

From “The Jetsons” to Online English Lessons

Gianelli Rodrigues

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Think about the words *optimistic* and *pessimistic* (both adjectives). What do they mean? Try using them in a few sentences. Also try making sentences with the nouns *optimist* and *pessimist*.
2. Have you ever felt positive about something but noticed that it also has a problem related to it? We call that a *drawback*. For example, I love the holidays, but one *drawback* is: they are very expensive.

Imagining Technology

My idea of technology was shaped by what I watched on TV when I was a kid. After school, in a simple house in Rio de Janeiro, I watched shows like “The Jetsons” and “Lost in Space.”

When I thought about technology, I imagined positive things, like robots cleaning the house or preparing meals. Unlike the science fiction writer, Isaac Asimov, I was not *pessimistic* about technology. Isaac Asimov saw a future where



The Jetson family and their robot housekeeper. Photo by scoutingny from [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/scoutingny/) CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



machines would rebel against us and wish to kill us. I was more *optimistic*.

Using Technology

When technology (beyond the TV) arrived in my life, I continued to be *optimistic*. My first encounter with it was through the video games I played with my brother. In these games, we could create characters and scenarios. Best of all, everything moved under our control. That was incredible.

Then came the internet.

Today, I use the internet every day. I use it to find the best route when I drive to a new place. I use it to communicate simultaneously with my family in Brazil and Portugal. I use it to keep up with world news. I use it for shopping. I use it to guide my students in Brazil through their master’s dissertations.

Noticing the Drawbacks

Most importantly, I am using the internet to improve my English. I love having online resources to learn English, but there are problems. For example, when I watch English lessons on

YouTube, I get used to the teacher’s accent. Then, when I talk to someone on the street, they have a different accent, and I do not understand what they say.

I also get lost among the many options on the internet. When you learn English, it’s good to follow a sequence. Each lesson builds on the next. But I find that when I’m clicking on lessons on the internet, I jump around a lot. I lose track of the proper sequence.

Current technology gives us so many possibilities. There are countless sources, and our eyes jump around from one thing to the next. Research has proven that having too many options causes stress.

Here to Stay

My brain is still very accustomed to the old and traditional learning method. To me, nothing replaces being in a physical classroom with a teacher and classmates. But technology is here to stay, so I need to learn how to use this tool properly.

Source: *The Paradox of Choice – Why More Is Less* by Barry Schwartz, published in 2004). Read a shorter article about it here: <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/economics/the-paradox-of-choice>

Gianelli Rodrigues is a student at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, Virginia. She is Luso-Brazilian, and she taught Business Law at two universities in Rio de Janeiro. Passionate about nature and the sea, she is also a certified diving instructor. Today, she lives in Charlottesville, Virginia, and she is married to Victor, and is the mother of Fernando (also known as Link, the knight from *The Legend of Zelda*).



AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, what are some of the *drawbacks* of technology?
2. See the article on p. 34 of Issue 58 of The Change Agent (<https://changeagent.nelrc.org/>), “Technology in My Life” by Svetlana Burenina. She also references the science fiction writer, Isaac Asimov. Learn more about his books and try reading one.



3. Learn a comma rule! When two clauses that could be complete sentences on their own are connected by a conjunction, then you need to put a comma before the conjunction. For example, *I love technology, but it has some drawbacks*. In that sentence, there are two independent clauses. They are connected by the word **but**. In this sentence, **but** is a conjunction. The other conjunctions we use in English are:

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

Notice that if you take the first letter of each conjunction, it spells **FANBOYS**. This is one way you can remember all the conjunctions. Find four conjunctions in this essay that connect two independent clauses.