The Guardian

one stop english

Will AI free us from drudgery – or leave us jobless and hungry?

Level 3: Advanced – Teacher's notes

Article summary: The article discusses AI's pros and cons in replacing human workers.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Expressions

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

a. This activity aims to get students to think about what jobs they think humans and AI/computers are good at and whether there is any overlap. Have students fill in the Venn diagram in pairs or small groups.

b. Encourage students to share their ideas and suggestions. Remind students to support their opinions with reasons.

2. Key words

a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups. You may wish to mention that *pessimist* is the opposite of *optimist*. Students may be familiar with the word *harness* as a noun to mean 'a restraint with straps'.

Key:
1. chatbot
2. unionise
3. bust
4. hype
5. trough
6. experimentation
7. morale
8. algorithm
9. automate
10. sticking point
11. negotiation
12. optimists
13. reassure
14. scam
15. harness

b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in context.

Key:
1. reassured
2. morale
3. optimist
4. chatbots
5. scam
6. hype
7. troughs
8. algorithm
9. busted
10. negotiations

3. Comprehension check

a. Students first read the statements and decide whether they are accurate according to the article. Students correct the false sentences to make them accurate. They may do this in different ways, e.g., in item 1, they may say, '*An organisation in the US got rid of its whole staff and replaced them with an AI chatbot*' or similar. Suggested answers are provided below, with the corrected details in **bold**.

Key:
1. *An organisation in the US got rid of **all** of its staff and replaced them with a **chatbot**.*
2. *The staff at the organisation **did** unionise successfully beforehand (just four days before).*
3. *True*
4. *The next stage in the Gartner hype cycle is the "**trough of disillusionment**" (which happens before things level out).*
5. *The author **doesn't think** that AI will lead to the end of civilisation as we know it (in the near future).*
6. *True*
7. ***IBM** is one of the few companies sharing specifics about how many people AI might replace, and they estimated **7,800** jobs.*
8. *In recent negotiations, film studios in Hollywood **did not** agree that movies could not be written without a human writer (and instead suggested having annual meetings to discuss advancements in technology).*
9. *True*
10. *BuzzFeed **shut down** its news division and **dismissed** a load of people **before** it started using more AI.*

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4. Key language

a. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. The expressions are all used in the article. As an extension activity, you could ask students to go back to the text and find the original sentences.

Key:
1. *f*
2. *d*
3. *c*
4. *a*
5. *h*
6. *b*
7. *e*
8. *g*

b. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Remind students that they may need to change the form of the verb.

Key:
1. *get rid of*
2. *wiped out*
3. *leaned into*
4. *champing at the bit*
5. *beg to differ*
6. *gets thrown around*
7. *clamp down*
8. *levelling out*

c. Allow the class to practise writing sentences with expressions similar to the ones they have just covered. Monitor and assist students as you walk around the class. Allow time for feedback so students can share some of the sentences they have written.

5. Discussion

a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

a. Ask students to imagine they are CEOs considering replacing some of their staff with AI. They use an internet search engine to find more information about AI applications in their chosen industry.

b. Students could then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to share the facts they've gathered and their opinions about the issue. Encourage them to use the phrases (from the worksheet) in their presentations to highlight the pros and cons of their arguments.