Communication Skills in The Age of Artificial Intelligence: Rethinking Human Communication in an AI-Mediated World

Govind Balu Sude,
Lecturer in English, Department of Science and Humanities, Government Polytechnic, Nanded

***Abstract*—Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an important part of contemporary communication. Generative AI systems can write emails, correct grammar, translate languages, summarise information, generate presentations, and produce extended texts within seconds. These developments raise an important question: if machines can increasingly perform linguistic tasks traditionally associated with communication, what does it mean to be an effective communicator in the age of AI? This paper examines how artificial intelligence is transforming rather than eliminating the importance of human communication skills. Using a qualitative narrative literature-review approach and conceptual analysis, the study draws on scholarship concerning communicative competence, AI-mediated communication, AI literacy, generative AI, and language education. It argues that although AI can improve linguistic accuracy, efficiency, and accessibility, effective communication continues to depend on human capacities such as critical thinking, empathy, contextual understanding, active listening, and ethical judgment. The paper proposes the concept of AI-assisted communicative competence, defined as the ability to communicate effectively, critically, contextually, and ethically while using AI as a tool without surrendering human communicative agency. The study concludes that communication education in the AI era should combine traditional language skills with AI literacy, verification, ethical awareness, and responsible human–AI collaboration.**

***Index Terms*—Artificial Intelligence, Communication Skills, AI-Mediated Communication, Generative AI, AI Literacy, Communicative Competence**

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication has always developed alongside technology. Writing, printing, telephones, radio, television, and the internet have each changed the ways in which people create and exchange information. Artificial intelligence represents a significant new stage in this development because contemporary AI does not merely provide a channel through which people communicate. It can increasingly participate in producing the message itself.

Generative artificial intelligence can draft emails, summarise articles, translate passages, formulate arguments, correct grammar, and generate extended texts. Consequently, communication is no longer necessarily a process in which a human creates the entire message and technology merely transmits it. AI can now modify, augment, and generate language on behalf of the communicator.

Hancock, Naaman, and Levy describe this development through the concept of Artificial Intelligence-Mediated Communication (AI-MC), in which AI modifies, augments, or generates messages in interpersonal communication. (academic.oup.com)

This development creates an important problem for the traditional understanding of communication skills. Effective communication has generally been associated with abilities such as speaking clearly, writing accurately, listening carefully, understanding context, and adapting language to different audiences. If AI can perform an increasing amount of linguistic production, however, communication competence must be reconsidered.

The central question of this paper is therefore: How are communication skills changing in an environment in which artificial intelligence can increasingly produce and modify human language?

This paper argues that AI does not make human communication skills unnecessary. Instead, it changes their function. As machines become increasingly

capable of producing grammatically correct and stylistically polished language, human communicators must place greater emphasis on evaluating information, understanding context, recognising emotions, exercising critical judgment, and accepting responsibility for the final message.

This issue is especially important in education. Students can use AI to generate outlines, essays, summaries, translations, and grammatical corrections. These tools can support learning, but excessive dependence can also raise concerns about independent thinking, authorship, accuracy, and academic integrity. Research on large language models in education identifies both their potential and their limitations, particularly the need for human oversight and critical evaluation (Kasneci et al., 2023).

The present paper therefore proposes the concept of AI-assisted communicative competence as a way of understanding communication skills in the contemporary AI environment.

II. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE AI ERA

Communication is more than the transmission of information. It involves the relationship between communicator, message, audience, purpose, context, medium, and interpretation.

Traditional approaches to language education sometimes placed considerable emphasis on grammatical accuracy. However, the development of communicative approaches demonstrated that grammatical knowledge alone does not guarantee effective communication. Canale and Swain's influential model established a broader understanding of communicative competence in which language must be used appropriately within social situations. This distinction becomes particularly important in the age of AI.

AI systems are highly capable of manipulating linguistic form. They can generate grammatically correct sentences, organise paragraphs, suggest vocabulary, and adjust tone. Yet communicative success cannot be reduced to linguistic correctness.

Consider a manager responding to an employee who has made a serious mistake. AI may produce a grammatically excellent response, but the manager must determine what should actually be communicated. The appropriate response depends on the relationship, the seriousness of the situation, the employee's circumstances, organisational culture, and the desired outcome.

This demonstrates the difference between language production and communicative judgment.

Communication competence in the AI era can therefore be understood through several related abilities:

- Linguistic competence: knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, structure, and discourse.
- Contextual competence: ability to adapt communication to a particular situation.
- Interpersonal competence: understanding emotions, relationships, and social expectations.
- Critical competence: evaluating information and identifying inaccurate claims.
- Ethical competence: considering privacy, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and consequences.

AI can support some of these abilities, but it cannot remove the human responsibility associated with them.

III. AI-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN AGENCY

AI-mediated communication differs from earlier forms of computer-mediated communication because AI can intervene directly in the content of a message. Hancock, Naaman, and Levy argue that AI can modify, augment, or generate messages on behalf of communicators.

AI involvement may occur at different levels. A person may write an email and use AI to correct grammar. Alternatively, a person may provide several ideas and ask AI to transform them into a professional message. At a more extensive level, a person may provide only a general instruction and allow AI to generate the complete communication. These situations reveal that AI involvement exists on a continuum.

The central issue is consequently not whether AI is used, but how communicative responsibility is distributed between the human and the machine.

AI can be a valuable communicative assistant. It can help users overcome language difficulties, improve clarity, translate information, and organise ideas. However, assistance becomes problematic when it becomes substitution.

A student who asks AI to identify grammatical errors in a personally written essay is using the technology differently from a student who submits an entirely AI-generated essay. Similarly, a professional who asks AI to improve the clarity of an email retains more communicative agency than someone who allows AI to generate all interpersonal communication automatically.

Human agency must therefore remain at the centre of AI-mediated communication.

IV. AI AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF WRITING

Writing is one of the communication skills most directly affected by generative AI. AI can now draft emails, reports, essays, advertisements, summaries, and other forms of text. There are clear benefits. AI can identify grammatical problems, suggest vocabulary, reorganise information, translate languages, and generate alternative forms of expression. For multilingual users, these functions may improve access to academic and professional communication.

However, writing is not simply the production of sentences. It is also a process of thinking. When students organise an argument, select evidence, search for appropriate words, and revise unclear ideas, they are developing intellectual abilities. If AI performs all these activities, students may receive polished language without experiencing the cognitive process through which writing develops.

This creates an important distinction between AI-supported writing and AI-substituted writing.

AI-supported writing can enhance communication while leaving the communicator responsible for the ideas and final message. AI-substituted writing may reduce the user's active participation in the intellectual process.

Another concern is the preservation of individual voice. AI-generated language generally aims for clarity and broad acceptability. If users repeatedly allow AI to rewrite their communication, their writing may become more standardised.

Human writing is valuable partly because it expresses individuality. Vocabulary, rhythm, examples, cultural references, humour, and rhetorical choices contribute to a distinctive voice.

AI should therefore help individuals express their ideas rather than replace the identity contained within those ideas.

V. CRITICAL THINKING AND INFORMATION EVALUATION

One of the most important communication skills in the AI era is critical thinking. Generative AI can produce fluent and convincing language without guaranteeing factual accuracy. AI systems may generate incorrect information, unsupported claims, or inaccurate references. Research on generative AI in education has therefore emphasised the importance of verification and human oversight (Kasneci et al., 2023).

This changes the nature of communication. When information is difficult to obtain, communication requires finding information. When information can be generated almost instantly, communication increasingly requires deciding which information should be trusted.

The communicator must therefore become an evaluator and verifier.

Critical communication requires questions such as:

- What is the source of this information?
- Is the claim supported by evidence?
- Can the information be independently verified?
- Does the response distinguish fact from opinion?
- Has important context been omitted?
- Does the output contain bias or unsupported assumptions?

These questions are particularly important in academic communication. Students should not assume that an AI-generated citation is genuine or that an AI-generated summary accurately represents an original source.

AI can assist research, but the responsibility for verifying information remains with the researcher.

The development of AI consequently increases rather than decreases the importance of critical thinking.

VI. EMPATHY, LISTENING, AND CONTEXT

Another group of communication skills that remains strongly human is empathy.

AI can generate language that appears sympathetic or encouraging. However, producing empathetic

language is not equivalent to participating in a human emotional relationship.

Human communication involves personal experience, relationships, shared history, emotional circumstances, and social expectations.

For example, when communicating with a grieving friend, the most effective response may not be the most polished one. A simple personal expression may communicate more effectively than a carefully generated AI response.

Similarly, teachers need to understand the emotional circumstances of their students. A student struggling academically may need encouragement rather than a technically precise list of weaknesses. The appropriate communication depends on the individual and the situation.

This makes active listening increasingly important.

Contemporary digital communication often rewards speed. AI can generate a response almost immediately. Yet effective communication sometimes requires waiting, asking questions, acknowledging uncertainty, or simply listening.

AI tends to facilitate the generation of answers. Human communication often requires attention to the person behind the question.

Empathy, emotional intelligence, active listening, and interpersonal awareness should therefore remain central to communication education.

Context is equally important. The meaning of a statement depends not only on words but also on relationships, cultural expectations, timing, tone, and circumstances. A sentence appropriate in one professional environment may sound inappropriate in another.

Human communicators therefore require contextual intelligence. This is especially important in multilingual and multicultural environments. AI translation can reduce linguistic barriers, but translation is not simply the replacement of one word with another. Language carries cultural meanings, politeness conventions, social relationships, and emotional nuances.

AI can assist translation, but human users must determine whether the translated message communicates the intended meaning.

VII. TRUST, AUTHENTICITY, AND ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Trust is fundamental to communication. Recipients evaluate messages not only according to linguistic quality but also according to their perception of the communicator's intentions and authenticity. AI complicates this relationship.

If an individual sends a substantially AI-generated message, the recipient may assume that the language represents the person's own thoughts and feelings. This raises questions concerning authorship, transparency, and authenticity.

AI-assisted communication is not automatically dishonest. People have always used dictionaries, editors, translators, and other communication tools. The important question is whether the final message genuinely represents the communicator's intentions and whether the communicator accepts responsibility for it.

AI involvement can therefore be broadly understood in three forms:

1. AI-assisted expression – AI helps a person express their own ideas.
2. AI-generated expression – AI produces substantial content from human instructions.
3. AI-substituted communication – the human effectively delegates the communicative act to AI.

These forms should not automatically be treated as equivalent.

Ethical communication with AI also requires attention to privacy, bias, misinformation, academic integrity, and transparency.

Users should ask:

- Is the information accurate?
- Is AI appropriate in this situation?
- Has private information been entered into the system?
- Does the final message honestly represent the communicator?
- Should AI involvement be disclosed?
- Could the output reproduce bias?
- Who is responsible if the communication causes harm?

Technical competence alone cannot answer these questions. They require ethical judgment.

VIII. AI LITERACY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The growing role of AI means that communication education must increasingly include AI literacy. AI literacy is broader than knowing how to operate an AI application. It includes understanding AI, using it appropriately, evaluating its outputs, creating with it, and considering its ethical implications. Recent research has identified AI recognition, understanding, application, evaluation, creation, and ethical navigation as important dimensions of AI literacy (Almatrafi, Johri, & Lee, 2024).

These dimensions can be directly incorporated into communication education.

Students should learn to recognise when AI is involved in a communication process, understand its limitations, use it for appropriate purposes, evaluate its outputs, and retain responsibility for the final message.

UNESCO's *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research* similarly emphasises a human-centred approach to AI use, including ethical, safe, equitable, and meaningful implementation. English language education provides a particularly important context.

AI can support grammar, vocabulary, translation, conversational practice, and writing feedback. However, these benefits should supplement rather than replace human interaction. For example, teachers can ask students to write a paragraph independently and then compare it with an AI-generated revision. Students can identify what AI improved, what it changed unnecessarily, whether their personal voice was weakened, and whether the AI version introduced factual or interpretive problems. Such activities develop both language competence and AI literacy.

Speaking and listening must also remain central. A student who can generate an excellent presentation with AI may still struggle to answer an unexpected question or participate in spontaneous discussion. Debates, interviews, presentations, group discussions, and role-playing therefore remain essential.

IX. AI-ASSISTED COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The discussion leads to the central concept proposed in this paper: AI-assisted communicative competence. It may be defined as:

The ability to communicate effectively, critically, contextually, ethically, and empathetically while using artificial intelligence as a communicative aid without surrendering human judgment and responsibility.

This concept extends traditional communicative competence by recognising the technological conditions of contemporary communication.

It includes seven related dimensions:

Dimension	Central Question
Linguistic competence	Is the language clear and accurate?
Contextual competence	Is the message appropriate for the situation?
Critical competence	Is the information reliable?
Interpersonal competence	How will the audience experience the message?
Ethical competence	Is the communication responsible?
AI competence	Is AI being used appropriately?
Reflective competence	Should AI be used in this situation at all?

The final dimension is particularly significant.

The ability to use AI does not mean that AI should always be used.

A personal message to a grieving friend may require individual expression. A teacher's feedback may require personal attention. A researcher developing an original argument may need independent thought before consulting AI.

AI-assisted communicative competence therefore includes knowing when not to use AI.

X. CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence is transforming communication by moving beyond the role of a passive technological medium. Contemporary AI systems can participate directly in producing, modifying, translating, and organising language. This transformation requires a reconsideration of traditional communication skills.

However, the growing ability of machines to produce language does not make human communication skills less important. Instead, it makes their deeper dimensions more visible.

When AI can produce grammatically correct sentences, human communicators must become better

at evaluating meaning. When AI can generate information, humans must become better at verification. When AI can produce apparently empathetic language, humans must continue to develop genuine empathy. When AI can adapt language to a prompt, humans must remain responsible for understanding context. When AI can produce an entire message, humans must decide whether that message genuinely represents their intentions.

This paper has proposed AI-assisted communicative competence as a framework for understanding these changes. It combines traditional communication abilities with AI literacy, critical thinking, ethical judgment, contextual understanding, and reflective decision-making.

The central principle is that AI should assist communication without replacing human communicative agency.

For education, this means that students should not be taught merely how to generate better texts with AI. They should learn how to question AI, verify its information, revise its language, preserve their own voice, recognise its limitations, and determine when human communication should remain independent of AI.

The future of communication will therefore not necessarily be a competition between humans and machines. It will increasingly involve collaboration between humans and intelligent systems. The crucial issue is who remains responsible for meaning.

Artificial intelligence may increasingly help humans produce language, but communication remains fundamentally connected with relationships, intentions, values, contexts, and consequences. In the age of AI, effective communication is therefore not simply the ability to produce correct language. It is the ability to decide what should be communicated, why it should be communicated, how it should be communicated, whether the information is trustworthy, and what consequences may follow.

The future communicator is consequently not merely a speaker or writer but also an evaluator, listener, critical thinker, ethical decision-maker, and responsible user of artificial intelligence.

REFERENCES

[1] O. Almatrafi, A. Johri, and H. Lee, “A systematic review of AI literacy conceptualization, constructs, and implementation and assessment efforts (2019–2023),” *Computers and Education Open*, vol. 6, Art. no. 100173, 2024, doi: 10.1016/j.caeo.2024.100173.

[2] M. Canale and M. Swain, “Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing,” *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–47, 1980, doi: 10.1093/applin/I.1.1.

[3] J. T. Hancock, M. Naaman, and K. Levy, “AI-mediated communication: Definition, research agenda, and ethical considerations,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 89–100, 2020, doi: 10.1093/jcmc/zmz022.

[4] E. Kasneci, K. Sessler, S. Küchemann, M. Bannert, D. Dementieva, F. Fischer, U. Gasser, G. Groh, S. Günnemann, E. Hüllermeier, S. Krusche, G. Kutyniok, T. Michaeli, C. Nerdel, F. Pfeiffer, O. Poquet, M. Sailer, A. Schmidt, T. Seidel, *et al*., “ChatGPT for good? On opportunities and challenges of large language models for education,” *Learning and Individual Differences*, vol. 103, Art. no. 102274, 2023, doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2023.102274.

[5] D. T. K. Ng, J. K. L. Leung, S. K. W. Chu, and M. S. Qiao, “Conceptualizing AI literacy: An exploratory review,” *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 2, Art. no. 100041, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100041.

[6] K. Sperling, C.-J. Stenberg, C. McGrath, A. Åkerfeldt, F. Heintz, and L. Stenliden, “In search of artificial intelligence (AI) literacy in teacher education: A scoping review,” *Computers and Education Open*, vol. 6, Art. no. 100169, 2024, doi: 10.1016/j.caeo.2024.100169.

[7] UNESCO, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*. UNESCO, 2023.