

STUDENT'S WORKSHEET · BUSINESS ENGLISH

Does AI make professionals more productive?

LEVEL
C1 · Advanced

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Reading · Speaking · Grammar · Vocabulary

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- analyse a news article about an experimental study
- use hedging language to report research cautiously
- identify the limitations of a study
- discuss responsible use of AI at work

Key vocabulary

productivity · control group · evaluator · inequality · limitation · white-collar · hype · generalise · fact-check · prompt

Materials

- this worksheet
- article: *Study finds ChatGPT boosts worker productivity for some writing tasks* (MIT News)

1 Warm up

SPEAKING

Look at the pictures. What can you see? How are they connected to the topic? Then answer the questions with your teacher.



PICTURE A · an AI chat assistant



PICTURE B · writing and editing a text

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1. Which writing tasks take up most of your working time?
2. Have you used an AI tool to write at work? What was the result?
3. What worries you about using AI for professional writing?

2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A: Match the words with the definitions.

white-collar (adj) | hype (n) | control group (n) | limitation (n) | generalise (v) | evaluator (n)

1. _____ exaggerated public excitement about something new
2. _____ the group in an experiment that does not receive the treatment, used for comparison
3. _____ a person who judges the quality of something
4. _____ a weakness or factor that reduces how far results can be trusted or applied
5. _____ connected with office and professional work rather than manual work
6. _____ to apply a result from one situation to many others

Part B: Research verbs. Complete the sentences with the verbs in the box (in the correct form).

find | suggest | measure | assign | replicate | rate

1. The study _____ that ChatGPT reduced completion time.
2. Participants were randomly _____ to two groups.
3. Independent evaluators _____ the quality of each text.
4. The results _____ that less experienced workers benefit most.
5. The researchers _____ time in minutes.
6. Other teams need to _____ the study in real workplaces.

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3 Main input: read and learn

READING · GRAMMAR

In 2023, two MIT researchers tested how ChatGPT affects professional writing. Read the first two paragraphs, then from "To study generative AI's effect..." to the end of the paragraph that begins "The experiment demonstrates...".

ARTICLE

Study finds ChatGPT boosts worker productivity for some writing tasks
MIT News (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) · Zach Winn · 14 July 2023 · selected paragraphs, about 500 words (3 minutes) · free
https://news.mit.edu/2023/study-finds-chatgpt-boosts-worker-productivity-writing-0714

Read the first two paragraphs. Answer: By how much did ChatGPT reduce the time to complete tasks? By how much did quality increase?

Language focus: hedging: reporting research cautiously

Careful writers avoid overstating results. Compare the strong and hedged versions.

Strong claim	Hedged version	Hedging device
AI makes workers more productive.	AI may make some workers more productive.	modal verbs: may, might, could
The gains are real.	The gains appear to be real in this context.	appear / seem to; limiting phrases
AI reduces inequality.	The data suggest that AI tends to reduce inequality between workers.	suggest, indicate, tend to
Real-world gains are smaller.	Real-world gains are likely to be somewhat smaller.	likely / unlikely to; somewhat, relatively

Practice: Rewrite the strong claims using the hedging device in brackets.

1. ChatGPT improves the quality of all professional writing. (may / some) → _____
2. Weaker writers benefit most. (The data suggest) → _____
3. The time savings will be the same in real offices. (unlikely to) → _____
4. Workers who try ChatGPT keep using it. (tend to) → _____
5. Generative AI will change white-collar work. (is likely to) → _____

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4 Reading comprehension and analysis

READING

Part A: Read again. Are the statements true (T) or false (F)? Circle.

1. The participants were college-educated professionals from six occupations. T / F
2. All participants used ChatGPT for both tasks. T / F
3. The ChatGPT group finished the second task 11 minutes faster than the control group. T / F
4. Evaluators rated the quality of ChatGPT users' work 18% higher. T / F
5. Workers who scored lower on the first task benefited least from ChatGPT. T / F
6. Two weeks later, workers exposed to ChatGPT were twice as likely to use it in their real jobs. T / F

Part B: Choose the best answer.

1. Which of these was one of the tasks in the study?
   (a) A financial audit. (b) A software program. (c) A cover letter for a grant application.
2. Why might the real-world speed gains be smaller than in the experiment?
   (a) Companies don't allow ChatGPT. (b) Workers have to fact-check and write prompts.
   (c) Real tasks are always shorter.
3. What effect did ChatGPT have on inequality between workers?
   (a) It reduced it. (b) It increased it. (c) It had no effect.
4. Where was the research paper published?
   (a) Nature. (b) MIT Technology Review. (c) Science.

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Part C: Analyse and evaluate.

1. Identify one limitation of the study and explain how it could affect the conclusions.

2. If AI helps weaker writers most, what could this mean for hiring, training and pay?

3. Under what conditions would you allow your team to use AI for client-facing writing?

5 Speaking practice and discussion

SPEAKING

Part A: Choose TWO cue cards. Talk about each card with your teacher for 1–2 minutes.

Cue card 1: AI at my company

- Current policy
- Tools used
- Concerns

Cue card 2: Quality vs speed

- When speed matters
- When quality matters
- Trade-offs

Cue card 3: Skills and inequality

- Junior staff
- Senior staff
- Training

Cue card 4: Trust and accuracy

- Fact-checking
- Responsibility
- Errors

Cue card 5: Research and hype

- Reading studies critically
- Headlines
- Evidence

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Part B: Answer the questions with your teacher. Give reasons and examples.

1. Which parts of your job could AI realistically speed up, and which should remain fully human?
2. Who should be responsible when AI-assisted writing contains an error?
3. If AI narrows the gap between strong and weak performers, how should companies reward expertise?
4. How can professionals avoid being misled by hype about new technologies?
5. Should companies require employees to disclose when they have used AI? Why? / Why not?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Three hedging expressions I'll use: _____
2. The finding I find most significant: _____
3. The study suggests that _____ ; however, _____
4. My rule for using AI at work: _____

Takeaway: In a controlled experiment, ChatGPT cut writing time by about 40% and raised quality by 18%, helping weaker writers most — but real-world gains are likely to be smaller. Read research critically: look at the tasks, the sample and the limitations.

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+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Write a critical summary (200–250 words) of the study for your company's leadership team. Report the findings, evaluate two limitations and make a cautious recommendation. Use at least five hedging devices.

Alternative activity:

Draft a one-page "AI writing policy" for your team (what is allowed, what must be checked, who is responsible) and present it to your teacher in the next class.

References

Winn, Z. (2023, July 14). *Study finds ChatGPT boosts worker productivity for some writing tasks*. MIT News. https://news.mit.edu/2023/study-finds-chatgpt-boosts-worker-productivity-writing-0714

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for C1 learners.

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