

Tech In The News

Assignment: Hello Barbie

Headphones Needed: **YES** **NO**

Step One:

[Click into this Website](#) and watch the Video

Step Two:

Read the Articles (2) at the bottom of this document

Step Three:

With your partner, create a Word document, and write the 5Ws:
Who, What, Where, When, Why of this story.
Discuss with your partner of this is a wonderful toy—Why or why not?

Step Four:

[Click to this Website](#), and learn about other interactive toys. Add the information to your Word document.

Step Five:

Then create a list of some other toys you and/or your partner played with as kids, at least five (5), and discuss if they would be way more cool if they had AI built-in. Write that information in your document. Then discuss/write exactly how creepy AI toys are.

Submit Your
Assignment :

As CreepyBarbie_your lastNames

To Mr. Amerikaner
Using:

Gdrive.

Technology

Artificial intelligence takes over Barbie's brain

By Anthony Cuthbertson

September 17, 2015 17:47 BST

A prototype for Mattel's ubiquitous Barbie doll has been developed that incorporates advanced artificial intelligence (AI) to allow it to process human speech, and even answer profound questions like: "Do you believe in God?" The new Hello Barbie, unveiled to The New York Times ahead of its November launch, will combine AI software with a microphone, WiFi and speech-recognition capabilities in order to communicate through more than 8,000 lines of pre-recorded dialogue.

Through the speech-recognition software, key words are used to trigger certain responses from the Hello Barbie. For example, "good", and "fantastic" would cue the doll to say phrases like: "Great, me too!" The toy is also able to remember answers – such as being told a relative has died – in order to draw upon them for future interactions or avoid such topics altogether.

At its current level, the Hello Barbie is reportedly not sophisticated enough to pass the Turing Test – the threshold that machine intelligence can pass itself off as human intelligence. However, that's not to say it couldn't fool a six-year-old child.

"It is very hard for [young children] to distinguish what is real from what is not real," said Doris Bergen, professor of educational psychology at Miami University in Ohio.

One conversation described by The Times shows the doll's ability to speak about complex concepts, like relationships. It also infers, to the child at least, that the Barbie is capable of real emotions and feelings.

"I was wondering if I could get your advice on something," Barbie asked, before explaining that she and her friend were not speaking with each other following an argument. "I really miss her, but I don't know what to say to her now," Barbie said. "What should I do?"

The girl playing with the doll responded: "Say 'I'm sorry'."

"You're right," Barbie said. "I should apologise. I'm not mad anymore. I just want to be friends again."

(In answer to the God question, Barbie replied: "I think a person's beliefs are very personal to them.")

Privacy issues

Mattel came under fire earlier this year after privacy advocates raised concerns about Hello Barbies recording conversations between the doll and its user and transmitting them to a ToyTalk server. The doll – dubbed Eavesdropping Barbie – sparked an online petition to withdraw the doll, garnering over 4,000 signatures.

"If I had a young child, I would be very concerned that my child's intimate conversations with her doll were being recorded and analysed," Angela Campbell, from Georgetown University's Center on Privacy and Technology, said at the time.

"In Mattel's demo, Barbie asks many questions that would elicit a great deal of information about a child, her interests and her family. This information could be of great value to advertisers and be used to market unfairly to children."

In response, Mattel released a statement that stated: "The No. 1 request we receive from girls

Examples of Hello Barbie's dialogue

- "You're right. I should apologise. I'm not mad anymore."
- "Fantastic. I just know we're going to be great friends."
- "I think a person's beliefs are very personal to them."
- "That sounds like something you should talk to a grown-up about."
- "Just remember this: You made friends with me right away."
- "Have you ever felt jealous about something?"

globally is to have a conversation with Barbie, and with Hello Barbie we are making that request a reality."

The rise of AI toys

Hello Barbie is arguably the most advanced iteration of artificial intelligence to be found in a children's toy, but Mattel is not the only manufacturer to be working on integrating the technology into its toys. In 2013, UK-based Supertoy Robotics developed a cuddly toy that can listen, learn and interact with its surroundings, while evolving its capabilities through an app described as "Siri on steroids".

More recently, the MiPosaur robotic dinosaur has been on show at toy fairs demonstrating its AI capabilities that allow it to enhance playtime by bringing the computer game experience to the real world. The multi-talented MiPosaur, developed by hi-tech toy firm WowWee, has been described by its creators as "like interacting with a pet" and is capable of altering its mood depending on the interaction.

"Connected toys, robotics and AI is really where the industry is heading I feel," Michael Yanofsky, from WowWee, told **IBTimes UK** at the annual London Toy Fair earlier this year. "A lot of retailers are actually expanding those categories. For us the AI can enable us to do so many things."

TECHNOLOGY

The Bright-Eyed Talking Doll That Just Might Be a Spy

By KIMIKO de FREYTAS-TAMURA FEB. 17, 2017

Cayla is a blond, bright-eyed doll that chatters about horses and hobbies. She plays games and accurately answers questions about the world at large. She could also be eavesdropping on your child.

That's the stark warning parents in Germany received on Friday from the country's telecoms watchdog, the Federal Network Agency, which said hackers could use the doll to steal personal data by recording private conversations over an insecure Bluetooth connection.

The watchdog said it was pulling the doll off store shelves and banning them in Germany.

"Objects that have concealed cameras or microphones that can send information endanger the private sphere," said Jochen Homann, the agency's president. "The Cayla doll is forbidden in Germany," he added, citing a German telecommunications law.

Mr. Homann encouraged parents to deactivate the doll, which is manufactured by United States-based Genesis Toys and distributed by the Vivid Toy group. "This is also about protecting the rights of the weakest in society," he said.

The announcement reflects the growing concerns over “smart” products in the home that can get, well, too smart. A string of reports in recent years about hackers targeting and remotely controlling items like baby monitors have sounded the alarm.

Meanwhile, numerous experiments by researchers have shown how easy it is to hack into cars, medical devices and even dolls.

Germans are particularly sensitive to questions of privacy and data collection because of their experiences under the Nazi and Communist regimes, when releasing personal details could be a matter of life and death. The nation has some of the strongest data-protection laws in the world, and it considers an individual’s right to privacy to be far more important than any perceived public right to know.

“It doesn’t matter what kind of object it is,” a spokeswoman for the network agency told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. “It could also be an ashtray or a fire detector.”

The restrictions run the gamut in Germany. For example, “Hello Barbie,” an interactive doll, is sold in the United States but not in Germany, where the news media has dubbed it the “Stasi-Barbie,” a reference to the widely hated East German secret police that infiltrated the everyday lives of Germans to such an extent that even relatives were distrustful of one another.

Cayla is already under scrutiny in the United States. In December, advocacy groups filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission alleging that Genesis Toys had violated the rules on children’s privacy because the Cayla doll records and transmits the voice prints of children to Nuance Communications, a computer-software company.

Cayla and a similar toy, i-Que, made by the same company are Internet-connected and talk and interact with children by recording their conversations.

“These voice recordings are stored and used for a variety of purposes beyond providing for the toys’ functionality,” the complaint said.

Last year, Norway also found the products potentially in breach of its advertising regulations.

“It’s quite disturbing because the company reserves the right to direct marketing towards kids,” Finn Myrstad, technical director of digital services at the Norwegian Consumer Council, told the BBC at the time.

Genesis Toys has not yet released a statement on the German ban. Attempts to reach the company on Friday were unsuccessful.

Christopher Shea contributed reporting.

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