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

Level 1: Elementary – 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: Quantifiers: *few*, *many*, *a little*, *a lot*

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

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1. Warmer

a.   This activity aims to get students to brainstorm what jobs they know.

b.   Now, students think about which jobs humans, computers or both are good at. Have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss and fill in the Venn diagram with their ideas.

   N.B. You may wish to tell students that 'AI' is an abbreviation. AI means 'artificial intelligence' (computers or robots).

2. Key words

a.   Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups.

   Key:
   1.   staff
   2.   assistant
   3.   blogpost
   4.   steal
   5.   boss
   6.   *Expensive*
   7.   *replaced*
   8.   *machine*
   9.   *agree*
   10. *department*

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.   department
2.   machine
3.   steals
4.   agree
5.   assistant
6.   boss

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, '*They use an AI assistant named Tessa*' or similar. Suggested answers are provided below, with the corrected details in **bold**.

Key:
1.   NEDA uses an AI assistant called **"Tessa"**.
2.   NEDA said this was the plan for a long time, **but a staff member disagreed**.
3.   The author **doesn't think** AI will end life as we know it.
4.   True
5.   The author thinks we **are** going to see **a lot of** changes and mistakes in the next few years.
6.   True
7.   **Few** companies are talking about how many people might lose their jobs.
8.   IBM thinks about **7,800** people will lose their jobs because of AI.
9.   True
10. BuzzFeed **closed** its news department, **ended many people's jobs and 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 quantifiers tell us how much or how little of something there is. You may wish to note that 'few'/'many' are used with countable nouns, such as 'robots' and 'a little (bit of)' / 'a lot (of)' are used with uncountable nouns, such as 'time'. As an extension activity, you could ask students to go back to the text and find examples.

The Guardian

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Key:
1. *Few*
2. *Many*
3. *a little*
4. *a lot*

b. Allow the class to personalise the quantifiers they have covered in the previous activity. 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 the boss at a company they choose. They must replace 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 at least one of the phrases (from the worksheet) in their presentations to highlight reasons in their arguments.