

048 – the Robots are Coming – part 2

Hi English learners! Lori here, your teacher from betteratenglish.com. I'm so happy you've decided to join me. Welcome! Come on in, make yourself comfortable and get ready for some English listening practice.

In the previous episode you heard me and my American friend Will having a conversation about automation and artificial intelligence. Today you'll be hearing the second and final part of this conversation. As always, the full transcript of every delicious word, every scrumptious syllable, including all the mistakes, all the back tracking, all the rambles, recasts and interruptions of a real life, spontaneous English conversation, it's all been lovingly prepared and packaged by yours truly, just for you to download to support your English learning. You can find it all at www.betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

And my dear listener, I'm talking to you...yes you, wherever you are, whenever you are listening to this, if you enjoy or benefit from my podcasts or transcripts, I would love it if you could take a moment to leave a rating or review in your podcast app or iTunes or Spotify or wherever you listen to the podcast. And...ooh, I hope I say this right... Roohoolah, if you're listening, thank you so much for your review. I saw it this morning and it totally made my day, so thank you so much for taking the time.

All right, let's get on part two of this Real English Conversation...Will and I are picking up where we left off by talking about some of the ways we've noticed automation being implemented in real life. Are you ready? Here we go!

Lori: I heard that...I think it's Pizza Hut already has... or no... Domino's is already experimenting with robot pizza delivery vehicles. Yeah. I mean, this this is happening now.

Will: Well, you know, a main...I've been talking about this whole automation thing....oh, by the way, **jot this down**. If you've never seen it. There's a, there's a short 15-minute video on YouTube called *Humans Need not Apply*. And it puts the entire conversation and frames it into a perfect, digestible, understandable video that explains automation for anybody who's interested and doesn't have, you know, hours of time to spend on the topic.

Lori: Oh yeah, great, thanks!

Will: So jot that down. Yep, no problem.

Lori: Done.

Will: But Amazon, which everybody knows who Amazon is, the company, they did, they did something about maybe six months ago or so. They implemented a grocery store that had no cashiers, it was set up with turnstiles that using your mobile device, you would log in before you entered the store. You would get whatever you needed at the market, groceries, whatever you needed, and you would leave, you wouldn't stand in a line you would just walk through the turnstile and be automatically charged to your account. And I remember when Amazon did this I kind of freaked out a little bit because I, I said, you know, I sounded like the crazy preacher man running down the hill, I said to anybody I'd ever spoken to the topic about, they're testing a patent for this type of framework **to be rolled out** on a larger scale to the supermarket industry. And in the past week, Amazon has purchased Whole Foods and I am positive that it is connected to their concept of implementing this...you know, cashierless...you know, turnstile, just walk in and walk out, fully automated, market shopping experience.

Lori: Wow, IOh, my goodness. I didn't know that they had bought Whole Foods.

Will: Yep. In the past week. I **lost my mind** when I read it.

Lori: Wow. Wow. I mean, it's something like that, I mean, a lot of people would lose their jobs or you know, the the poor cashiers. But at the same time, it sounds like a nice shopping experience, that you just walk in, get your things and walk out and everything is taken care of...I ...**provided that** it's all accurately...that you're accurately charged for your items.

Will: Yes. Of course, and it's a perfect...it's a perfect example of "If it works for the consumer..." which it sounds like that's a **no brainer**. And there...if the quarterly numbers come out for Whole Foods, and they see massive profits as a result of not having to carry those salaries and that that level of overhead as a result of employing humans, then it'll also make sense from a business perspective. And we will inevitably start to see the shift into the direction of automation. When it works for people and it works for businesses and the governments are scrambling around trying to figure out what to do with all of these, you know, unemployed unemployable people. It almost like a dirty word, unemployable. You're unemployable.

Lori: Yeah. But it really depends on how, you know, what is going to happen with society as this, you know, as these changes start taking place, because the point that that...remind me of what his name was. Do you remember the name of the guy who made this this video about the rise of AI?

Will: Aaaah....

Lori: I can't remember his name. Well, in any case, the point he made was that if these things do happen, we could if things go well, and if we plan properly, we could end up with a society where all we humans are doing is developing ourselves, learning new things.

Will: Exactly.

Lori: You know, just basically living a life of...that... where we can follow our interests and our passions. And...

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Lori: ...and then the machines, the AI is taking care of all the **drudgery** and all the things that that we used to have to do just **to put food on the table**.

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Lori: And according to him, I mean, in his vision, it's possible. But the problem is, is this feeling that...we own...our value comes from us trading our effort, and our skills and our work for something, some other kind of value, you know, money that we can then use to buy the things we need.

Will: And how many studies have major corporations done around providing leisures and, let...Google is a great example. They have nap pods and massage parlors and cafes and all of these things that are offered to their employees **on premise** because they...

Lori: Yeah.

Will: ...understand that happy, you know, nurtured, people are far more productive and that...

Lori: Oh, yeah.

Will: And so apply that apply that on a societal level where all of a sudden, we're happier, we're feeling more fulfilled, and we're not being so physically drained and having to micromanage our time to the extent of monotony just because of the life that we've been just, just born into and in, in the working world, you know, it's just, it's a, it's a frame shift of it's...a...it's just such a massive change culturally.

Lori: Yeah.

Will: You know, we haven't even seen the conversations that need to happen in any of our governments or Congress or, you know, anything like that.

Lori: Right. And I think part of the problem that, we're, this way of thinking is so **ingrained** that it's hard to even imagine. Imagine yourself into a world where humans don't work...

Will: Yeah

Lori: ...in the traditional sense of work, but...and that it's perfectly okay, and that it's desirable for society and that it works well. And, you know, **chaos** and mayhem don't ensue, because, because people aren't working jobs and the machines are doing all the things that that we used to have to do...

Will: Yeah.

Lori: ..for...as forms of labor. And it's just so hard to even imagine that, that you can't even have a conversation about something that you that you can't even imagine.

Will: Yeah, I think you know...

Lori: There's the problem...

Will: I think, I think music and movies and all of these concepts that we have seen artistically have a lot to do with our perception of the issue. And as we have discussed in this conversation, there is so much more to it than just the doom and gloom and, and fear aspects of it. And you have to have the conversations as a society of what we're going to do to move in a direction where a society has these types of automated systems in place. And we can still be a people that live happily and peacefully and purposefully without having to worry about either apocalypse or an economical crash on the other side of that coin.

Lori: Right. Right. Yeah, it's it's kind of interesting that that this is happening now. There's there's a lot a lot of things that are potentially scary that are happening right now. And one of them is just the rise of social media and the way ideas can spread like wildfire now, globally, within minutes, basically whether they're true ideas or false ideas, and that people then act based on what they believe and what they think is true, and...

Will: Yup.

Lori: ...in some ways, it can be good if it's...if it's for the good, but I see it's also creating a lot of problems. So that's the one thing..

Will: Yeah...

Lori: ..and then we have also the climate going on, which I know there's there's some debate about it, but I'm leaning towards the side that that, yeah, something is definitely going on with our climate and it's something we need to take seriously and at least, yeah, try to work on you know, a bit. [uptalk example]

Will: Yeah. I have always been of the opinion that It doesn't at this point matter what has got us here or, you know who's to blame or...

Lori: Yeah.

Will: ...what we have to do, it's the it's the same thing as as it's completely parallel to automation, you just cannot, you cannot deny or discard the notion that it is here and it is happening. You have to at minimum have a conversation that acknowledges that it is here, and have healthy constructive discussions that revolve around what what we do about it because nothing else matters other than what we decide to do about it. It's the same with climate...

Lori: Exactly,

Will: ...it's the same with you know, any laun- any...the the **laundry list** of global conflicts, it's the same all around.

Lori: Yeah, yep. And and it's, it's just growing...in the...and the way, ideas and opinions can so readily be exchanged. And how everyone now can have a platform no matter how much they actually know about something, and that they can influence other people. So that that's a bit scary to me that the information, the ability to consume information and to form opinions is greater than it's ever been before. But alongside that we're not being taught the critical thinking skills, and...that we need to actually make sense of these things...

Will: Yes.

Lori: ...you know, in a constructive way, and it's...that, that is probably one of the scariest things to me about our, you know, the current time that we're in right now is there's all the information is there but people really aren't equipped to look at it critically...at all, basically, very few people are.

Will: That **hits the nail on the head**...is the ability to critically, you know, critical thinking and to make distinctions between facts and information, and, you know, see what is what is important, and what is maybe not important and, you know, just, just kind of a "**D, all of the above**" as far as the critical thinking aspect.

Lori: Yeah. Yeah. And and that goes for...for this study as well. Because to actually, like, understand what they're talking about, you need to not only, you know, read the actual study itself, but you can't just limit yourself to one study, you need to have a wide knowledge of the whole field and be very well read in order to make sense and, you know, weigh the results of one study against the other and look at the methodology and, you know, it's this whole huge conversation that you need to have in order to have some kind of informed opinion. And the problem is, is that there's just...we can't do that with everything.

Will: Yeah.

Lori: You know, even if we want to and you know are trying trying our best to be good critical thinkers and it's just so hard to to just keep up with...with what's going on and it's...Yeah...it's...I love I love having the access to information and to interesting conversations and all the things you can learn these days, but at the same time I'm worried about what I see happening when I when I do go online and you know, do things like read YouTube comments or even the threads on Facebook. It's it just, it's hard not to get pessimistic.

Will: It is. You know, that's, that's really I think that...the challenge as with everything is to understand and know all that goes on in the world, and yet still find a way to be optimistic and hopeful and, you know, be moving forward and, you know, not not be impacted by the negative aspects of this accessibility that we see in, in today's world.

Lori: Yeah, definitely. Great. Wow. What a conversation. Yes, I have to say, you have a beautiful voice and you're very well spoken.

Will: Well, thank you very much.

Lori: You're welcome, I mean it sincerely.

Hi again! That brings us to the end of this Real English Conversations episode. I hope you found this topic interesting to think about, and I hope it gave you some useful vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation in context that you can use in your English learning.

I have to say, I really enjoyed working on this episode for you. I noticed that my thinking about the topic has evolved since 2017 when Will and I had this conversation. These days I'm not so worried about scientists developing a sentient A.I. or self-aware robots who will decide to exterminate humanity. I'm mainly worried about what we humans and our human nature is going to do with this technology. Will we use A.I. exclusively for benevolent purposes to make our lives better? Or will we use it as a weapon that will cause more harm than good. And the question of what to do when most of our jobs can be done much more cheaply and efficiently by automated systems, that really can't be ignored.

I'm trying to stay optimistic about it all and I hope I'll be around for the next 30 years or so to see how things play out. Nobody really knows for sure what's gonna happen: even the experts in the field of A.I. don't really know what the future is going to bring. But no matter what happens, it's definitely going to be interesting!

Before I go, I should let you know that I put some extra energy into the transcript for this episode. There's a gap-fill listening exercise, and also word lists of all the more challenging vocabulary. The word lists are taken from the Oxford 5000 lists for the B2 and C1 levels, so you can check your understanding and look up any words that you are curious about. In the transcript there's a link to the Oxford site where you can look up the words, see definitions, and even hear how they're pronounced in standard British and American English. You can download the whole thing, the whole shebang, the whole kit and kaboodle, the whole nine yards at www.betteratenglish.com/transcripts.

If you enjoyed this episode, I would love it if you could leave a rating or review wherever you might be listening. You can contact me directly with your questions and comments at www.betteratenglish.com. I love hearing from English learners from all over the world, so don't be shy.

Until next time, this is Lori, signing off from the Better at English mother ship, and wishing you an inspired and productive day. Bye for now!

LINKS TO SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

If you use Blinkist, here are some links to read short summaries of books on the topic of A.I. and automation. Blinkist is great for English learners. You can read along as you listen, plus look up words you don't know all from the app!

***The Future of Work*, by Darrell M. West**

<https://blinkist.o6eiov.net/zLbBe>

***The Robots are Coming*, by Andres Oppenheimer**

<https://blinkist.o6eiov.net/RvnWa>

***The A.I. Economy: Work, Wealth and Welfare* by Roger Bootle**

<https://blinkist.o6eiov.net/ydbBv>

Video about delivery robots

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujziZuhE92g>

Humans need not apply

Video about how automation and A.I. will affect the job market for humans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Pq-S557XQU>

Robots will beat humans at every task

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/this-is-when-robots-will-start-beating-humans-at-every-task-ae5ecd71-5e8e-44ba-87cd-a962c2aa99c2>

Dirty, Dirty robots

Funny (but still disturbing) video about A.I. from comedian Lee Camp

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyfxP6ZyNtw>

Link to original Yale / Oxford study about A.I.

This is for learners of academic English. People in the videos about A.I. summarize findings from this study. This is the actual academic study for comparison.

<https://arxiv.org/pdf/1705.08807.pdf>

Elon musk on the Joe Rogan podcast, talking about A.I.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ra3fv8gl6NE>

Elon Musk's talk at SXSW

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-Osn1gMNtw>

Ted talk with neuroscientist and philosopher Sam Harris

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nt3edWlgIg>

Sam Harris on the Joe Rogan Podcast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BChxQHyFIOI&t=1487s>

TED talk by Peter Haas A robot designer who is afraid of robots

The Real Reason to be Afraid of Artificial Intelligence

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRzBk_KulaM

How frightened should we be of A.I.?

Article in the New Yorker, free, with full text and audio so you can read along as you listen.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/05/14/how-frightened-should-we-be-of-ai>

A Conversation with Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Inc. & Founder of SpaceX moderated by H.E. Mohammad Al Gergawi, Minister of Cabinet Affairs & The Future, UAE. Chairman of the World Government Summit

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCoFKUJ_8Yo

Oxford word lists

You can look up words and hear American and British English pronunciation at

<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/wordlists/oxford3000-5000>

048 - The robots are coming part 2 - Word list

Look up and listen to the words here: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/wordlists/oxford3000-5000>

B2 OXFORD 5000 excluding OXFORD 3000

accurately
alongside
automatically
corporations
critically
equipped
framework
fulfilled
goodness
groceries / grocery
implemented /implementing
inevitably
optimistic
parallel
perception
potentially

C1 OXFORD 5000

according
chaos
desirable
discard
distinctions
drained
ensue
hopeful
log
methodology
patent
premise
productive
readily
threads

OXFORD PHRASAL ACADEMIC LEXICON (OPAL) WRITTEN WORDS

Look up and hear the words here: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/wordlists/opal>

accurately
critically
desirable
distinctions
framework
implemented / implementing
methodology
parallel
perception
potentially
productive
readily

048 - The Robots are Coming part 2

Listening comprehension exercise

Listen to the conversation and write the words that you hear in the spaces below. The words are listed at the bottom of this page.

Will: But Amazon, which everybody knows who Amazon is, the company, they did, they did something about maybe six months ago or so. They _____ a _____ store that had no cashiers, it was set up with turnstiles that using your mobile device, you would _____ in before you entered the store. You would get whatever you needed at the market, _____, whatever you needed, and you would leave, you wouldn't stand in a line you would just walk through the turnstile and be _____ charged to your account. And I remember when Amazon did this I kind of freaked out a little bit because I, I said, you know, I sounded like the crazy preacher man running down the hill, I said to anybody I'd ever spoken to the topic about, they're testing a _____ for this type of _____ to be rolled out on a larger scale to the supermarket industry. And in the past week, Amazon has purchased Whole Foods and I am positive that it is connected to their concept of _____ this...you know, cashierless...you know, turnstile, just walk in and walk out, fully automated, market shopping experience.

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quarterly numbers come out for Whole Foods, and they see massive profits as a result of not having to carry those salaries and that that level of overhead as a result of employing humans, then it'll also make sense from a business perspective. And we will _____ start to see the shift into the direction of automation. When it works for people and it works for businesses and the governments are scrambling around trying to figure out what to do with all of these, you know, unemployed unemployable people. It almost like a dirty word, unemployable. You're unemployable.

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Lori: Yeah, definitely. Great. Wow. What a conversation. Yes, I have to say, you have a beautiful voice and you're very well spoken.

Will: Well, thank you very much.

Lori: You're welcome I mean it sincerely

automatically hopeful implementing goodness corporations inevitably
framework distinctions discard optimistic perception ensue groceries
grocery drained equipped according readily implemented threads
critically chaos log methodology patent productive parallel potentially
desirable fulfilled accurately alongside premise