Job Automation
World of Work

- Teacher's Insights -

At a Glance

🕐 60-90 minutes

🎫 **B2**, C1

🎯 degrees of likelihood, listening, speaking

Preparation

🕐 5-10 minutes

- Print one worksheet for each student.

- Print the Teacher's Insights or keep them at hand.

- Click on the video link and set up a screen.

To use this in a flipped classroom format, send students the video link to watch before class. Ask them to prepare answers for the topic introduction questions at home and to bring their answers to class.

Exercise Summary

Kickoff: discuss what "job automation" is

Video: watch video and ask if their opinions from the Kickoff activity have changed

Grammar Focus: study "likely to" and "there's a chance that" structures (probability)

Grammar in Use: use grammar to in predictions

*Reading: the screen-share version has an additional text which the teacher may read to students using the worksheet (included below)

Speaking I: pros and cons of job automation

Speaking II: final debate on job automation (recommended for longer classes)

Topic Introduction: Answer the questions as a group.

Start by asking the students the listed questions, encouraging group discussion and allowing students to share their opinions. This also allows everyone time to arrive.

1. **Have you heard of the concept of job automation?** = job automation means substituting humans with technology to carry out particular tasks, or, sometimes, entire jobs
2. **Do you think your job is at risk of being automated? Why/Why not?** = the video will show them that this more or less comes down to how reducible one's job is to frequent, high-volume tasks
3. **Can you think of any jobs that have already been automated?** = some are switchboard operators, pinsetters at the bowling alley, lift (elevator) operators), and film projectionists; others which are in the process are cashiers, bus and train drivers, factory workers, and typists
4. **What jobs do you think won't exist in 20 years' time?** = some of the above, plus pharmacists, financial analysts, some translators, many jobs in insurance, and even journalists
5. **Do you think job automation is overall a good thing?** = this depends on the students opinion
6. **Do you think that machines will do all jobs in the future?** = the video suggests that automation will stop at around 50% of current jobs, and new jobs appear after such revolutions

Video: Watch the video below and discuss if your answers have changed.

Play the video for the students and then have a follow-up discussion to see if their initial answers have changed based on the information provided in the video.

video link: https://youtu.be/gWmRkYsLzB4

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Grammar Focus: Study the structures below with your teacher.

Introduce the grammar structures and examples related to probability. Explain how adverbs and adjectives can be used to express different levels of probability.

<u>likely to:</u>   e.g., Job automation is likely to change the future of work drastically.
                                e.g., Cleaning robots are quite likely to exist in the future.

In the place of quite, we may use other adverbs to express lower or higher probability.

← not at all - hardly - somewhat - quite - very - highly - extremely →

<u>There's a chance that:</u>   e.g., There's a chance that supermarkets will be totally automatic one day.
                                e.g., There's every chance that robots could replace bus drivers in cities.

In the place of a or every, we may use other adjectives to express lower or higher probability.

← no – a slim – some – a fair – a good – a strong – every →

When teaching this structure, you may also introduce an alternative structure if you have more time:
<u>subject + has a chance of + gerund</u>
Explain to students that this structure can be used to express probability in a similar way. Provide examples to illustrate the concept:

e.g., Supermarkets have a chance of becoming totally automatic one day.
e.g., Robots have every chance of replacing bus drivers in cities.

Grammar in Use: Take a look at the jobs mentioned below.

Guide the students through the examples, discussing the likelihood of job automation for different professions. Encourage students to use the grammar structures they have learned.

Psychologists	Data Entry Clerks	Marketing Managers	Drivers	Teachers
Proof-readers	Healthcare Workers	Telemarketers	Dentists & Orthodontists	Cashiers

Examples:
- Psychologists are not at all likely to disappear in the future.
- Healthcare workers are hardly likely to become automated but machines have every chance of taking over elements of their work.
- Teachers are extremely likely to become more like personal tutors, as online material has a strong chance of replacing lectures.
- Drivers have a slim chance of surviving, as self-driving cars are being developed already.

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Job automation, and things such as Artificial Intelligence, will inevitably bring about big changes.

All change has positive and negative aspects. As with past revolutions, there will be job losses, but also new opportunities.

Take, for example, the agricultural revolution. It led to an increase in food production and population growth, but also caused many people who worked in agriculture to be out of work. However, as technology advanced, new jobs emerged, such as factory work and other manufacturing jobs.

Similarly, during the Industrial Revolution, the introduction of new technologies led to many job losses. Artisans and craft workers, for example, were replaced by machines. Again, however, new jobs such as those in marketing and advertising came about in time.

A little further down the line, the Digital Revolution caused job losses as new technologies emerged. Secretaries, administrative assistants, and bank tellers were some of those affected. Yet again, though, it led to the creation of new jobs, such as web development, social media management, and data analysis.

The automation revolution is currently underway. Many routine and repetitive jobs are at risk of being automated. However, this revolution will also lead to the creation of new jobs which we are yet to discover.

Speaking I: **Are the following advantages or disadvantages of job automation?**

These depend a little on whose perspective you look from (i.e., from the point of view of a rich businessman, a high initial investment may be an advantage because it means that others cannot enter that market) but the suggested answers below are from the point of view of society in general.

1. It replaces humans in dangerous environments. = advantage; it avoids accidents
2. It requires a high initial investment. = disadvantage; not all businesses can afford it
3. It leads to a more efficient use of materials. = advantage; it leads to less waste
4. It creates possible security threats. = disadvantage; for example, if someone hacked into a totally automated bank they could do a lot more damage than robbing one bank branch
5. It frees up workers to take on other roles. = advantage (although a little utopian, as the employees would probably be made redundant)
6. It increases productivity. = advantage
7. It reduces the hours of an average working week. = advantage (although again utopian; companies are more likely to lay off some employees than reduce everyone's working week)
8. It displaces workers due to job replacement. = disadvantage; we see it in countries such as Spain, where the villages are empty because all the jobs are now in the cities
9. It increases output consistency. = generally an advantage; all products are the same and can follow standards of quality

Speaking II: **With what you have learnt, hold a debate on whether job automation is a good or bad thing overall for society.**

This activity is recommended for longer classes (such as two-hour classes, or if you decide to use this material in two separate sessions).

Divide the class into two groups, assigning one group to argue in favor of job automation and the other to argue against it. Allow time for preparation, and then hold a debate. Encourage students to use the grammar structures and vocabulary they have learned throughout the class.