



# A2

## SEMINAR 10 Futurism

### Quotes About the Future

- 1) The best way to predict the future is to invent it. ~ *Alan Kay (1940 - ), American computer scientist*
- 2) I never think of the future – it comes soon enough. ~ *Albert Einstein (1879-1955), German-Swiss physicist*
- 3) The empires of the future are the empires of the mind. ~ *Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), British statesman*
- 4) The future is here. It's just not widely distributed yet. ~ *William Gibson (1948- ) American/Canadian cyber-punk science-fiction writer*
- 5) We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there. ~ *Charles F. Kettering (1876 -1958) American inventor*

Taken from <http://www.quotationspage.com/subjects/the+future/> on 9.8.2010.

### Discussion Questions

- 1 What are some of your hopes and/or worries about the future?
- 2 Do you enjoy science-fiction or futurism in literature and/or film?
- 3 What technological means could be useful for language learning?
- 4 What technology or invention do you predict could affect your life?

### Making Predictions

**Task 1** – Discuss and take notes on some of the following questions.

- 1) WILL WE EVER LOG OFF?
- 2) WILL WOMEN STILL NEED MEN?
- 3) WILL POLITICIANS MATTER?
- 4) WHO WILL BE THE NEXT ELITE?
- 5) WILL TEENAGERS DISAPPEAR?
- 6) WILL WE HAVE ANY PRIVACY LEFT?
- 7) WILL WE PLUG CHIPS INTO OUR BRAINS?
- 8) WHAT WILL OUR HOUSES LOOK LIKE?

Taken from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,996164,00.html> on 9.8.2010.



## Reading – Visions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Task 2** – Compare your predictions to the following extracts.

**1) Will we ever log off?**

Probably not. By now, almost everyone has heard about the refrigerator that will monitor your milk and orange juice supplies. That's just the start — get ready for a life led completely through the computer. You'll be able to "do" lunch with someone on the other side of the world. There will be a variety of virtual adventures — cyber vacations, but without real sand, real salt water or real sunburn.

**2) Will women still need men?**

As long as men are taller than most women, we will probably keep them around for getting those hard-to-reach items, but in terms of reproduction, the answer is probably no. With the advent of extensive reproductive technology, there will be an ever-diminishing practical need for male-female sexual intercourse. Regarding relationships, instead of investing in traditional, high-risk marriages, people will contract with partners on a short-term, no-hard-feelings basis.

**3) Will politicians matter?**

No. At least not as much as they have in 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. governance. The signs are everywhere: voter apathy, shrinking government — even political insiders now commonly talk about all the things government can't do. Meanwhile, volunteerism and church attendance are on the rise.

**4) Who will be the next elite?**

You're looking at them every time you see a business magazine, or see those hopeful e-Trade commercials. Unlike the WASP<sup>1</sup> elites who ruled the first half of the century by virtue of their birth, or the whiz-kid SAT meritocracy<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup> that replaced them, membership in this new elite will be measured by just one thing: a successful business and a mountain of money.

**5) Will there be any teenagers?**

Probably not, at least not in the form we're used to. The 20<sup>th</sup> century teenager is a historical anomaly,<sup>4</sup> born of the union of child labor laws and the rise of marketing to teens. That's all about to change — within a generation, as children are growing up faster than ever before, and adults are growing up more slowly.

**6) Will we still have privacy?**

Despite the best electronic security, an unprecedented<sup>5</sup> extent of your life will be an open book to anybody who really wants to look. How to stop this? The same method that works today, the one that keeps most people from going through your garbage or raiding your mailbox: common decency<sup>6</sup>. The fact that most of us consider invasions of privacy morally wrong is the best defense today — and will be in the future.

**7) Will we plug chips<sup>7</sup> into our brains?**

Although science fiction writers and film producers would like to think so, about the only purpose of such a thing would be for either medicine or military uses, says futurist William Gibson. Why bother interfering with the brain, says Gibson, when there will be plenty of super-smart machines around to do the work for you?

**8) What will our houses look like?**

Come 2025, people will still live in houses within close distance of their neighbors, but the cyber revolution and the environmental movement promise to alter<sup>8</sup> the landscape.



## Reading for Main Ideas

**Task 3** – Skim the text and underline the main ideas.

### What Will Our Houses Look Like?

By Wes Jones – Head of Jones, Partners: Architecture, a technology-oriented design firm in Los Angeles

For better or worse,<sup>9</sup> the suburbs are what America came up with when presented with the chance to manufacture its ideal geography. Come 2025, people will still live in houses within close distance of their neighbors, but the cyber revolution and the environmental movement promise to alter the landscape. While computers promote a dramatic trend toward decentralization, allowing people to spread out and live or work anywhere, the green consciousness will urge a contrasting densification,<sup>10</sup> to conserve open space. The reconciliation of these opposing trends will define the suburb of the future. As the vastness<sup>11</sup> of cyberspace increasingly satisfies the desire for more space, the house and yard will shrink to a more supportable size. Cyberspace will, at the same time, become the arena for conspicuous consumption<sup>12</sup> relieving the home and front lawn of that responsibility. Meanwhile, the physical neighborhood will be freed for parks and other community activities.

The cyber revolution will have an effect inside the home as well. It will challenge the cohesiveness<sup>13</sup> of the family as children become self-sufficient citizens of the virtual world. The home will continuously readjust itself to the family's needs. As cyberspace becomes the kind of space that matters, the primitive territorial need for fixed rooms will fade,<sup>14</sup> and the house will be divided among specific activities rather than simply among family members.

### THE EXTERIOR

1. Powering Up – Homes will obtain energy from efficient neighborhood generators, thermal-mass cooling ponds and solar collectors built into the streets.
2. Energy Sources – Machinery that runs the house will be powered in part by the homeowner's manual exercise. Pedal away, and watch the dishwasher and lawn mower go!
3. Safety Features – Wheelchairs of the future will be able to climb stairs, and guard rails<sup>15</sup> will be replaced with airbags to prevent falls.
4. Rooms with a View – While houses will have simplicity, their windows will become display surfaces, able to show views of deserts, jungles or urban skylines.

### THE INTERIOR

1. **Multipurpose Space** – Instead of individual rooms dedicated to specific activities such as dining or recreation, one large room will be converted as needed, with the help of movable activity units.
2. **The Family Room** – As a counterpoint<sup>16</sup> to the individual appliance<sup>17</sup> zones, the open family room will be a non-virtual space for those who wish to have an old-fashioned encounter with a relative.



3. **Work, Work, Work** - Most of our work will be done not in the office but in virtual workstations at home. With a computer screen and interface goggles,<sup>18</sup> you'll be able to work anywhere in the house.

4. **Burgers to Go** – Few people will cook. Instead their food will be delivered by the home-meal industry. The small kitchen will mainly be where food is opened, micro-waved and readied for the table.

5. **Waste Disposal** – Household refuse<sup>19</sup> will be sorted, processed and ready for recycling by a fully enclosed waste-management system, with organic bits composted and spread on the lawn during mowing.

6. **Bedrooms** – Bedrooms will be smaller, with a space-saving, foldout bed. Since cyberspace will be the arena for personal display, we will have fewer personal objects to store in closets and cabinets.

7. **Activities and Computer Games** – Instead of a garage crammed with speedboats, surfboards and assorted play gear, the home will have various fold-out recreational simulators and gaming units.

8. **Look up!** – Ceilings will be filled with video-conferencing devices; medical and security scanners; heating, ventilation and air-conditioning sensors; and environmental regulators.

9. **The Family Car** – The ELOV (Electric Low-Occupancy Vehicle<sup>20</sup>) will be the pollution-free mode of transportation. Its size will allow more cars on the highway, and its light weight will reduce accidents, since cars will simply bounce off one another. When extra passenger space is needed, another ELOV unit can be attached to its side.

Although technology is sure to change a great deal and influence our way of living, the most interesting thing will be to see how we harness<sup>21</sup> technology to satisfy our everyday needs and highest aspirations.

Adapted from [http://www.time.com/time/reports/v21/live/houses\\_mag.html](http://www.time.com/time/reports/v21/live/houses_mag.html) on 12.8.2010.

### Listening – Interview (6:42) with American inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil

at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmW9a37WHOK>.

**Task 4** - Take notes on the following topics that are mentioned in the video.

- 1) Linear growth vs. exponential growth –
- 2) Trends in technology –
- 3) Longevity<sup>22</sup> and overcoming death –
- 4) Robotic red blood cells –
- 5) Energy supplies and needs –



- 6) Nanotechnology –
- 7) Major challenges of humanity –
- 8) “Backing up” your brain –
- 9) Ethical opposition –
- 10) Evolution as a spiritual process –

Viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmW9a37WHOk> on 15.8.2010.

### **Task 5 – Grammar – Future tenses – future simple / future perfect / future continuous**

What is the difference in meaning in the following sentences?

- A) *In two years' time I will write my novel.*
- B) *In three years' time I will be writing my novel.*
- C) *In four years' time I will have written my novel.*

#### **1 Future simple**

Use the future simple to say that something **will happen** in the future. This tense is frequently used to make a general prediction about the future. *Every product the company makes **will contain** enough intelligence to communicate with other products.*

#### **2 Future perfect (will have + past participle)**

Use the future perfect to say that something **will be finished or achieved by** a certain point in the future. This tense is frequently used with the time expressions *in (three weeks') time* and *by (Saturday / next year)*.

**Note:** *by + a time expression = at the latest.*

*By next month I will have done all the work.*

(= The work will be finished next month at the latest.)

#### **3 Future continuous (will be + verb + -ing)**

Use the future continuous to say that an action **will be in progress** at a certain time in the future.

*This time next month I will be lying on the beach in the sun.*

*Don't phone me between 7:00 and 8:00, as we will be having dinner then.*

**Task 6 – Put the verbs in italics into an appropriate future form.**

- 1) By next year my parents \_\_\_\_\_ (*live*) in the same house for thirty years.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ you (*call*) us when you know what your plans are?



- 3) If things go as planned, this time next year I \_\_\_\_\_ (*run*) my own business.
- 4) Will they \_\_\_\_\_ (*finish*) by the time he gets back?
- 5) Call me on Saturday – I \_\_\_\_\_ (*work*) at home all weekend.
- 6) Have a great holiday. We \_\_\_\_\_ (*think*) of you there lying in the sun relaxing.

**Task 7** – True or false? Look at these predictions and say what you think.

In twenty years' time...

- 1) scientists will be cloning people.
- 2) people will be marrying less.
- 3) women in their sixties will be having children.
- 4) people will have stopped reading newspapers.
- 5) political parties will have disappeared.
- 6) people will be using more alternative medicine.
- 7) the birth rate in Europe will have gone up.
- 8) people will be using public transport more and driving less.
- 9) children will have stopped learning to write by hand and to spell.
- 10) patients will be treated by virtual doctors.

Adapted from Oxenden, Clive. English File – Upper Intermediate Student's Book: Oxford: 2002: p.30 and Wallwork, Adrian. International Express - Upper Intermediate Student's: Oxford: 2001. p. 101.

## Vocabulary

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. *WASP                          | White Anglo-Saxon Protestant                              |
| 2. SAT (scholastic aptitude test) | akademická zkouška způsobilosti                           |
| 3. whiz-kid SAT meritocracy       | vláda těch studentů, kteří úspěšně absolvovali tento test |
| 4. *anomaly                       | odlišnost, anomálie                                       |
| 5. *unprecedented                 | bezpříkladný, neslýchaný, bezprecedentní                  |
| 6. *common decency                | běžná, obyčejná slušnost                                  |
| 7. to plug a chip into something  | zasunout / vsunout čip do něčeho                          |
| 8. *to alter, change              | změnit  |
| 9. *for better or worse...        | ať už to vedlo ke zlepšení nebo zhoršení...               |
| 10. densification                 | urbanistické zhuštění                                     |
| 11. vastness                      | ohromná velikost  |
| 12. *conspicuous consumption      | okázalá spotřeba  |
| 13. *cohesiveness                 | soudržnost  |
| 14. *fade                         | postupně mizet  |
| 15. guard rails                   | zábradlí  |
| 16. *counterpoint                 | protiklad   |
| 17. *appliance                    | zařízení a spotřebiče pro domácnost                       |
| 18. interface goggles             | brýle, které vás propojí s virtuální realitou             |
| 19. *refuse (noun)                | odpad / odpadky   |
| 20. low-occupancy vehicle         | vůz pro malý počet uživatelů                              |
| 21. *to harness, use              | využít  |
| 22. *longevity                    | dlouhověkost  |