

'Dear, did you say pastry?': meet the 'AI granny' driving scammers up the wall

Level 3: Advanced

Article summary: This article discusses how an AI bot with a grandmotherly persona has successfully stopped scammers.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Defining relative clauses with *who*

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. The purpose of this activity is to start thinking about *scams* and *frauds*. Have students work in pairs or groups to come up with the tips. Set a timer to make sure the work moves along and the groups finish at the same time. Encourage students to express and justify their opinions.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the activity individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Students may be familiar with the word *combat* in the context of military action or war. Here, it is used to mean *fight* more broadly. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

Key:

1. *scammer, fraudster*
2. *dither*
3. *ubiquitous*
4. *ambivalence*
5. *riddled*
6. *bumbling*
7. *exasperated*
8. *affable*
9. *tactic*
10. *persona*

11. *combat*
12. *unauthorised*
13. *verify*
14. *anomaly*

- 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 other contexts.

Key:

1. *dithering*
2. *riddled*
3. *ubiquitous*
4. *scammers / fraudsters*
5. *combat*
6. *verify*
7. *unauthorised*
8. *bumbled*
9. *affable*
10. *ambivalence*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. They may do this in different ways, e.g. in item 1, they may say, 'She's an AI bot whose purpose is to waste scammers' time to stop them from scamming real people' or similar.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *Daisy is an AI bot. Her purpose is to waste scammers' time by keeping them on the phone, preventing them from targeting real potential victims.*
2. *She adopts the persona of a 78-year-old grandmother who is friendly but confused about technology.*
3. *She delays them by looking for her glasses, having trouble turning on her computer, being confused about finding icons and discussing things like recipes and knitting patterns.*
4. *up to 40 minutes*
5. *O2 (Virgin Media O2)*
6. *They pass Daisy's details on to another scammer in their call centre to try again.*

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7. *The main purpose was to raise awareness rather than to be rolled out on a much wider scale.*
8. *Daisy was passed between four different callers.*
9. *He is a 'scam baiter' who posts videos of himself wasting criminals' time. In this project, he helped plant phone numbers on websites to attract scammers.*
10. *in banking (to identify unauthorized transactions and identity fraud), insurance (to verify claims), travel (to monitor unusual booking patterns), and public services (to identify anomalies in tax filings)*

4. Key language

- a. The activity gives students an opportunity to practice defining relative clauses with *who* for people and *which* for things. Remind students that *that* can also be used with either people or things. As an extension activity, ask students to rewrite the examples with *that*. You may want to remind students that the relative pronoun cannot be omitted. As another extension opportunity, ask students to find more examples in the article.

Key:

1. *An elderly grandmother **who** chats about knitting patterns has become an unlikely tool in combatting scammers.*
2. *'Daisy' receives countless calls from fraudsters **who** often try to take control of her computer after claiming she has been hacked.*
3. *Daisy's task is simply to waste the time of the people who are trying to scam her.*
4. *The company worked with Jim Browning, a 'scam baiter' **who** posts videos of himself wasting the time of criminals.*

- b. This activity provides students an opportunity to apply what they learned in task a in a freer way. To support students or as an extension activity, suggest writing the two short sentences and then students switch papers to combine their classmate's sentences.

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 research more about internet fraud. Ask them to answer one or more of these questions: *What are common ways that scammers try to harm people? How can consumers protect themselves and their loved ones? How can AI help combat this problem? What are some things to do if you, or someone you love, have been scammed?*
- b. Students could then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to include facts and statistics when they share their research findings. Encourage them to also share their opinions and give reasons to support their answers.