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

Level 2: Intermediate – 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: Past passive

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 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.

Key:
1. headline
2. union
3. coincidence
4. civilisation
5. admit
6. strike
7. protection
8. depressing
9. era
10. endless
11. potential

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. admit
2. coincidence
3. depressing
4. endless
5. union
6. strike
7. era

3. Comprehension check

a. Students first read the statements and decide whether they 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 organization in the US removed **all** of its staff and replaced them with an **AI assistant**.*
2. *The staff at the organisation **did** unionise successfully before (just four days before).*
3. *True*
4. *The author **doesn't think** that AI will lead to the end of civilisation as we know it (in the near future).*
5. *The author thinks companies **are eager to** replace staff with AI.*
6. *True*
7. ***IBM** is one of the few companies sharing details about how many people AI might replace, and they estimated **7,800** jobs.*
8. *Recently, 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 technological changes).*
9. *True*
10. *BuzzFeed **shut down** its news division, got rid of many people, and then started using **more** AI.*

4. Key language

a. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Remind students that the past simple passive form is *was/were + past participle*. The passive voice often uses *by* to indicate the 'doer' in the sentence.

Key:
1. *The whole staff <u>was replaced</u> **by** AI.*
2. *The blogpost <u>was written</u> **by** a staff member.*
3. *Humans <u>were</u> already <u>replaced</u> **by** AI for some jobs.*
4. *AI-written films <u>weren't released</u> **by** film studios.*
5. *AI <u>was made</u> **by** humans.*

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

Key (suggested answers):
1. *AI replaced the whole staff.*
2. *A staff member wrote the blog post.*
3. *AI has already replaced humans for some jobs.*
4. *Film studios didn't release AI-written films.*
5. *Humans made AI.*

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 reasons in their arguments.