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# 7

Unit

## Tech, a blessing or a curse?



Like it or not, your life may have become more and more inseparable from smartphones, the Internet, computers, AI ... While bringing people tremendous convenience and making life easier, technology may be a double-edged sword. Probably one of the negative effects of all these technologies is that they have prevented human beings from thinking independently. Actually, technology is just a tool, and humans should be its masters not its servants. What will the future world be like? How can people use human expertise and experience to decide what technology can do for us? This unit will bring you some thoughts on these questions.

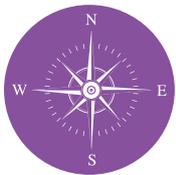
## Learning objectives

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the trends and major developments in technology in today's world
- listen for disagreement
- pronounce the plosives when they are followed by /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, and /g/
- give a speech to describe your vision of the future world

## Warming up

Inventions have changed the world and the lives of people many times through history, but which invention is the most important one? The following are some important inventions. What is the influence of each invention on the development of human civilization?



# iExplore 1: Listening and speaking

## Passage

### Listening and understanding

1 We may take it for granted that the advancement of technology is the result of the hard work of inventors. But is it true? Now listen to a passage and choose the best answer to each of the questions you hear.

- 1 A. Skills.  
B. Talents.  
C. Knowledge.  
D. Imaginations.
- 2 A. Ship.  
B. Subway.  
C. Helicopter.  
D. Submarine.

2 Listen to the passage again and fill in the blanks with what you hear.

- 1 They may have little or no background in design, but are able to imagine worlds \_\_\_\_\_ of the here and now.
- 2 Imagining \_\_\_\_\_ has allowed them to explore entirely new ideas.
- 3 Only when you dream can you actually have the chance to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 The fact that the dreams of these science fiction writers lead to the advancement of technology is \_\_\_\_\_ of this.



#### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

fiction /'fɪkʃn/ n. 小说

submarine /'sʌbməri:n/ n. 潜(水)艇

helicopter /'helɪ,kɒptə/ n. 直升机

#### PROPER NAMES

Jules Verne /ʒju:l 'vɜ:n/ 儒勒·凡尔纳 (法国科幻作家)

*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* 《海底两万里》(法国小说名)

Simon Lake 西蒙·莱克 (美国造船工程师和发明家)

# Conversation

## Listening and understanding

1 Artificial intelligence (AI) has already played an increasingly important role in our everyday life. But have you ever thought it may pose a threat to us as well? Now listen to a conversation and complete the following table with what you hear.

The man's opinion on AI

### AI is a threat.

- Professor Hawking said recently that artificial intelligence is a threat to 1) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Many AI researchers have expressed worries that humans are not doing enough to 2) \_\_\_\_\_ the rise of AI.
- How can we be sure that AI will have 3) \_\_\_\_\_ what is right and what is wrong?
- The problem is whether it can be 4) \_\_\_\_\_ at all. When the robots in *Westworld* become 5) \_\_\_\_\_, they fight against their creators.

The woman's opinion on AI

### AI is not a threat.

- After all, they are the 6) \_\_\_\_\_ of human beings.
- But the impact of AI 7) \_\_\_\_\_ who controls it.
- Simon Stringer, one of the leading thinkers in the AI field, has said that no one is going to produce anything of that level within 8) \_\_\_\_\_.

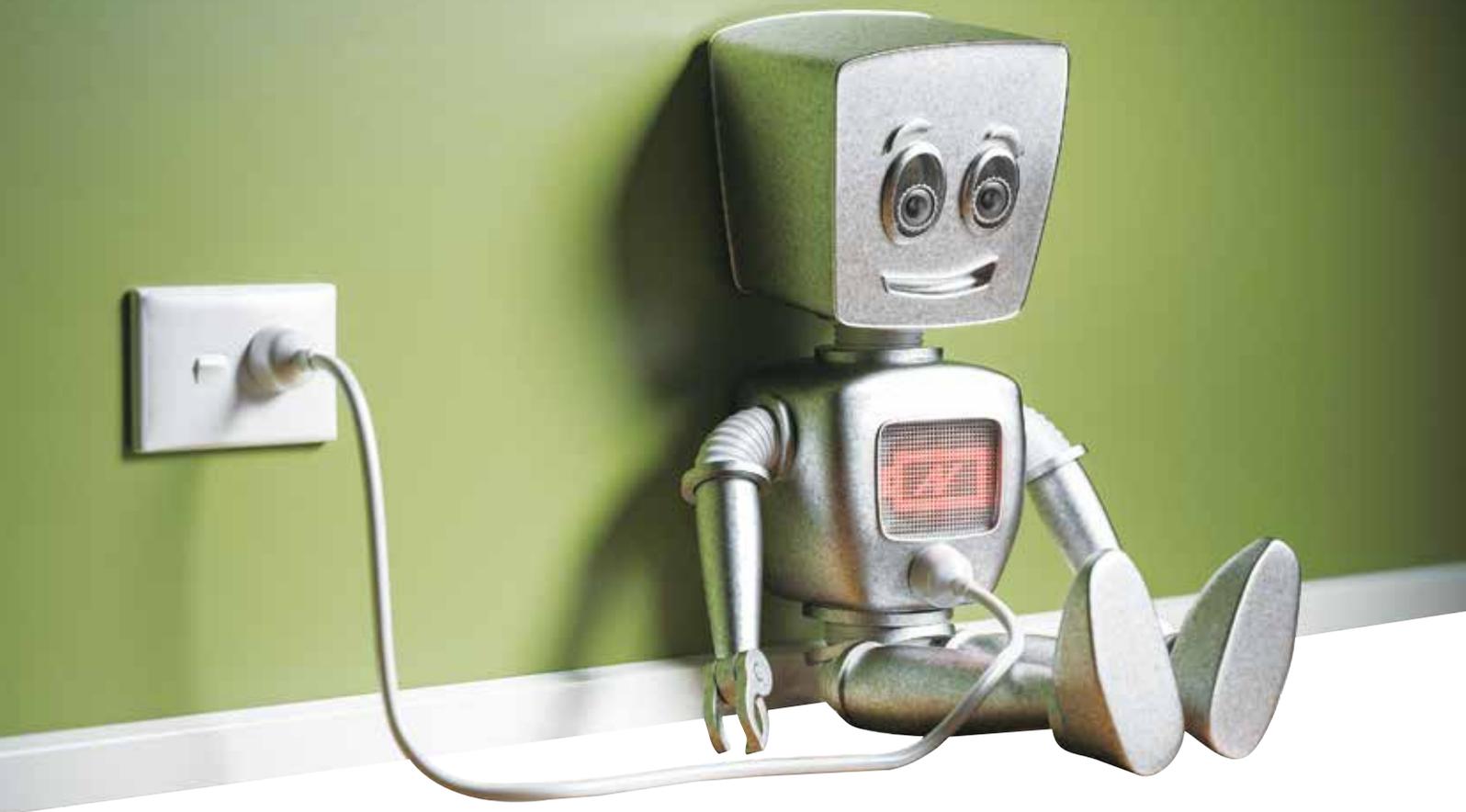
### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

artificial intelligence  
/ˌɑːtɪfɪʃl m'telɪdʒəns/  
n. 人工智能  
a way off 很远的将来

### PROPER NAMES

Hawking /'hɔːkɪŋ/ 霍金  
(Stephen Hawking, 英国理论物理学家)  
*Westworld* 《西部世界》(美国科幻连续剧名)  
Simon Stringer /'strɪŋə/ 西蒙·斯特林格(人名)





### LISTENING SKILLS

#### Listening for disagreement

People express different opinions when they speak. They will use certain expressions to show their agreement or disagreement. Paying attention to these expressions will help you understand the speakers' attitudes. In this conversation, the two speakers both use direct and indirect expressions to show their disagreement.

The following present some examples of expressions to show disagreement.

Direct	Indirect (more polite)
I disagree.	I'm not sure I agree.
I don't think so.	I don't know if I agree.
That's not true.	I don't know about that.

**2** Listen to the conversation again and fill in the blanks with what you hear. Then tell which expressions sound more polite.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ how it would become a threat.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ that as machines become more intelligent, they would want to destroy us or do harm.
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_. How can we be sure that ...
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_. Simon Stringer, one of the leading thinkers in the AI field, ...

### Thinking and speaking

**3** In the conversation, the man thinks that AI may pose a threat to us human beings, while the woman doesn't think so. Whom do you agree with? Work in pairs and have a discussion. List your opinions and reasons in the following table and report your discussion to the class. See which opinion your class mostly agrees with.

Opinions	Reasons

## News report 1

Modern technology has made driverless vehicles possible. Now listen to a news report and choose the best answer to each of the questions you hear.

- 1 A. The sale of truly driverless vehicles.  
B. The design of truly driverless vehicles.  
C. The plans to test truly driverless vehicles.  
D. The public opinions on truly driverless vehicles.
  
- 2 A. With the help of remote control.  
B. With the help of self-control devices.  
C. By riding on a road with no people.  
D. By having a driver nearby to control it.
  
- 3 A. As early as 2018.  
B. As early as 2019.  
C. As early as 2020.  
D. As early as 2021.

### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

hearing /'hiəriŋ/ *n.* 听证会

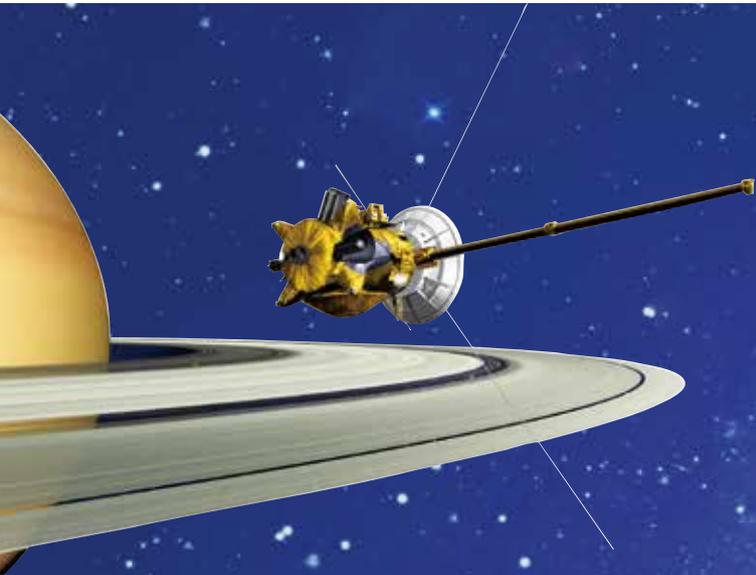
approval /ə'pru:vəl/ *n.* 批准

### PROPER NAMES

California /,kæli'fɔ:njə/ 加利福尼亚州 (美国州名)



START



## News report 2

### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

Saturn /'sætɜ:n/ *n.* 土星

mission /'mɪʃn/ *n.* 任务

organism /'ɔ:ɡə,nɪz(ə)m/ *n.*  
微生物

### PROPER NAMES

Cassini /kɑ:'sɪni/ 卡西尼号 (美国航天器名)

NASA /'næsə/ (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) 美国航空航天局

*Cassini* is a spacecraft aiming to explore Saturn and its moons from 1997. It ended its mission in 2017. Now listen to a news report and choose the best answer to each of the questions you hear.

- 1 A. On September 15.  
B. On September 20.  
C. On October 15.  
D. On October 20.
- 2 A. The possibility of life on one of Saturn's moons.  
B. The possibility of rings on one of Saturn's moons.  
C. The possibility of energy on one of Saturn's moons.  
D. The possibility of atmosphere on one of Saturn's moons.
- 3 A. To prevent *Cassini* from running out of power.  
B. To protect organisms carried by *Cassini* from Earth.  
C. To avoid polluting the life on one of Saturn's moons.  
D. To prevent *Cassini* from burning up on one of Saturn's moons.

# iExplore 2: Viewing and speaking

## Viewing and understanding

1 Probably you are very interested in AI but lack certain knowledge. Now watch a video clip and complete the following table with what you hear.

Questions	Answers
What is AI?	In basic terms, AI is a broad area of 1) _____ that makes machines seem like they have human intelligence. It's not only programming a computer to drive a car but it's when that program also acquires 2) _____ like road rage.
How can AI learn like humans?	Machine learning is based on algorithms, a machine language that 3) _____. As the algorithm gains experience, it 4) _____ itself. Over time the program actually gets smarter.
Why can't machines become a danger to human society?	A robot is 5) _____ but a shell powering the technology. They are very powerful but they can't do 6) _____.

### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

road rage /reɪdʒ/ *n.* 公路暴力 (指路上的驾驶者对其他驾驶者的暴力和愤怒行为)

algorithm /'ælgə,rɪðə:m/ *n.* 演算法; 计算程序

diagnose /'daɪəg,nəʊz/ *v.* 诊断

shell /ʃel/ *n.* 壳

mixed up *a.* 糊涂的

### PROPER NAMES

Netflix /'netfliks/ 网飞 (美国网络视频订阅公司)

Siri /'sɪəri/ 苹果智能语音控制功能

Tokyo /'təʊkjəʊ/ 东京 (日本首都)

### CULTURE NOTES

**Industrial Revolution (工业革命):**

It refers to the process of change from an agrarian (农业的), handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture in modern history. This process began in England in the 18th century and from there spread to other parts of the world.



**2** Watch the video clip again and decide whether each of the following statements is true (T) or false (F).

- 1 People in the AI age have realized that there's a computer that makes decisions.
- 2 Machine learning is one of the most exciting areas of AI.
- 3 Ask a weather robot what time it is in Tokyo and it will give you the answer.
- 4 AI takes on the repetitive tasks of our jobs so we can master strategy and relationships.

## Thinking and speaking

**3** Since AI is so clever, will it take our jobs and make our work no longer useful? Work in groups and discuss the following questions.

- 1 What kinds of jobs will be affected by AI?
- 2 What kinds of jobs will never be replaced by AI?



# iPractice: Pronunciation

## Plosives with no audible release

When a plosive (/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/) is followed by another plosive, the release of the first plosive cannot be heard, being masked by the hold of the second plosive.

For example:

background      helicopter      September      obtain  
lead to          a threat to      big kite

- 1 Listen to the following sentences and underline the plosives which have no audible release.
  - 1 Both stories support the idea that science fiction is in fact the mother of invention.
  - 2 I don't see any reason to think that as machines become more intelligent, they would want to destroy us or do harm.
  - 3 California announced plans to open its roads up to self-driving vehicles with no human drivers.
  - 4 A hearing will be held next month to get the public opinions on the proposed rules.
  - 5 We've been led to expect flying cars that stay clear of traffic and robots that will make our weekday dinner.
- 2 Listen to the sentences in Exercise 1 again and take turns reading them to a partner.

# Unit project

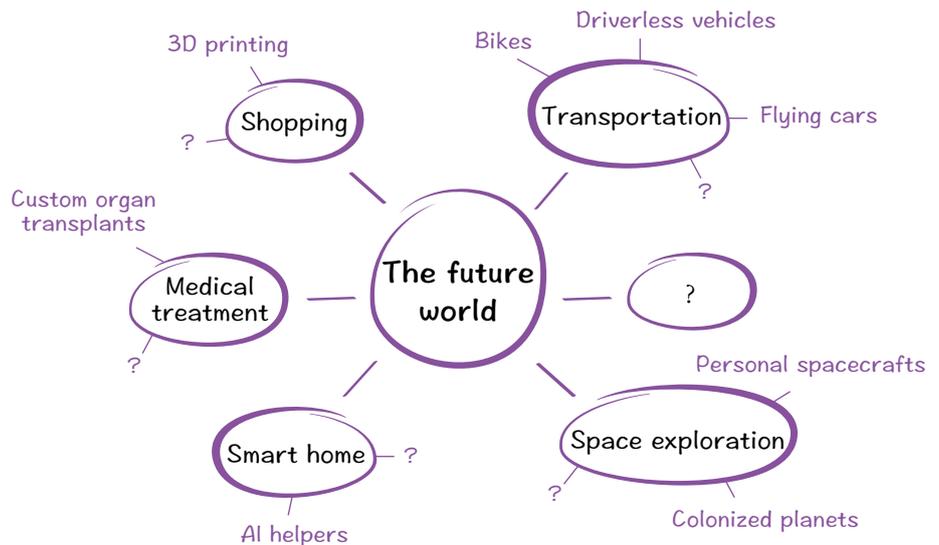
**Giving a speech**

## My vision of the future world

Your university is going to organize a public speaking contest on the topic of "The future world." Your group is going to participate in the contest and make a two-minute speech to describe your vision of the future world. The following steps may help you with the project.

**Step 1** Decide on the topic

In the listening and viewing parts, you have learned a lot about the trends and major developments in technology in today's world. Have you ever thought about what the future world will be like with the coming technological and scientific changes? Work in groups of four to five to decide which aspect of the future world you'd like to describe. You may find the following mind map helpful.



Your topic: \_\_\_\_\_



## Step 2 Get the information needed

Now that you have decided on the aspect of the future world you want to describe, go on to collect the information needed for your speech.

- 1 Try to collect the information needed for your topic in various ways, such as surfing the Internet, going to the library, consulting an expert of your university in science and technology, etc.
- 2 Think about how you can present the information and the materials that will help you, for example, showing some photos or taking quotations from the expert.

## Step 3 Write a draft of your speech

Everything is ready and it's time to write a draft. Structure your draft into three parts. Pay special attention to the main body. The following outline may help you structure your draft.

### Outline

**Introduction:** Introduce the topic and relate the topic to the audience. If possible you can use questions or quotes to attract attention.

**Body:** Describe your vision of the future world. Use some examples to support your ideas.

**Conclusion:** Reinforce the central idea and try to be brief but powerful.

## Step 4 Revise your draft

Discuss your draft with your group members:

- Which part satisfies you and which part needs to be improved?
- Are the expressions properly used or not?
- Is the vision described clearly?

## Step 5 Give your speech

Give your speech to the class. The class votes on the most interesting vision of the future world.

# Further listening

## News report

### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

tablet /'tæblət/ *n.* (计算机的)  
输入板, 手写板  
fine /faɪn/ *n.* 罚款

### PROPER NAMES

Dubai /dju:'baɪ/ 迪拜 (组成阿拉伯联合酋长国的酋长国之一)

Listen to a news report and choose the best answer to each of the questions you hear.

- 1 A. To fight crime.  
B. To give directions.  
C. To welcome guests.  
D. To answer questions.
- 2 A. Reading sign language.  
B. Reading facial expressions.  
C. Analyzing people's thoughts and emotions.  
D. Expressing opinions by nodding or shaking its head.
- 3 A. 20 percent.  
B. 25 percent.  
C. 30 percent.  
D. 35 percent.

## Conversation

### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

UFO *n.* (Unidentified Flying Object) 不明飞行物  
solar /'səʊlə/ system *n.*  
太阳系

### CULTURE NOTES

E.T.:

It refers to the little alien in the 1982 American science fiction movie *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*. In this movie, this alien is stranded (滞留) on Earth.

Listen to a conversation and choose the best answer to each of the questions you hear.

- 1 A. Intelligent life exists.  
B. Intelligent life does not exist.  
C. Intelligent life has placed a foot on our planet.  
D. Intelligent life may not know the existence of Earth.
- 2 A. 7 light years.  
B. 17 light years.  
C. 70 light years.  
D. 700 light years.
- 3 A. Some scientists do not believe in UFO's.  
B. Some scientists have received signals from other planets.  
C. Some scientists believe their signals can reach only a few stars.  
D. Some scientists have been sending signals into space for about a century.

## Passage

Listen to a passage and choose the best answer to each of the questions you hear.

- 1 A. Newton.  
B. Einstein.  
C. Hawking.  
D. Archimedes.
  
- 2 A. Having a bath.  
B. Being on a vacation.  
C. Riding a streetcar home.  
D. Thinking in his study room.
  
- 3 A. After physical exercise.  
B. After continuous hard work.  
C. After sufficient relaxation and rest.  
D. After a lot of communication with others.

### WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

eureka /jʊ'ri:kə/ *interj.* 我发现了 (因找到问题的解决方法或发现某物等而发出的欢呼)  
flash /flæʃ/ *n.* 突然理解; 顿悟

### PROPER NAMES

Archimedes /,ɑ:kɪ'mi:di:z/  
阿基米德 (古希腊数学家和发明家)

Einstein /'aɪnstain/ 爱因斯坦  
(美国物理学家和数学家)  
special theory of relativity  
/,ri:lə'tɪvəti/ 狭义相对论  
Bern /bɜ:n/ 伯尔尼 (瑞士首都)

