Robots

Task 1 – Jobs for Robots

What jobs do you think robots could do? Write as many different jobs as you can here:

Imagine you have a robot to help you at home and at school. Which three jobs would you like your robot to do? Put your top three here:

1)

2)

3)

Now compare your top 3 ideas with the rest of the class.

Task 2 – Robofilms

Discuss the questions:

- What films have you seen with robots in?
- Do you like films with robots? Why / not?
- What were the abilities of the film robots?
- Do you think that robots with these abilities will ever exist?
- DO you think that in the future robots will become a normal part of our lives?

Task 3 – Robot reading – Jeeves Machine

Before you read the article, decide if the following statements are true or false for you:

1) I would like to have a robot in my house
2) I think that in ten years' time most people will have robots in their homes
3) Research into robots is a waste of money

Read the article and then answer the questions in pairs or small groups.

Jeeves Machine

Having robots around to do the laundry sounds like a great idea. But will they be polite? And how will you teach them not to always have the TV remote control?

In only three years time there will be more than four million robots in domestic service in homes throughout the world! That's according to the latest United Nations report. They won't, however, be like C-3PO with their very own list of psychological 'issues', although they will still need to follow codes of behaviour. But how can you teach a robot social skills?

A Research Group at Hertfordshire University's School of Computer Science is trying to answer this question. Advances in technologies are making the dream of autonomous household robots into a reality that is closer than we may think.

In the very near future, robots could be as common as vacuum cleaners and blenders, so their 'personalities' are going to be important. That is why the Hertfordshire University group has hired behavioural psychologists to work alongside programmers and electronics engineers.

The team is conducting experiments in which robots interact with people, assist them with various tasks, and even play with children. Observations and post-experimental surveys are revealing. The person's own personality-type, age and gender influences perceptions of the robot. Service robots should really be able to assess different types of people and react accordingly – much as we do ourselves.

It is hoped the guidelines for robot etiquette will be established for when technology makes robots ready to share a house with people. And for when people are ready to share a house with robots. How long will that be? 'It might take five years, it might take twenty or more,' says Dautenhahn, cautiously.

However long, it is probably inevitable. Sceptics should note that large companies including Dyson, Electrolux and Hoover, are seriously investing in home robotics. They should also remember similar reservations expressed about the potential for home computers.

Of course the friendly C-3PO is not the only model of electronic companion. Anyone who has seen The Terminator will probably need little persuading as to the benefits of a charm school for robots.

This article was adapted from the British Council Culture Lab UK website. The original writer was Don Connigale

- Do you believe that in three years' time more than four million homes will have domestic robots?
- Do you think that robots can be given personalities?
- Do you think it's possible to create polite robots?
- What jobs do you think may be replaced by robots in the future?
- Do you think a robot could be used to teach languages? Why / not?

www.teachingenglish.org.uk

Task 4 – Back to the future

Think of how your life has already changed thanks to technology. Complete the columns with as much information as you can.

Past	Present	Future
Wrote letters	Send e-mails	?

Task 5 – Design your own robot

Imagine that you work for a robot design company. You and your team are responsible for designing the next generation of robots for the home. Talk to your team and decide on these points:

- What will your robot be able to do?
- What will your robot look like?
- How much will your robot cost to buy?
- What type of people will want to buy your robot?
- What brand name will you give your robot?

Now draw your robot and tell the other teams about your design.