

Chatterbox #180 – Artificial intelligence

Episode description

Today, technology is moving faster than ever. What crazy new technologies do you think we'll have in the near future? In today's Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Suzanne have a conversation about one of the most exciting new technologies: artificial intelligence. Join them as they discuss a possible future where machines can think like human beings!

Fun fact

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is a concept with a receding definition. This means that what we consider AI today will no longer be considered AI in the future. This is because once people understand how something "intelligent" works, they no longer believe it is truly intelligent. For example, Apple's Siri would have been considered marvellous AI 40 or 50 years ago, but today people understand it as voice recognition software, not as artificial intelligence.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- Gloom and doom
- To put on your thinking cap
- Rip it off like a Band-Aid
- To take over
- Robot



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name's Andrew.

Susan: And I'm Susan.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

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Andrew: Hey, Susan?

Susan: Yes?

Andrew: I thought you were Suzanne.

Susan: Suzanne is not here today.

Andrew: What? Where'd she go?

Susan: I am the artificial intelligence **robot** for Suzanne. I am Susan.

Andrew: Susan, you need to get Suzanne. We need her for this podcast.

Susan: But I am a **robot**. I can do the podcast instead.

Andrew: Well, you know what? Today we're doing a Chatterbox episode all about artificial intelligence. So this is great. We have a real-life artificial intelligence bot to speak with us today. Wow, great timing!

Suzanne: We ... Susan, no. I told you to clean the dishes. Sorry about that, Andrew.

Andrew: Hey, Suzanne. You're here.

Suzanne: Yeah, whoof!

Andrew: Wow, you got rid of your AI bot?

- Suzanne: Yeah, she wanted to **take over** and do the podcast. Gosh!
- Andrew: Not today. Not this time. OK, Suzanne, so like I was saying, today we're talking about artificial intelligence. Do you think you could give our listeners a very simple definition of artificial intelligence? What is this?
- Suzanne: It's really simple. It's intelligence that is demonstrated by a machine, so not a human.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, right. So a machine—probably a computer—that can learn and can become self-aware and solve really big problems by itself.
- I find that people can be divided into two camps.
- Suzanne: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Some people are really interested in artificial intelligence and the role that it will play in the future. Other people don't care at all. So I would say that I'm in the first camp. I really am interested in this topic.
- What about you, Suzanne? Are you interested in it? Have you thought about it much? What camp are you in?
- Suzanne: I'm definitely not in the camp of I don't care or don't think about it. I have only seen examples of artificial intelligence on TV or in movies. But I haven't really experienced artificial intelligence, except for my **robot**, Susan. Ugh ...
- I do think about it, but it kind of scares me because I find the human qualities and human connections so important in the world that I get kind of scared that maybe **robots** would **take over** the world.
- Andrew: Well, you're not alone in this thought, because some of the world's smartest people—like Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk, and Bill Gates—they've all warned about the potential dangers of AI, of artificial intelligence.
- But I also think there can be good things with AI. And so today, you and I will have a chat about AI, and we'll break this episode into two parts. The first part, I want to talk about the good news, the potential benefits of AI, the positive aspects.
- And then in the final half of the episode, we'll go to the **gloom and doom** and we'll talk the potential negative aspects of AI. Does that sound good to you?
- Suzanne: That sounds good to me.
- Andrew: OK. Let's start with the good news.

- Suzanne: OK. Good news first. Can you **put on your thinking cap** for a second?
- Suzanne: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: Thinking into the future, if artificial intelligence becomes a thing, if we can figure out how to invent artificial intelligence, what would be a potential positive aspect, in your opinion?
- Suzanne: I think we would have access to even more of the world, and more information.
- Andrew: Hmm.
- Suzanne: I think the speed at which we could communicate would be even faster than it is now, and that is exciting.
- Andrew: That is exciting. Can you imagine an artificial intelligence supercomputer that could act as a translator, a perfect translator for all of the world's languages? How cool would this be?
- Suzanne: Yeah! That would be amazing. And what about the idea of cars that can drive themselves and direct themselves, in traffic and across the country, like on big road trips?
- Andrew: This is such a cool idea to me. I drive but I honestly don't love driving—stresses me out a little bit because I don't trust other people. They're on their phone texting or ... I don't know. They're distracted. This is the scary part about driving.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: But if we had self-driving cars, wow! That would take the stress right out of it.
- Suzanne: Would it, though? Would you feel like you can trust a machine to drive itself?
- Andrew: I would trust it, yes.
- Suzanne: More than a person?
- Andrew: Yeah, because from what I've seen about self-driving cars so far, they are pretty good and they have cameras looking all over the place. They have lasers. They have tons of tech built into the car.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: So that it's more aware than a person can be.

- Suzanne: That's true.
- Andrew: I think right now, maybe the technology isn't perfect but in 5, 10 years, the speed of technology, the way that it progresses so fast, we're going to figure this one out. I'm really confident about it.
- Suzanne: That's really interesting. Additionally, the cars that would be programmed to be able to drive themselves, they would also have a uniform response to things.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Suzanne: Meaning ... Like if I'm driving and I just had a fight with my boyfriend, or you're driving and you've had too much coffee, maybe—you know—we go too fast or too slow. We have human responses that are individual and different.
- Whereas a car is programmed by a set of rules, a set of criteria, then they will respond in a very predictable way. And you won't have to worry, is that person too drunk? Is that person texting? Is that person having a conversation on their phone? You will just know the computer knows where to turn, how to stop, and when to move.
- Andrew: Yeah, and it should help the flow of traffic, too, so that there's fewer traffic jams, less congestion.
- Suzanne: Yeah. Maybe they'll even be able to fly.
- Andrew: Ooo. It's funny, in the '60s and '70s, movies that took place in the future, when they were making projections about the future, they always had flying cars.
- Suzanne: Like *Back to the Future*.
- Andrew: *Back to the Future, The Jetsons*.
- Suzanne: *The Jetsons*, yes.
- Andrew: But I don't know if this will become a reality. I think we're going to just have self-driving cars. That's my prediction.
- Suzanne: Yeah, first.
- Andrew: Another potential benefit of AI, in my opinion, is to do with health care. I think that artificial intelligence will help us to live longer and healthier lives.
- Suzanne: And how do you think they would manage that?

Andrew: Well, I read an article this week, actually, about a type of artificial intelligence that reviewed the medical records of cancer patients. And it was just as accurate as a human doctor in detecting cancer.

Suzanne: Wow!

Andrew: And they think that in the future, it will be 100% accurate. So I could see us using computers to detect diseases, maybe really early on, before they become severe. And it will be easier, more efficient, and more accurate than a human doctor.

So this could be great news for everybody.

Suzanne: Yeah, the machine could work all night long, so if there's an emergency in the middle of the night, health-wise, doctors don't have to be exhausted and tired. They can then be used for doing actual procedures, whereas the machines could maybe be there for the times when the doctors need to rest.

Andrew: Totally. I think we will always need human doctors.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: We have the expression bedside manner. This is an important concept in medicine, bedside manner. Can you quickly tell our listeners what bedside manner is?

Suzanne: Yeah. So bedside manner is the way doctors handle themselves next to the patient.

Andrew: Right.

Suzanne: The demeanor and the way that they care for the patient. You go to the hospital, not just to get fixed up or to have, you know, procedures done, but also to feel like you're being taken care of. And sometimes it's not just your physical body that needs to be taken care of, but also you need to feel calm, safe. Your emotions need to be taken care of as well, and you need to feel like you can trust the hospital and the people helping you, and that you're going to be OK.

And sometimes, if you're dealing with difficult news, a **robot** or AI machine may not be the nicest or easiest way to hear difficult news, because sometimes you need to hear it from a kind and warm and compassionate human.

- Andrew: You're absolutely right. So bedside manner is the way that your doctor interacts with you, right? We think that doctors need to have good bedside manner. They have to have a very kind relationship. They have to break difficult news to you gently, and they have to help you believe that when you're sick, that you can get better. I think they have to encourage you to become healthy again.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: I can't imagine an AI **robot** having good bedside manner. It just seems like something we need humans for.
- Suzanne: Yeah. And we don't even know if AI machines will actually have the capability to have human emotions and compassion. So I think that's one of the things that kind of leads us into the negative aspects of artificial intelligence. What do you think?
- Andrew: Yeah, let's go there. Let's ... Let's get into the doom and gloom. So we talked about some positive aspects, and I think there are many, many positive aspects of AI. It could be great, it could be super life-changing for everyone, AI.
- Suzanne: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: But with all technologies, there's positive aspects, there's negative aspects. And there are some potential huge negative aspects of AI. The first one that came to my mind is—and this goes back to the self-driving cars that we were talking about—is the potential that many, many people will lose their jobs.
- Suzanne: Yeah. This is really something that's already beginning, I think.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: I know that in the US, with the growth of computerized manufacturing and communications, many jobs have become obsolete, or no longer existing. And that's scary, and people need to then learn different skills. And maybe for many years they've been doing one, two, or three skills, and now they have to learn four, five, and six skills. It can be quite difficult.
- Andrew: I saw recently that the very first self-driving delivery truck made a delivery in the USA.
- Suzanne: Oh my gosh.
- Andrew: Do you know what the delivery was, Suzanne? Can you guess?

- Suzanne: Um, hmm ...
- Andrew: Cases of beer.
- Suzanne: What?
- Andrew: But, yeah, a self-driving truck delivered a shipment of beer to a distribution centre all by itself, and people freaked out because if truck drivers suddenly don't have a job, this will mean massive layoffs in countries like Canada and the USA.
- Suzanne: Yeah. It's not merely them learning another skill, which is true. That's more of the positive, optimistic way of looking at it. Well, they can learn a new skill and do something else. But it really has quite an impact, a negative impact on the economy of a country when a massive amount of people are out of work.
- Because they are not then spending money, and money isn't circulated. And that becomes, you know, a signal for a depression within the country.
- Andrew: Yeah, and I think saying that people can just retrain and find another job, it's easier said than done, right? Especially if you're a little older, it could be hard to find another trade and retrain for that trade and find employment.
- So, yeah, I'm worried about this aspect of AI.
- Suzanne: Yeah. And like I said, it's already beginning and I think, as it grows, this is definitely something that people are afraid of.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- In your opinion, what's the scariest aspect of AI?
- Suzanne: Oh! Oh my gosh, you want to know?
- Andrew: Just **rip off that Band-Aid**. Let me know.
- Suzanne: I'm terrified that ... I don't know. Enemies on the planet Earth, for example. Um, you know, say countries that are not agreeing on things.
- Andrew: Bad guys.
- Suzanne: Create and develop competing AI devices or machines. And they become like an army. And then they have a war, and then it's like the humans can't even, you know, stand up to that amount of strength and intelligence. And it's easy to manufacture many, many **robots**. You can't manufacture many, many human soldiers. So there's no end to the destruction that could possibly happen.

- Andrew: It's kind of like a story from a James Bond movie, where some evil person or dictator somewhere in a faraway country has this technology that he's developing.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: And James Bond has to go stop him before he takes over the world. And ...
- Suzanne: Yes, before it's too late.
- Andrew: So this is scary, I agree. I hope that if we do develop artificial intelligence, that we do so in a way where all countries are participating equally, and we don't have one country that abuses it and uses it to their advantage over weaker countries.
- Suzanne: Yes, yes. And I think the other option would also be to see if there exists a real, live James Bond, and maybe ... I'm just kidding.
- Andrew: It's you.
- Suzanne: You must stop them!
- Andrew: You must stop them.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Yeah. Well, Suzanne, maybe we should end on that positive note.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Thanks for spending a bit of time with us today. We really appreciate it.
- Suzanne: Yeah, we really do. And before we let you go, we just want to remind you to visit our website, Culips.com.
- Andrew: While you're there, check out our membership options that we offer. Culips members get unlimited access to our learning materials.
- What are the learning materials? Well, they include transcripts, vocabulary definitions, and quizzes for each and every Culips episode. It's really a fantastic way to study with us, and we highly recommend it.
- Suzanne: Yeah, so check it out today.
- Andrew: We're on Facebook at facebook.com/culipspodcast. If you haven't liked us yet on Facebook, now is a good chance to do so. And you can also drop us a line through our Facebook page.

Suzanne: Yeah, you really should. We really enjoy your comments and questions. So please leave a comment, ask us a question, give us some feedback, message us through Facebook or our website.

Andrew: That's it for us. We'll be back soon with another brand-new Culips episode.

Suzanne: Bye, guys.

Andrew: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Gloom and doom

Gloom and doom is an idiom with two uses. With either meaning, **gloom and doom** is often preceded by “all” or “full of” and follows directly after the verb to be.

In its first use, **gloom and doom** is used to refer to sad or tragic events. For example, if someone told you their weekend was **all gloom and doom**, they mean that depressing or bad things happened to them over the weekend.

When using **gloom and doom** to talk about sad events, you can also use it as a noun. This is the meaning and construction Andrew used in this episode when he said we would turn to “the **gloom and doom**” in the second half of the episode. In other words, we discussed the sad, scary, or depressing aspects of AI in the second part of the episode.

The second use of **gloom and doom** is to refer to a feeling or attitude of hopelessness. So, when you feel that things can only get worse and you have no hope for the future, you can say you’re **full of gloom and doom**.

Here are a couple more examples with both uses of **gloom and doom**:

Craig:	Have you looked at the news lately?
Andrea:	No, I haven’t. It’s full of gloom and doom . I try to stay away from stories that make me sad!
Craig:	I guess you’re right. There have been a lot of tragic events in the news lately.

David:	How was your coffee date?
Martha:	With Mina? The same as always—depressing!
David:	Why’s that?
Martha:	Mina’s all gloom and doom . She’s the least positive person I’ve ever met!
David:	She sounds like a difficult person to be friends with! I can’t handle being around people who can’t look on the positive side of life.

To put on your thinking cap

To put on your thinking cap is an idiomatic phrase that means to think deeply about something in order to fix a problem. The problem could be simple or complex. The key thing is that when you **put on your thinking cap**, you're not just daydreaming; you're trying to accomplish something.

Imagine that you're faced with a difficult problem or situation, one to which you don't know the answer or solution. In these situations, you might take the time to consider the situation and try to think of the best solution. This is called **putting on your thinking cap**!

You can use **to put on your thinking cap** to give the advice or state the request that someone takes time to think about something. For example, in this episode Suzanne and Andrew talk about the potential benefits of artificial intelligence. When Andrew asks Suzanne what those might be, she says, "Can you **put on your thinking cap** for a second?" In other words, she's asking Andrew to come up with examples of the potential benefits of artificial intelligence.

Here are a couple more examples with **to put on your thinking cap**:

Jessica:	OK, so our guests are going to start arriving in an hour. What time do you want me to put the chicken in the oven?
Martin:	Well, it'll need about an hour to cook.
Jessica:	Yes, but when do you want to serve dinner? Also, how should we handle heating up the other dishes? Should I put the chicken in at 7:00? How about the dessert?
Martin:	Wait, wait! I'm going to need to put on my thinking cap for a second here and come up with a cooking schedule. I'll give you an answer in a few minutes.

Amy:	Carlos, should I quit my job? I really don't like the work I'm doing, but the money is good.
Carlos:	I don't know—that's a pretty tough question. I would say it's up to you to decide. It sounds like you need to put on your thinking cap .
Amy:	You're right. Maybe I'll take the time to make a list of pros and cons!
Carlos:	That sounds like a great idea! Good luck.

Rip it off like a Band-Aid

Rip it off like a Band-Aid is another popular culture saying that comes from *Seinfeld*, a TV show from the 1990s.

This saying is easiest to understand if you imagine it. Everyone knows that taking off a Band-Aid is unpleasant. If you rip a Band-Aid off slowly, it makes the discomfort last a while. That's why it's common to rip Band-Aids off quickly, to make the experience go quickly as possible.

So, when you **rip something off like a Band-Aid**, you treat another uncomfortable or painful experience just like ripping off a Band-Aid. In other words, you do the unpleasant activity as quickly as possible.

Next time you're presented with a painful or unpleasant task, try getting it over with as quickly as possible. In other words, **rip it off like a Band-Aid!**

Here are a couple more examples with **rip it off like a Band-Aid**:

Dane:	Ugh, I can't believe my parents are going to show up for their visit in less than a day!
Winona:	Why's that so bad? Aren't you excited to see them?
Dane:	I'm excited to see them, but I'm not excited about having to clean my entire apartment before they get here.
Winona:	That's all? C'mon, rip it off like a Band-Aid! Stop complaining about it and go do it! You'll feel a lot better if you just get it out of the way.
Dane:	You're right—I should just go do it right now.

Terry:	I think I have to break up with Mark. When do you think I should do it? Or wait, should I try talking things out with him again?
Heather:	If you've already decided that you don't want to date him anymore, don't drag out the process. Rip it off like a Band-Aid!
Terry:	You're right, I shouldn't make this terrible process last any longer than it needs to. It's just such a difficult thing to do.
Heather:	I believe in you! You can do this!

To take over

To take over is a phrasal verb that means to assume control or responsibility for something. When you **take over** something from someone, you take charge of that thing.

For example, in this episode Suzanne says that her AI, Susan, tried **to take over** and co-host the episode. In other words, Susan tried to record the episode instead of Suzanne recording the episode. If Susan had actually recorded the episode, you could have said that she had **taken over** the responsibility of co-hosting this episode.

Asking someone **to take over** is a simple way of asking them to do a task you're currently doing. For example, if you were doing the dishes, you might ask someone **to take over** for you. In other words, you'd be asking them to do the dishes instead of doing them yourself.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take over**:

Angela:	Jason, you look really tired. Is everything OK?
Jason:	Yeah, I'm fine. I am really tired, though. I think I'm working too many shifts at the restaurant lately.
Angela:	If you're working too much, why don't you ask one of your coworkers to take over some of your shifts?
Jason:	That's a good idea! I'm definitely going to see if I can get someone to work at least a couple shifts for me next week.
Angela:	Do it! You deserve the break.

Diana:	Hey, Marc, good to see you! How was work today?
Marc:	Oh man, I can't stand the new guy!
Diana:	Why not?
Marc:	He's the worst. He's only been working at our office for a week and he's already trying to take over some of my projects! He doesn't even know what he's doing yet, but still thinks he's better than the rest of us.
Diana:	He sounds awful! You might be able to make the situation work for you, though. Why don't you let him take over the work you don't want to do?
Marc:	That's brilliant!

Robot

Robot is a noun with two related meanings. The first meaning of **robot** is mostly fictional. In today's episode, we talked about artificial intelligence. When people think of AI, one of the first things they might think about is the fictional type of **robot**: a machine that looks and acts like a human being.

There are many examples of this type of **robot** in TV shows, movies, and books. Have you ever seen *Star Wars*? C-3PO is an example of a typical fictional **robot** because it is shaped like a human, and can speak and think like a human.

The other meaning of **robot** is a machine that performs tasks automatically, meaning that they don't need to be operated by humans. This type of **robot** is very real. Industrial robots are commonly used in manufacturing. For example, many parts of cars are made and assembled by **robots**!

Here are a couple more examples with both meanings of **a robot**:

Steve:	Do you want to watch a movie with me?
Alice:	Sure—as long as we watch anything but science fiction.
Steve:	What, you don't like sci-fi? Why not?
Alice:	I don't hate all sci-fi! I'm just really scared of robots .
Steve:	You're afraid of robots ? I've never heard of someone with that fear before.
Alice:	When I was a kid, I had nightmares about robots taking over the government and enslaving humanity. I never want to watch movies with robots again!

Paul:	Darn, the vacuum cleaner broke again! We really need to get a new one.
Emily:	Why don't we get one of those robot vacuum cleaners? Wouldn't it be nice to have a machine do all the vacuuming for you?
Paul:	I don't know, those things look pretty silly and I'm sure they take way longer to get the job done than a traditional vacuum.
Emily:	C'mon! We live in an age where we can have a little robot helper, even if it's just for vacuuming. It would be fun!

Quiz

1. **A robot is a machine that:**
 - a) can think for itself
 - b) performs tasks automatically
 - c) looks like a human
 - d) must be operated by a human

2. **If someone wants to assume responsibility for an activity that you are responsible for, you can say they want:**
 - a) to take up
 - b) to sit out
 - c) to put away
 - d) to take over

3. **True or false: To put on your thinking cap is to take the time to think seriously about a problem in order to find a resolution.**
 - a) true
 - b) false

4. **If you say someone is all gloom and doom, you mean they have a(n) _____ attitude.**
 - a) upbeat
 - b) depressing
 - c) bad
 - d) realistic

5. **If you want to advise someone to do a difficult task quickly, you could say:**
 - a) "Rip it off like a Band-Aid."
 - b) "Shake it like a Polaroid picture."
 - c) "Suck it up."
 - d) "Take your time."

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.d 3.a 4.b 5.a

Episode credits

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