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Internet helps families stay more in touch

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0810/081021-family.html>

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21st October, 2008

THE ARTICLE

Much has been said about how anti-social the Internet and mobile phones are. The truth is however, according to new research, communication technology is bringing people closer together. A study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found family members were keeping in regular contact today more than ever before. And this is all down to e-mail, chat, our cellphones and SMS messaging. It makes sense. Years ago, it took a long time to write a letter, then find an envelope and go to the post office to buy a stamp and post it. Today we write mails while we wait for our change in the convenience store and they're sent in an instant. Having free Internet telephone calls also helps us to stay in touch more often and for longer. Everyone's at it, from five-year-olds to tech-savvy grandparents.

According to the Pew survey, technology has a very positive effect on communication within families. Researchers asked 2,252 adults whether new technologies had increased the quality of communication with their family. Fifty-three percent said it increased communication with family members they did not live with, two per cent said technology decreased this. Numbers were similar for those living in the same house as their family. The project director Lee Rainey said: "There's a new kind of connectedness being built inside of families with these technologies". Survey co-author Barry Wellman agreed: "It used to be [that] husbands went off to work, wives went off to a different job or else stayed home...and the kids went off to school...and not until 5:30, 6 o'clock did they ever connect," he said.

WARM-UPS

1. FAMILY: Walk around the class and talk to other students about family. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

anti-social / communication technology / keeping in contact / SMS / envelopes / positive effects / family communication / connectedness / wives staying at home

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. CONNECTED?: Are you connected? Are you in regular contact with people? Complete the table below. Share what you wrote with your partner(s).

| Who? | How often? | How? | Why? |
|------------------|------------|------|------|
| Best friend | | | |
| Parents | | | |
| Siblings | | | |
| Partner | | | |
| Teacher | | | |
| Anyone else ____ | | | |

4. TECHNOLOGY: Students A **strongly** believe communication technology will bring peace to the world; Students B **strongly** believe communication technology will make us all strangers and we'll end up fighting. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

5. COULDN'T DO WITHOUT IT: Which of these things are most important to you? Rank them in order. Talk about your rankings with your partner(s).

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ envelopes and stamps | _____ mobile phone |
| _____ fax | _____ e-mail |
| _____ SMS | _____ telephone answering machine |
| _____ chat | _____ web cam |

6. SMS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the abbreviation 'SMS'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Communication technology is reuniting people separated at birth. | T / F |
| b. Family members are in more regular contact today than ever before. | T / F |
| c. You often needed a stamp to keep in contact years ago. | T / F |
| d. Many of our parents' parents now keep up with technology. | T / F |
| e. Technology has had a very negative effect on family communication. | T / F |
| f. 2% of a survey said technology worsened family communication. | T / F |
| g. Families are building network connections inside their homes. | T / F |
| h. A researcher said families only used to communicate in the evenings. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. much | a. quickly |
| 2. according to | b. writer |
| 3. down to | c. inside |
| 4. in an instant | d. almost identical |
| 5. savvy | e. as stated by |
| 6. within | f. linking |
| 7. decreased | g. a lot |
| 8. similar | h. know-how |
| 9. connectedness | i. lowered |
| 10. author | j. because of |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. technology is bringing people | a. sense |
| 2. keeping in | b. being built |
| 3. It makes | c. instant |
| 4. sent in an | d. the Pew survey |
| 5. Everyone's at | e. families |
| 6. According to | f. closer together |
| 7. communication within | g. they ever connect |
| 8. family members they | h. it |
| 9. There's a new kind of connectedness | i. regular contact |
| 10. not until 5:30, 6 o'clock did | j. did not live with |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Much has been _____ about how anti-social the Internet and mobile phones are. The truth is however, according to new research, communication technology is bringing people _____ together. A study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found family members were keeping in _____ contact today more than ever before. And this is all _____ to e-mail, chat, our cellphones and SMS messaging. It makes _____. Years ago, it took a long time to write a letter, then find an envelope and go to the post office to buy a stamp and post it. Today we write mails while we wait for our _____ in the convenience store and they're sent in an instant. Having free Internet telephone calls also _____ us to stay in touch more often and for longer. Everyone's _____ it, from five-year-olds to tech-savvy grandparents.

change
regular
at
down
said
helps
sense
closer

According to the Pew survey, technology has a very positive _____ on communication within families. Researchers asked 2,252 adults whether new technologies had increased the _____ of communication with their family. Fifty-three _____ said it increased communication with family members they did not live with, two per cent said technology _____ this. Numbers were _____ for those living in the same house as their family. The project director Lee Rainey said: "There's a new _____ of connectedness being built inside of families with these technologies". Survey co-author Barry Wellman agreed: "It used to be [that] husbands went _____ to work, wives went off to a different job or else stayed home...and the kids went off to school...and not until 5:30, 6 o'clock did they ever _____," he said.

decreased
connect
quality
kind
similar
effect
off
percent

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

Much _____ how anti-social the Internet and mobile phones are. The truth is however, according to new research, communication technology _____ closer together. A study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found family members were keeping in regular _____ than ever before. And this _____ e-mail, chat, our cellphones and SMS messaging. It makes sense. Years ago, it took a long time to write a letter, then find an envelope and go to the post office to buy a stamp and post it. Today we write mails _____ our change in the convenience store and they're sent in an instant. Having free Internet telephone calls also _____ in touch more often and for longer. _____, from five-year-olds to tech-savvy grandparents.

According to the Pew survey, technology _____ effect on communication within families. Researchers asked 2,252 adults whether new technologies had _____ of communication with their family. Fifty-three percent said it increased communication with family members _____, two per cent said technology decreased this. Numbers were similar _____ the same house as their family. The project director Lee Rainey said: "There's a new kind of connectedness _____ of families with these technologies". Survey co-author Barry Wellman agreed: "It used to be [that] husbands went off to work, wives went off to a different job or else stayed home...and the kids went off to school...and not until 5:30, 6 o'clock _____ connect," he said.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'anti' and 'social'.

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| anti | social |
|-------------|---------------|

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• truth• closer• regular• stamp• change• savvy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• positive• increased• 2%• similar• built• kids |
|---|--|

STUDENT FAMILY SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about family in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

| | STUDENT 1 _____ | STUDENT 2 _____ | STUDENT 3 _____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. | | | |
| Q.2. | | | |
| Q.3. | | | |
| Q.4. | | | |
| Q.5. | | | |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'technology'?
- c) Do you think communication technology is making us more anti-social?
- d) How does the Internet bring you closer to people?
- e) How would your life change without the Internet and mobile phones?
- f) Do you like the idea of writing letters with a pen and then mailing them?
- g) How many mails or SMS messages do you write a day?
- h) The article says "Everyone's at it". Do you know anyone who doesn't use the latest technology to communicate?
- i) Are your grandparents tech-savvy?
- j) Are you good at keeping in touch?

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DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Who is the biggest user of technology in your family?
- c) Do you think technology has increased the quality of communication in your family?
- d) How might technology decrease the quality of communication?
- e) How could families become even more connected?
- f) Do you sometimes wish you weren't so connected?
- g) What will be the next big thing that will connect us all?
- h) Would you like a permanent, open connection to anyone you choose?
- i) Is your family good at staying in touch?
- j) What questions would you like to ask project director Lee Rainey?

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LANGUAGE

(1) _____ has been said about how anti-social the Internet and mobile phones are. The (2) _____ is however, according to new research, communication technology is bringing people closer together. A study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found family members were keeping in (3) _____ contact today more than ever before. And this is all down to e-mail, chat, our cellphones and SMS messaging. It makes (4) _____. Years ago, it took a long time to write a letter, then find an envelope and go to the post office to buy a stamp and post it. Today we write mails while we wait for our (5) _____ in the convenience store and they're sent in an instant. Having free Internet telephone calls also helps us to stay in touch more often and for longer. Everyone's at (6) _____, from five-year-olds to tech-savvy grandparents.

According to the Pew survey, technology has a very positive (7) _____ on communication within families. Researchers asked 2,252 adults whether new technologies had (8) _____ the quality of communication with their family. Fifty-three percent said it increased communication with family members they did not live with, two per cent said technology decreased this. Numbers were similar for (9) _____ living in the same house as their family. The project director Lee Rainey said: "There's a new kind of connectedness being (10) _____ inside of families with these technologies". Survey co-author Barry Wellman agreed: "It used to (11) _____ [that] husbands went off to work, wives went off to a different job or else stayed home...and the kids went off to school...and not (12) _____ 5:30, 6 o'clock did they ever connect," he said.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | (a) Most | (b) Many | (c) Lot | (d) Much |
| 2. | (a) true | (b) truth | (c) truly | (d) truthful |
| 3. | (a) regular | (b) regularly | (c) regulation | (d) regulations |
| 4. | (a) sensation | (b) senses | (c) sense | (d) senseless |
| 5. | (a) changed | (b) changing | (c) change | (d) changes |
| 6. | (a) them | (b) it | (c) that | (d) these |
| 7. | (a) effect | (b) affect | (c) affection | (d) ill effect |
| 8. | (a) increases | (b) increasing | (c) increase | (d) increased |
| 9. | (a) them | (b) those | (c) ones | (d) these |
| 10. | (a) building | (b) builder | (c) build | (d) built |
| 11. | (a) been | (b) being | (c) be | (d) was |
| 12. | (a) until | (b) yet | (c) since | (d) as |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about the Pew report in this article. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. TECHNOLOGY: Make a poster about the types of communication technologies you use. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. CONNECTED: Write a magazine article about how connected people are nowadays. Include imaginary interviews with an ordinary person and the boss of a communication technology company.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. DIARY / JOURNAL: Write about the different times you communicate using technology in one day in your life. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

6. LETTER: Write a letter to Lee Rainey. Ask him three questions about his research. Give him three suggestions on what aspects of society he should study next. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. much | a. a lot |
| 2. according to | b. as stated by |
| 3. down to | c. because of |
| 4. in an instant | d. quickly |
| 5. savvy | e. know-how |
| 6. within | f. inside |
| 7. decreased | g. lowered |
| 8. similar | h. almost identical |
| 9. connectedness | i. linking |
| 10. author | j. writer |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. technology is bringing people | a. closer together |
| 2. keeping in | b. regular contact |
| 3. It makes | c. sense |
| 4. sent in an | d. instant |
| 5. Everyone's at | e. it |
| 6. According to | f. the Pew survey |
| 7. communication within | g. families |
| 8. family members they | h. did not live with |
| 9. There's a new kind of connectedness | i. being built |
| 10. not until 5:30, 6 o'clock did | j. they ever connect |

GAP FILL:

Internet helps families stay more in touch

Much has been **said** about how anti-social the Internet and mobile phones are. The truth is however, according to new research, communication technology is bringing people **closer** together. A study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found family members were keeping in **regular** contact today more than ever before. And this is all **down** to e-mail, chat, our cellphones and SMS messaging. It makes **sense**. Years ago, it took a long time to write a letter, then find an envelope and go to the post office to buy a stamp and post it. Today we write mails while we wait for our **change** in the convenience store and they're sent in an instant. Having free Internet telephone calls also **helps** us to stay in touch more often and for longer. Everyone's **at** it, from five-year-olds to tech-savvy grandparents.

According to the Pew survey, technology has a very positive **effect** on communication within families. Researchers asked 2,252 adults whether new technologies had increased the **quality** of communication with their family. Fifty-three **percent** said it increased communication with family members they did not live with, two per cent said technology **decreased** this. Numbers were **similar** for those living in the same house as their family. The project director Lee Rainey said: "There's a new **kind** of connectedness being built inside of families with these technologies". Survey co-author Barry Wellman agreed: "It used to be [that] husbands went **off** to work, wives went off to a different job or else stayed home...and the kids went off to school...and not until 5:30, 6 o'clock did they ever **connect**," he said.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - b 3 - a 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a 8 - d 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a