog to digital on a major scale. The last, and perhaps most significant technological shift in my lifetime would be the transition from local media to internet connected. There are many authors that speak about these major shifts, as well as other shifts that have happened in the past that have had a similar effect on society. Neil Postman is an author with a strong, opinionated voice on the subject. Postman also references several other authors who have written about various topics of similar concept to those he discusses. There is a clear relation to many of the points that are discussed in his work, to the changes of technology in my life, as well as the way in which the changes effected me personally, as well as the society around me.

I feel as though the memories that I have before I could read or write are quite limited. I’ve always liked to talk quite a bit, so many of the memories I have from being that young consist of conversations. The major hobby that I would say that I had at that age, were playing with toy cars and watching movies. I wasn’t a child that liked to color or draw very often. In terms of visual art I am not a very creative person, although I do like very much to view the works of others. However, my obsession with technology began at a very young age. Some of the oldest photos that my family have of me are me playing with my elder family member’s electronic devices, as well as fiddling with toy renditions of common household electronics. Previous to my introduction to electronics, and eventually video games by extension, playing with the toy cars is the only thing I can remember doing. As my life progressed I became completely infatuated with technology, which I feel is what propelled me to being active orally. I loved to talk on the phone, with anyone, about anything. As a small child I would often pick up the phone and simply hit the redial number and just talk to whomever the last person that my mother had called, and just talk to them. Outside of day to day conversations with family, this was how I interacted with people in an oral sense at a young age.

Being introduced to a game called, “Age of Empires” at the age of about 7, propelled me into the world of literacy. While I enjoyed reading for a few years prior to that, and was considered by my teachers and classmates to be quite a strong reader for a person of that age, playing this game was what drove me to start reading for pleasure. The game is based off of history and your interaction with different types of people throughout history as well as the advancement of technology and the way in which it affects the society that you have created. This led me to read, and take in a massive amount of information about various elements of historical relevance to the game. As well as information about the game itself and how to get better at the game. My passion for that game led me into developing interest into several other video games. Something that led me into reading and writing more at a fairly young age was the card game “Yu-Gi-Oh!”. The game is fairly complex, and requires you to be aware of a plethora of rules, as well as the special effects that many of the cards have. The drive and motivation to simply improve at the game led me to sink countless hours into reading the effects of cards, official and unofficial rules of the game, and various people’s thoughts on new strategies on the internet. My parents have also played a major role in my development as a literate person. For a great deal of my childhood, even though we had a computer with a connection to the internet, when I had a question that they could not answer, they always prompted me to turn to texts that we had access to in our house. Whether it be their vast collection of encyclopedia, or one of the many dictionaries or thesaurus that have always been present in my home. As a highly educated man, my father took it as a personal failure when he realized that me or any of my siblings had a lack of knowledge in a particular area of study. He would utilize some combination or oral and written knowledge to then educate us on the topic to the best of his ability. This was a major way in which my family played a role in both my development in an oral scene as well as in personal literacy.

I think is relatively apparent that, having grown up with technology being such an integral part of my life, the interaction with literacy and orality have been greatly affected by technology. I feel that this point can relate very directly to a point that Neil Postman made when he spoke about how the United States has become a “Technopoly”. Technology has a foothold in every aspect of our lives. There is almost nothing in life that has gone untouched by the introduction of new technology, especially for my generation, and even more so for the generation of people that are younger than me. Postman states, “human life must find its meaning in machinery and technique.” (Postman, 52). It seems very much so, that the “American Technopoly” Postman discusses, has had a great affect on my life, and the way in which I have developed. Being tech enthusiast, changes in the technology world tend to have a tremendous effect on my life. The most significant of which would be the change from using the computer locally, as opposed to in a networked way, or in other words, the development and refinement of the internet. The most obvious effect of the advent of the internet in my life would be that it became the primary way that I would interact with my friends. Other than when we were playing games, my friends and I played games with one another. Before the internet became such a major part of our lives, we did the same things, except in the same room as one another. there were both positive and negative aspects to us being introduced and utilizing this technology. The obvious benefit was that we were able to spend more time together, talking and for the most part just having a good time. However, something is lost in this scenario. The major drawback to talking to friends in a virtual world as opposed to in reality, is the loss of the human element. It’s not something that can be easily put into words, but there is a big difference between playing a game next to 4 of your close friends, and being alone in a room, with just their voices in your ears. This concept can be related back to a concept that Postman poses when he speaks about Plato’s work called “Phaedrus”. Postman speaks about a story about Plato telling a story of a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus, in which Socrates tells a story about a conversation between and ancient Egyptian King named Thamus and Theuth. Theuth proposes the advent of writing to which Thamus decides against introducing to the world in fear of the negative effects that it could have on society. While the negative effects on society weren’t fully obvious, they were present, and even though Thamus decided against releasing the technology to the world, it still took the world by storm. The situation is the same with my experience with the introduction to the internet, the negative effects weren’t clear, and the technology spread wildly anyway.

A tech enthusiasts interaction with orality and literacy, seems to be more of the way in which a tech enthusiast of the modern era utilized technology in order to have a sense of orality and literacy. Technology is such an overwhelming factor in my life that it is hard for me to find examples in my life for just about anything that aren’t in some way connected to technology. Whether or not this is negative It’s not clear. While I do love technology is it something that I don’t feel I’m tied down too. I have interests that lie outside the realm of technology in the modern sense. So I only feel that technology has helped me to become a more literate, and orally adept person on a general level.