

One step forward, two steps back: the dance between automation and tradition

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Overview: This article discusses the alleged crime wave driven by self-checkouts and the unintended consequences of automation.

Business topic: AI, automation, self-checkout, shrinkage, security

Business language: Words and phrases related to AI and automation in retail, describing trends

Activities: Key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, creating and carrying out a survey, presenting findings

Groups: Whole class, one-to-one, small groups

3. *unprecedented*
4. *headwind, headwinds*
5. *cataclysm*
6. *kerfuffle*
7. *scapegoat*
8. *amplify*
9. *shrinkage*
10. *unmanned*
11. *miscreant, miscreants*
12. *deter*
13. *multipronged*
14. *stratification*

4. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to find and highlight the relevant parts of the article and compare them with each part of the statements. Have them share their answers in pairs or small groups before eliciting answers from the whole class.

Key:

1. *True*
2. *False. The article does not mention staff cuts as a security strategy.*
3. *True*
4. *True*
5. *False. The ability to sell goods online is an incentive.*
6. *True*
7. *True*
8. *False. It only allows a certain low maximum number of items.*
9. *False. They are investing in hiring real workers for these roles.*
10. *True*

5. Business language – trends

- a. You could set this activity up as a whole-class activity, so students compete against each other to complete the 'race'.

Key:

1. *shoot up, an all-time high, rise, jump*
2. *dip, fall, drop, reduce*
3. *return to the average; be flat*
4. *add up to*

1. Warmer

- a. Ask student to discuss the questions in small groups. Monitor and write any useful vocabulary on the board. Elicit the main ideas that arise from the discussion from the whole class.

2. Reading for gist

- a. Have students skim the article and choose the main idea. Ask students to then scan for phrases that support their answer.

Key:

3

3. Key words

- a. Have students scan the article, find the key words individually, and compare their answers in pairs. Elicit answers from the whole class.

Key:

1. *automation*
2. *crime wave*

- b. This can be done with the whole class by asking students first to identify the part of speech of the words and phrases in the article and then asking them to see if they can be changed to a different form.

Key:

rise, jump, dip, fall, drop, return

- c. Ask students to complete the task in pairs or small groups. In some instances, more than one answer is possible.

Key:

1. *have risen / rose / (have) jumped / (have) shot up / (have) increased*
2. *dip / drop / fall*
3. *added up to / were at an all-time high of*
4. *an all-time high*
5. *reduce*
6. *jumped / shot up / increased*

- d. Ask students to write their sentences individually and share them in pairs or small groups. Ask students to give each other feedback on correctly using the new language. Monitor and provide as much individual feedback as possible.

Have students read the rubric and check understanding by eliciting examples of questions that follow and don't follow the advice mentioned. Then, have students write their questions. Monitor and provide feedback.

Once you have provided feedback, get students to create their surveys. If possible, encourage the use of an online tool since this will also make it easier for students to convert their data into graphs. Ask students to answer each other's surveys, and if needed, involve students from other classes or simply acquaintances.

Ask students to discuss their data in their original pairs or groups and plan their presentations.

Regroup students so they can share their findings with others.

If this task is graded, get students to record and send their presentations.

If there is time, encourage follow-up questions and further discussion based on the presentations.

6. Discussion

- a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions.

7. Wider business theme – a survey: transforming industries with AI

- a. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups. Ask them first to decide what topic they want to focus on. While it can be self-checkouts and retail, encourage them to choose a sector that is relevant to them and their context. Explain that they will create a survey to gauge public opinion regarding the use of AI and how that industry is being transformed by automation, etc.