An End to Tedious Conversations

Have you ever worried that your conversations might be boring? Well, help could be at hand from a watch that gives a warning buzz if you have been talking too much and in a monotonous manner. Scientists from Massachusetts have created a device worn on the wrist that uses artificial intelligence to read the tone of conversations. The watch is loaded with sensors that capture physiological data such as heart rate, blood pressure, temperature and movement. That information is then combined with audio recordings to analyse a conversation’s energy levels and vocabulary. Using a complicated algorithm, the device assesses the tone with an 83% accuracy level. It understands happy, sad or neutral tones and some versions could tell you if you are boring others by collecting negative signs such as pauses, moving about restlessly or putting a hand to your face. The device could be linked to smartphones that would then warn you if a conversation was going downhill. The prototype focuses on the wearer, but later versions could also analyse audio from all sides of a conversation, telling us whether the listener is still interested in what we are saying. Experts believe that in the future people could have an “intelligent social coach right in their pocket”. It could help you succeed in important social situations, such as job interviews. It could also help people who suffer from conditions such as autism and Asperger’s syndrome, since they struggle to read emotional cues. This device could help them avoid a variety of negative consequences, from social isolation to depression.

QUESTIONS

1.- Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy the evidence from the text. No marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE.

a) Scientists have invented a device that alerts you with a visual signal when you are having a tedious conversation. FALSE “Well, help could be at hand from a watch that gives a warning buzz if you have been talking too much and in a monotonous manner”

b) The new watch, as it is now, collects information from both parties involved in the conversation. FALSE “The prototype focuses on the wearer, but later versions could also analyse audio from all sides of a conversation, telling us whether the listener is still interested in what we are saying.”

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

2.- In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions. Do not copy from the text.

a) What kind of information does the new watch need to analyse conversations? IT LISTENS THE VOICE RHYTHM, THE WORDS YOU SAY, YOUR ATTITUDE AND IT TAKES YOUR VITAL SIGNS IN ORDER TO ANALYSE THE CHAT

b) In what ways might this new invention be useful in the coming years? IT WILL REGISTER BOTH PARTS OF THE CONVERSATION, THAT WAY WE WILL BE ABLE TO KNOW IF THE PERSON WHO IS SPEAKING TO US IS INTERESTED IN THE THINGS WE SAY.
3.- Find the words in the text that mean:

a) way (paragraph 1) -MANNER

b) gadget (paragraph 1) -DEVICE

c) trainer (paragraph 3) -COACH

d) achieve good results (paragraph 3) -SUCCEED

4.- Complete the following sentences. Use the appropriate form of the word in brackets when given.

a) ____ALTHOUGH____ many new devices have started to conquer the market, smartphones are still the ____MOST____ popular gadget among young people.

b) If you ____WERE____ (be) a boring salesman, ____WHAT____ would you do? Would you wear one of those new watches?

c) This is the first device that ____MATCHES____ (match) different types of data to read the tone of conversations. Every detail ____IS PUT____ (put) together with the greatest precision.

d) Complete the following sentence to report what was said. “What else did you buy?” I asked the girl ____WHAT ELSE SHE HAD BOUGHT____

5.- Write about 100 to 150 words on the following topic. Are you a fan of the new technologies? Justify your answer. (Puntuación máxima: 3 puntos)

I am a huge fan of new technologies, in fact I have to admit that I can’t live without it.

First of all, I am always using my mobile phone, I know that it is an annoying habit and although I am concerned about my problem, I can’t help using it all the time. Even if I am with friends or on a date night, knowing that it isn’t polite I keep on using it. It is really useful, if you need to phone or you are in an emergency, to whatsapp your friends or to google anything you want to know, smartphones are just perfect.

Secondly all new technologies can be also used at home, with new households and devices, that can be controlled with your phone or with a remote, all of them make our lives easier and they are simply great.

In spite of having a lot of advantages new technologies have taken us to an isolation situation with the people who is around us, it is not difficult to see a couple having dinner in a restaurant and looking their phones instead of talking one another.

To sum up, new technologies must be used carefully and trying to respect the others.
Tragedy Can Be Good for Your Health

“Why do we waste so much of our time and money going back to novels and films that make us cry?” asked a research team at the beginning of a new study. In their previous investigations of group activities like dancing, laughing and singing, they found that feel-good chemicals called endorphins were released in the brain, leading to increased pain tolerance. They also discovered that there were stronger bonds between participants. Watching a tragic film unfold in a cinema might trigger the same system, the researchers hypothesized.

For their study, 169 participants were recruited and split into two groups. The first group was shown the film Stuart: A Life Backwards, the true story of a homeless man with a troubled childhood, while the second group watched a documentary on archaeology. Before and after seeing the films, participants were asked to indicate, through various scales, their mood and their feelings of belonging towards other members of their group. Some participants were also asked to do the wall-sit test to gauge their pain tolerance. This test involves squatting with their back against a wall for as long as possible. The higher the endorphin level, the longer a person should be able to sustain the posture.

The results revealed that those who watched the traumatic film had a much stronger change to their moods and that their pain thresholds were boosted by nearly 18% as compared to the control scenario. They also had increased feelings of group bonding. So, psychologists may have found a reason why such films are so appealing: “perhaps watching tragic films is good for your health!”

1.- Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy the evidence from the text. No marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE.

a) According to the text, dancing and singing produce a stronger resistance to pain. TRUE “In their previous investigations of group activities like dancing, laughing and singing, they found that feel-good chemicals called endorphins were released in the brain, leading to increased pain tolerance”

b) In the investigation described in the text, tragic stories lead to a heightened sense of connection between people. TRUE “They also discovered that there were stronger bonds between participants”

2.- In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions. Do not copy from the text.

a) Describe the pain tolerance test and its purpose. THE AIM OF THE TEST IS DISCOVERING HOW RESISTANCE TO PAIN CAN BE INCREASED BY WATCHING SAD FILMS, SO 2 GROUPS OF PEOPLE SEE DIFFERENT FILMS AND COMPLETE A DIARY WITH THEIR FEELINGS.
b) Give two reasons why the researchers consider that watching dramatic films may be good for you. FIRST OF ALL YOU BECOME STRONGER AND YOU CAN TOLERATE PAIN BETTER AND LONGER, AND SECONDLY YOU FEEL LINKED WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

3.- Find the words in the text that mean:

a) set off (paragraph 1) BEGINNING
b) problematic (paragraph 2) TROUBLED
c) measure (paragraph 2) GAUGE
d) attractive (paragraph 3) APPEALING

(Puntuación máxima: 1 punto)

4.- Complete the following sentences. Use the appropriate form of the word in brackets when given.

a) Romantic films, __WHICH___ are sometimes very silly, are often more entertaining _ THAN _____ westerns.

b) I felt like the __LUCKIEST___ (lucky) person in the world after I _WON_____ (win) two tickets to attend a play in New York.

c) I really don’t feel like ___GOING__ (go) out to the cinema tonight. I’d rather _STAY_____ (stay) home and watch TV.

d) Complete the following sentence to report what was said. “Can you meet me at the cinema, Doug?” Mary wanted to know ___IF DOUG COULD MEET HER AT THE CINEMA _________.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

5.- Write about 100 to 150 words on the following topic.

What are your favourite types of films? Name one film and explain why you enjoy it.

(Puntuación máxima: 3 puntos)

I really like watching films, specially science fiction films. In my opinión they are far more interesting than any other.

Firstly, since I am a very sentive person I don’t like dramas or sad films, because they often make me cry. In spite of this fact, my favourite film is science fiction mixed with drama but it also has some morals and for this reason I think that watching this film worths it.

Harry Potter is an orphan who lives with his aunt, uncle and his cousin in a terribel way, they consider him a servant and he doesn’t have anything, one day he discovers that he is a wizard and then all his life changes, he starts studying in a magic school, he makes friends and enemies,
and until the very end he fights against the evil one and also his own ghosts of the past. There are 7 books and 8 films, all of them teach us about the power of love and friendship, and moreover they make us believe in ourselves and in our possibilities and at the same time they show that life is not always what we expect and we can’t avoid living very difficult situations.