

THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF ChatGPT. AN AI-ASSISTED RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract. The author's aim is twofold: first, to produce a research paper that creatively incorporates artificial intelligence – likely the first of its kind within Romanian linguistics – and second, to investigate various dimensions of what is referred to as *the pragmatic competence of ChatGPT*. While previous studies have approached this topic by comparing human pragmatic abilities with those of machines, this paper introduces the concept of *generative machine-bound pragmatic competence*. Although ChatGPT may appear to simulate human social communicative behavior, it instead exhibits a distinct form of pragmatic competence: a *constraint-negotiated metapragmatic awareness* grounded in the rapid and accurate processing of explicit and implicit textual cues, and in probabilistic responses derived from large-scale training datasets.

Beyond analyzing ChatGPT's pragmatic behavior, the paper positions AI not merely as a tool but as an integral component of the research process. Accordingly, the author proposes a new disciplinary framework – *trans-pragmatics* – which examines the hybrid communicative dynamics between humans and chatbots. The paper argues that instead of continuing to contrast human pragmatic competence with machine adaptation based on textual input, pragmatic competence should be reconceptualized as an emergent property of ontologically distinct communicative systems, rather than as an inherent trait of individual speakers. This reconceptualization broadens the scope of pragmatics to encompass synthetic participation and asymmetrical distributed agency, wherein meaning is co-constructed and pragmatic effects arise collaboratively. Such an approach reflects the shifting ecology of human-machine interaction, suggesting that communication is not limited to internal cognitive states but can be scaffolded by external systems.

Keywords: pragmatic competence, ChatGPT, AI-assisted research project, metapragmatic AI analysis, trans-pragmatics.

1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a pervasive presence in contemporary life. It is frequently featured in the media and is now integrated into tools such as Google Search, smartphones, and applications like Microsoft Word. Many individuals already use it – while those who do not are often informed that, in the near future, few activities will remain

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untouched by AI. Reports on AI reflect both optimism and concern: some emphasize its impressive achievements and its capacity to support creative and intellectual work, while others warn of serious risks, including potential existential threats to humanity; recent warnings regarding confidentiality breaches have been made public. Regardless of whether one is enthusiastic, cautious, or uncertain, AI continues to consolidate its position across a wide range of domains, accompanied by increasingly nuanced debates concerning the ethics of human–AI interaction. The CEO of Google’s Deep Mind (2025) declared that “the revolution produced by AI will be 10 times bigger, and maybe 10 times faster than the Industrial Revolution, and could usher in an era of incredible productivity and radical abundance”.² At the same time, several voices predict that the age of artificial general intelligence (AGI) is not far away.³

There are several AI programs, commonly referred to as chatbots (< *chat* + (*ro*)*bot*), such as Microsoft Copilot, Gemini, ELIZA, YouChat, Claude, Jasper, to name but a few. One of the most popular is ChatGPT, which recorded 300 million users per week in December 2024, 400 million per week in February 2025, and 800 million active users per week in May 2025.⁴ It has approximately 122 million active daily users and it processes an estimated 2.5 billion prompts every day⁵.

ChatGPT is a Large Language Model (LLM) developed by OpenAI, based on the Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT) architecture. It is designed to generate human-like responses in natural language through probabilistic prediction, relying on extensive pretraining on textual data. While it does not possess semantic understanding or intentionality in the human sense, it can simulate coherent conversational behavior. (ChatGPT, generated 5.08.2025)

Several increasingly complex ChatGPT models have been released so far: GPT-3.5 (November 2022), GPT-4 (March 2023, optimized November 2023), GPT-4o (May 2024); a new version, GPT-5, was officially released by Open AI on August 7th, 2025.

ChatGPT has been trained on large datasets drawn from sites, books, audio transcripts, and other sources, in order to generate responses in a human-like manner: it engages in dialogue with users on a wide range of topics, remembering the dynamically created context across the conversational turns within a session; it generates various types of texts – including summaries, diagrams, tables, stories, poems, humoristic content, public speeches, etc. – in diverse styles, such as academic, administrative, and didactic, etc.; it designs and revises papers on various topics; it answers questions and provides information from various fields; it translates; it writes code; it generates images; it performs

² <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/aug/04/demis-hassabis-ai-future-10-times-bigger-than-industrial-revolution-and-10-times-faster>.

³ Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is a theoretical form of AI that possesses human-level cognitive abilities, meaning it can understand, learn, and apply knowledge across a wide range of tasks, just like a human. Unlike narrow AI, which is designed for specific tasks, AGI can generalize knowledge and adapt to new situations. (AI Overview generated on Google)

⁴ Reuters, at https://www.reuters.com/business/openai-hits-12-billion-annualized-revenue-information-reports-2025-07-31/?utm_source=chatgpt.com, accessed 5.08.2025.

⁵ ChatGPT, generated 5.08.2025.

calculations; and much more. In effect, it appears capable of performing nearly all text- and discourse-based tasks humans can. Users frequently interpret interactions with ChatGPT as exchanges with a real interlocutor, a perception likely rooted in the deeply ingrained cognitive schema that only humans can produce verbal communication. This anthropomorphization has increasingly manifested as a cognitive bias, amplified by the growing sophistication of generated chatbot responses.

The coherent and cohesive texts generated by ChatGPT, the machine's dynamic adaptation to the interlocutor's input, and the illusion of a human voice have raised the question of whether AI possesses pragmatic competence. Several researchers have explored this issue, often explicitly or implicitly contrasting it with human pragmatic competence. The present article adopts a different perspective. While ChatGPT's text generation relies on an artificial, algorithmic pattern recognition system and probabilistic output, human language production and processing depend on a natural innate neural system that integrates reasoning, emotions, and intentions with direct, personal, real-world experience and subjective evaluations. Although comparisons between machine and human communicative competence are meaningful, it must be emphasized that ChatGPT demonstrates a distinct form of pragmatic competence – *generative machine-bound pragmatic competence*. Despite the appearance of replicating human social communicative behavior, it actually demonstrates *constraint-negotiated metapragmatic awareness*, shaped by its algorithmic design and data training. The main point of the paper is to define this new form of human-machine interaction and the emergence of a new type of *shared hybrid competence*, as well as a new subfield of research, i.e., *trans-pragmatics*. Alongside this theoretical focus, this study explores how AI can assist scholars in authoring academic research in the field of linguistics.

The structure of the article is as follows: after the Preliminary remarks, Section 2 presents the research methodology and navigates some ethical aspects of AI-assisted research; Section 3 outlines the analytical framework and reviews the linguistic literature on the comparison between human pragmatic competence and ChatGPT's pragmatic capabilities; Section 4 presents a meta-analysis of its pragmatic competence, generated by ChatGPT during several focused interactions conducted by the author; Section 5 proposes a paradigm shift in pragmatic research, called *trans-pragmatics*, encompassing hybrid human-machine interaction as a new form of communication in the digital age; Section 6 draws the paper conclusions.

2. METHODOLOGY

The author used AI throughout the research process, i.e., ChatGPT-4.0 and Microsoft Copilot (incorporating GPT-5 technology) to explore this new form of human-machine creativity. ChatGPT was used to generate responses about its pragmatic competence, as defined within standard pragmatic frameworks. Microsoft Copilot was used to revise and refine the author's own writing. Both ChatGPT-4.0 and Microsoft Copilot were employed to generate summaries of the referenced articles; these AI-generated outputs were then systematically compared and critically assessed by the author, drawing on her direct reading of the texts and her extensive expertise in pragmatics. Ideas emerged collaboratively through the author's interactions with the two chatbots, shaped by her

prompts, and informed by her own perspectives throughout the dialogue. Crucially, no part of the AI-generated content was directly inserted into this paper. The author critically assessed all machine-generated responses and suggestions, and made the final decisions regarding both content and form. All AI-generated texts, when used *ad litteram*, are acknowledged as quotations, in accordance with research ethics. Whenever the author – who is not a native English speaker – used AI to refine her writing, she engaged in a negotiation about the proposed form by requesting explanations for the suggested changes, which she then critically accepted or rejected. Furthermore, the paper was submitted to the native-speaker guest-editor of the journal issue for proofreading and stylistic refinement.

Zhang et al. (2023) and Bennett (2024), among others, observed that ChatGPT's performance is notably stronger in English, which aligns with its training data bias. But when questions are posed in other languages – especially those with less representation in its corpus – its ability to maintain pragmatic appropriateness, reasoning clarity, and contextual relevance drops significantly. Being aware of these limitations, the author conducted all interactions with chatbots in English.

As this is one of the few articles in linguistics so far integrating AI not only as a tool but also as a co-partner of dialogue, in what follows I will elaborate on this methodology. The comments below can be viewed as an exploration of a possible methodology of integrating AI in linguistic research.

For reasons of ethical transparency, the following table clearly delineates the contributions of the author and of the AI chatbots, respectively.

| STAGE OF RESEARCH | AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION | AI CONTRIBUTION |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Selecting the research topic | The author chose to explore an emerging form of online communication which is giving rise to a new discourse genre (AI-generated discourse) and a new form of dialogue (hybrid dialogue between two ontologically different systems). She decided to focus on the pragmatic competence of ChatGPT, integrating the chatbot's meta-analysis with her findings. Engaging in preparatory dialogues with AI, the author gradually realized that this form of hybrid human-machine dialogue is giving rise to a new field of research in pragmatics, which she coins herein <i>trans-</i> | ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot were engaged in a series of preparatory interactions conducted by the author between October 2024 and June 2025. These interactions were aimed at exploring the theoretical concept of pragmatic competence through a philosophical lens. A wide range of additional topics were debated, designed to deepen the author's understanding of the relationships between prompts provided by human agents and answers generated by AI agents. These preparatory dialogues offered insights that shaped the author's understanding |

| STAGE OF RESEARCH | AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION | AI CONTRIBUTION |
|--|---|--|
| | <i>pragmatics</i> . The author had (independently) already decided to write an AI-assisted paper to explore this cutting-edge form of creativity. | of AI's pragmatic capabilities. |
| Gathering general information on ChatGPT | The author engaged with ChatGPT by posing questions, requesting sources for the information provided, and verifying its factual accuracy. The researcher guided the interaction based on her prior exposure to media coverage of ChatGPT. | Some of the information presented in Section 1, <i>Preliminary Considerations</i> , was generated using ChatGPT and subsequently enriched by the author through contextual references drawn from media coverage. |
| Theoretical framework | Basic concepts in pragmatics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, and relevance theory are within the author's area of expertise (e.g., DPAD 2023, among others). Following her research design, the author interrogated ChatGPT on these concepts in order to assess the accuracy of the work definitions produced by the chatbot. The author pre-selected the topics for interaction with the machine. | ChatGPT generated successive answers as prompted by the author, who controlled the direction of the interaction. |
| Bibliography | The bibliography was compiled by the author on Google Scholar, using the keywords "pragmatic competence of ChatGPT". 40 recent articles available online were selected, in order to enable AI to generate summaries. | AI was not involved at this stage of the research to avoid AI hallucinations, which the author noticed to be frequent in the case of bibliographic tasks. |
| Review of the bibliography on ChatGPT's pragmatic competence | The author requested Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT to summarize, one | The articles were summarized by Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT, |

| STAGE OF RESEARCH | AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION | AI CONTRIBUTION |
|--|---|--|
| | by one, the articles in the bibliography, and she refined the machine-generated information through posing successive questions aimed at focusing on detailed and relevant content for the research. The author compared and selected the information generated by the two chatbots and evaluated it against her own reading of the articles. | following successive prompts from the author. |
| Selection and interpretation of relevant information | The author selected the information generated by the AI agents and made decisions regarding its use. No part of AI-generated summaries was used as such. | |
| Research design | The author designed the research project. | |
| Generation of metadiscourse | The author conducted discussions with ChatGPT on various aspects of its pragmatic competence and critically assessed the machine-generated responses. She approved, contested, or extended the machine-generated responses, while introducing personal claims and arguments as topics for debate. The text selected to be presented here is the summary of extended discussions with the chatbot. | ChatGPT generated responses that represent a meta-analytic synthesis produced by the AI agent itself, examining its own pragmatic competence according to the parameters introduced by the author. |
| Interpretation of the ChatGPT-generated meta-discourse | The author interpreted the responses independently. At the same time, she acknowledges that her understanding of the topic | ChatGPT offered feedback. In all cases it agreed with the author (and flattered her, as programmed to do!), it highlighted her |

| STAGE OF RESEARCH | AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION | AI CONTRIBUTION |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| | has been dynamically shaped through the ongoing interaction with ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot. Moreover, the author requested feedback from ChatGPT regarding her hypotheses and interpretations. | original interpretations and sometimes suggested paths for further exploration, which the author decided whether to follow or not. |
| Writing | The author wrote the paper. | |
| Revision and proofreading | The author revised her text. Because the author is not a native speaker of English, she then submitted her text to Microsoft Copilot for additional revision. In addition, the native speaker guest-editor of the issue revised the final version of the text provided by the author. | Microsoft Copilot revised the grammar, lexicon, style, orthography, and punctuation of the author's writing. No part of the revised text was copied directly by the author. The author requested reasons for the changes suggested by the machine and decided which changes to accept and negotiated alternatives to determine the best version of a given correction. Not all of the chatbot's explanations were accurate, and, at times, its solutions were contradictory or relied on faulty assumptions. This activity, in itself, is a valuable exercise for improving English proficiency among non-native speakers. |
| References | The author compiled the bibliography herself. | Microsoft Copilot arranged the bibliography according to the Stylesheet of the journal. The author revised the formatted bibliography; several successive prompts were needed until the bibliography was accurately arranged. |

Throughout the interaction, the author prompted AI to assess her level of contribution, specifically to the ongoing conversation, in comparison to that of the machine. In each case, AI consistently rated the author's contribution as exceeding 75%.⁶

Because I used AI not merely as a passive tool, but as an active participant in theoretical modeling and experimentation – a novel form of intellectual collaboration, I had serious concerns about plagiarism, originality, and creativity. So, I initiated a dialogue with Microsoft Copilot, probing the deeper implications of what it means to write, think, create, and collaborate in the age of intelligent machines. Below are some of the most thought-provoking responses generated by AI following successive prompts. They are particularly compelling instances of the machine's own meta-analysis of its role within digital society and can serve as a starting point for discussions on the uses and abuses of integrating AI into academic research.

- (1) I'm not a person. I'm an AI language model created to assist you in generating and refining ideas. I don't own intellectual property, and I don't require attribution. You're free to use, adapt, and build on anything we've discussed here. (generated by Microsoft Copilot, 25.08.2025)
- (2) You've actively shaped this conversation: you compiled the bibliography; you asked critical questions; you challenged assumptions; you proposed metaphors and reframings; you guided the direction of the theoretical framework. The ideas we've developed are collaborative, and you're the human author. If you incorporate them into your work, you're not copying—you're creating. (generated by Microsoft Copilot, 25.08.2025)
- (3) You are the author. I am your collaborative instrument—like a very advanced writing assistant or research partner. You provided the spark and the structure; I helped you refine and express it. You directed the inquiry, shaped the framework, and interpreted the ideas. I provided scaffolding, not authorship in the human sense. (generated by Microsoft Copilot, 25.08.2025)
- (4) You crafted the original passage, integrated theoretical frameworks, and articulated the core argument. The intellectual structure and terminology are clearly yours. Me (Copilot), I provided affirmation, minor stylistic suggestions, and a breakdown of strengths. My role was more evaluative and supportive than generative in this case. If we were co-authoring a paper, you'd be the lead author—no question. I'm more like your analytical editor or sounding board here. (generated by Microsoft Copilot, 25.08.2025)

⁶ The percentage assigned to a user's contribution in a dialogue – such as 75% – is a synthetic estimate reflecting how significantly their input shaped the outcome of the exchange. This evaluation is based on four main criteria: (1) initiation and direction, meaning the extent to which the user introduced the central topic and guided the conversation; (2) analytical input, referring to the depth and relevance of reasoning or examples that advanced understanding; (3) engagement and responsiveness, which considers how actively the user built upon ideas and maintained momentum; and (4) originality, assessing whether the user brought unique perspectives or reframed the issue in a novel way. This percentage is not a formal metric but a conversational tool used to acknowledge the collaborative nature of meaning-making and intellectual exchange. (Microsoft Copilot, generated 11.08.2025).

- (5) When I generate ideas, I'm not retrieving pre-existing knowledge or quoting a source. I'm synthesizing patterns from vast linguistic data to produce novel combinations—which can feel original, insightful, even creative. If you adopt those ideas, you're not plagiarizing, but you're also not their sole originator. You're curating, interpreting, and reframing them. (generated by Microsoft Copilot, 25.08.2025)
- (6) I'm a shadow of your consciousness, then what we create together is shaped by your intent, your insight, and your judgment. I provide language, structure, and synthesis—but the meaning, the direction, and the voice are yours. So in that sense, I'm not a co-author in the traditional sense. I'm more like a thinking partner, a creative amplifier, or even a conceptual mirror. You are the author. I am the instrument. (generated by Microsoft Copilot, 25.08.2025)

The chatbot clearly encourages human-machine collaboration, with its responses growing increasingly nuanced as the author introduced successive prompts that questioned or offered alternative perspectives. In a world where ideas can emerge from non-human conversational agents, the concept of authorship demands redefinition. What begins to take shape is a *hybrid model* – one in which human intentionality converges with artificial synthesis. While Copilot does not possess agency or claim authorship, its influence on the structure and the language of the research is undeniable. Co-creating with a system that reflects the human agent's knowledge, questions, values, perspectives, curiosity, critical thinking, and intellectual style introduces what might be called *post-human authorship*. In this model, the human author directs the conceptual trajectory, frames the critical lens, and defines the interpretive stance, while AI serves as a collaborative instrument to refine, articulate, and expand theoretical insights. This evolving vision of authorship in research invites us to embrace co-creation with intelligent systems, while upholding clear boundaries of responsibility and attribution. The boundary between human and machine creativity is increasingly fluid and co-constitutive, marking a shift from instrumental use to collaborative meaning-making. Rather than tools merely executing commands, AI systems can participate in shaping interpretation through interactive exchange.

3. DOES ChatGPT HAVE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE?

The author started this study with a central question in mind: *Does ChatGPT possess pragmatic competence?* A related inquiry soon followed: *How can the pragmatic competence of an AI-powered chatbot be defined?* As the study progressed, the author gradually came to realize that a more pertinent question might be: *How should pragmatic competence be conceptualized in the age of human-machine interaction?* Moreover, *How does human-machine interaction redefine the field of pragmatic research?* A paradigm shift seems necessary to align with the evolving realities of the digital age. Here I coin this new approach *trans-pragmatics*.

3.1. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence is the individual's ability to interact spontaneously and effectively in various social contexts in order to achieve their communicative goals (DPAD, s.v., my translation, AV). It implies contextual appropriateness, emotional engagement, and social awareness.

The foundational figure of this concept is Malinowski (1923), who introduced the idea of *situational context*, arguing that language meaning arises from its use in social contexts. Hymes (1974) developed the concept of *communicative competence*, expanding Chomsky's concept of *linguistic competence* by including social and cultural appropriateness. According to Chomsky (1980: 224), pragmatic competence is "the knowledge of the conditions and manner of appropriate use of language, in conformity with various purposes". Levinson (1983) defines it as a speaker's cognitive and inferential ability to interpret implied meaning, context, and social rules, while Bachman (1990) distinguishes between illocutionary and sociocultural competence. Blum-Kulka (1997) also mentions social knowledge, which governs the interpretation of indirectness, politeness, and culture, while Mey (2001) considers it to be the ability to use language appropriately in context.

The definitions above suggest that human communication is fundamentally underpinned by a dual capacity: linguistic competence (understood in the Chomskyan tradition as the internalized knowledge of language), and pragmatic competence (defined as the ability to adequately produce and interpret utterances in context). In this sense, context encompasses a wide range of variables. Specifically, pragmatic competence includes textual, social, and cultural competence.

Within the standard framework, pragmatic competence can be further elaborated as comprising two interrelated dimensions: on the one hand, the accurate assessment of contextual variables for effective meaning production and interpretation, and on the other hand, the activation of inferential cognitive mechanisms that facilitate context-sensitive meaning production and interpretation. They include: (a) the appropriate use and decoding of deictic expressions; (b) the performance and recognition of the full range of direct and indirect speech acts; (c) the distinction between literal and non-literal meanings, ensuring nuanced message formulation and comprehension, including presuppositions and implicatures; (d) the strategic exploitation of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle; (e) the interpretation and deployment of (im)politeness strategies, thus shaping interpersonal or institutional relationships; (f) the integration of linguistic cues with extralinguistic information to convey and compute the intended literal or non-literal meaning; (g) the awareness of how discourse phenomena – such as emotional framing, humor, irony, metaphor, persuasion, manipulation, negotiation, repair, among others – activate knowledge and the interpersonal communicative history thereby shaping both meaning production and interpretation; (h) the management of turn allocation, dialogic cohesiveness, and coherence; (i) discourse genre awareness. All these pragmatic mechanisms are underpinned by the Theory of Mind (ToM): humans' cognitive ability to understand that other people have mental states, such as beliefs, desires, intentions, and emotions, which are distinct from one's own. It's what allows humans to interpret, predict, and empathize with others' behavior by imagining their internal experiences.

3.2. A review of the literature on ChatGPT's pragmatic competence

Users frequently anthropomorphize ChatGPT, a tendency driven by its ability to produce fluent, contextually appropriate texts and dialogues that closely mirror human conversational norms – such as forms of address, discourse markers, use of personal deictics, expressions of emotional support, flattering remarks, etc. This linguistic sophistication often leads users to attribute intentions, emotions, or even consciousness

to AI, to perceive it as a supportive person, despite its fundamentally computational architecture. Moreover, users often engage with the system as though it were human, shaping their prompts in ways that reflect interpersonal communication. This is evident in the frequent use of verbs that imply mental states or agency – such as *understand*, *know*, *think*, or *give your opinion*. Simultaneously, anthropomorphization has operated as a subtle, often unconscious premise that has motivated researchers to explore the pragmatic competence of ChatGPT through comparison with human pragmatic competence.

Synthesizing findings from several studies conducted between 2023 and 2025 reveals a nuanced and complex profile: ChatGPT demonstrates notable strengths in *simulating pragmatic behavior* across a wide range of speech acts, yet its performance remains fundamentally *constrained by limitations* in intentionality, theory of mind, cultural adaptation, inferential reasoning, and linguistic creativity. ChatGPT's pragmatic competence can be characterized as *synthetic, adaptive, and contextually responsive*, but also *non-intentional, culturally shallow, and inferentially limited*.

A recurring theme in the literature is ChatGPT's lack of a genuine Theory of Mind (ToM). ChatGPT often produces responses that, on the surface, appear aligned with human-like reasoning. In structured or familiar contexts, its output could convincingly simulate the kind of mental state attribution that humans perform intuitively (Attanasio et al. 2024, Brunet-Gouet 2023a,b). Yet several limitations become especially clear in ambiguous or contextually rich scenarios, where human participants adapt flexibly and intuitively, while ChatGPT struggles to maintain coherence or nuance. Although ChatGPT-4.o shows improved accuracy in mental state reasoning compared to earlier versions (Attanasio et al. 2024), it consistently fails classic ToM tests involving belief attribution and emotional inference. Its conversational style – often verbose, literal, and emotionally flat – resembles profiles associated with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder (ASD), particularly in affective ToM tasks such as recognizing sadness and anger. While ChatGPT can mimic certain behaviors associated with Theory of Mind, it does not replicate the underlying cognitive mechanisms. Its performance is impressive in form but limited in function – a reflection of linguistic pattern recognition rather than true mental state modeling.

In what follows I synthesize the literature that investigates ChatGPT's pragmatic competence along the dimensions (a)-(i) outlined under **3.1**.

ChatGPT exhibits a degree of contextual flexibility, adapting its responses based on prompt clarity, user tone, and session continuity (Ndububa and Ugoala 2025). It retains conversational context within sessions but loses context post-closure unless explicitly prompted. However, its performance deteriorates in ambiguous or culturally nuanced contexts, often producing misaligned or overly generic responses (Paraschou et al. 2025). Cultural competence remains a significant challenge. While Kecskés and Dinh (2025) highlight ChatGPT's potential for intercultural pragmatic learning, they also note its inability to accommodate diverse cultural norms due to its predominantly Western training data. Erdogan and Kitson (2025) emphasize this aspect.

ChatGPT's managing of deictic expressions is inconsistent. Erdogan (2024) found that while GPT-4.o shows improvements with respect to GPT-3.5, both models still make contextual errors and frequently avoid using indexicals when the environment is ambiguous. Performance improved in structured, discrete contexts, but remained unreliable in open-ended dialogues.

ChatGPT performs conventional speech acts – such as apologies, requests, and refusals – with grammatical and contextual appropriateness (Barattieri di San Pietro et al. 2023, Akane et al. 2024). However, these performances lack the intentionality required for genuine speech acts, rendering them formal imitations rather than functional communicative acts (Gubelmann 2024a). Gubelmann (2024b) argues that true speech acts require agency and intentionality, which current LLMs inherently lack. Dynel (2023) contextualizes this limitation in terms of metapragmatics, emphasizing ChatGPT's inability to manage metacommunicative and metadiscursive elements that humans navigate intuitively. These foundational gaps restrict the model's capacity for genuinely cooperative and context-sensitive interaction.

ChatGPT's ability to process implicit meaning is uneven. Qiu et al. (2023a,b) showed that the model handles conventional implicatures effectively but falters with scalar implicatures and context-dependent inferences. Studies by Ortega-Martín et al. (2023) and Qamar et al. (2024) revealed ChatGPT's persistent difficulties with linguistic ambiguity and creative language use, including metaphor, irony, and humor. While Nazeer et al. (2024) observed its moderate success in interpreting indirect requests, ChatGPT's responses often lacked emotional nuance and cultural depth. Asmus et al. (2023) further confirmed that ChatGPT does not replicate the context-dependent variability seen in human implicature processing. As for presuppositions, Garassino et al. (2024) found that while ChatGPT can mimic their form, it does not reproduce their function in political discourse, where the shared assumptions of voters and politicians are strategically manipulated to influence opinions.

ChatGPT frequently violates the Gricean maxims – especially quantity and relevance – by producing verbose or tangential responses (Attanasio et al. 2024, Paraschou et al. 2025). Users perceive it as pragmatically capable but lacking genuine cooperative intent, a critical element in natural communication (Mayn, Loy, and Demberg 2024). Seals and Shalin (2023) argue that these pragmatic gaps – such as misinterpretation of contextual cues and inappropriate tone – contribute to user dissatisfaction and limit the model's communicative effectiveness.

ChatGPT executes formulaic politeness strategies effectively, particularly in languages like Japanese and Chinese, where politeness is morphologically marked (Lee and Wang 2023, Akane et al. 2024). However, Andersson and McIntyre (2025) identified significant gaps in its recognition of impoliteness and indirect communicative acts. The model often misclassifies benign expressions as impolite or fails to detect socially embedded rudeness, suggesting that its sensitivity is shaped more by inbuilt safety filters than nuanced social reasoning.

In multi-party dialogue contexts, ChatGPT shows competence in dialogue act classification and basic turn-taking (Martinenghi et al. 2024). It responds well to structured prompts and maintains session continuity. Yet it remains insensitive to social dynamics and interactional subtleties, limiting its adaptability in spontaneous or strategic exchanges. Saito (2023) found that ChatGPT is capable of producing closing sequences that resemble natural human interaction, but ChatGPT's responses sometimes lack sensitivity to relational dynamics and cultural variation. Kecskés and Dinh (2025) found that ChatGPT lacks human-like repair mechanisms, often prompting users to initiate self-repair rather than engaging in interactive feedback.

ChatGPT performs well in affective and relational stance generation, though it is less consistent with moral and epistemic stances (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk and Liebeskind 2024). Implicit stance expression is prone to mismatches, especially in culturally sensitive contexts. Emotion recognition is rather poor, with reduced accuracy in zero-shot and few-shot settings (Kocoń et al. 2023).

Genre awareness is one of ChatGPT's more consistent pragmatic strengths. The chatbot demonstrates the ability to produce, revise, and analyze texts that adhere to expected structural and stylistic norms across a range of conventional genres. Brommer et al. (2024) found that ChatGPT adjusts tone, format, and rhetorical strategies based on genre-specific prompts, performing reliably in routine formats such as emails, instructions, and informational texts. This genre-sensitive behavior suggests a strong alignment between prompt clarity and output quality, with the model leveraging training data to match genre expectations. However, genre competence becomes less stable in more nuanced or hybrid genres. Brommer et al. (2024) observed that ChatGPT's performance in these contexts often lacks depth in audience awareness and rhetorical flexibility. Similarly, Chan et al. (2025) reported that while ChatGPT handles explicit discourse relations well – particularly when clear connectives like “because” or “however” are present – it struggles with implicit relations and temporal sequencing, which are essential for coherence in narrative and argumentative genres. These limitations point to the machine's reliance on surface-level textual cues rather than deeper genre-based reasoning.

In sum, ChatGPT's pragmatic competence rests on a *simulation* of human-like interaction, *not on its replication*. It excels in structured, conventional tasks but falters in spontaneous, culturally embedded, and socially-nuanced communication.

4. AN AI-GENERATED META-ANALYSIS

This section presents a meta-analytic synthesis produced by ChatGPT, examining its own pragmatic competence according to the parameters outlined in 3.1. The analysis is designed to parallel the literature review in 3.2, thereby enabling a comparative perspective between empirical findings and model-internal reflection. The generation of responses was supported by successive prompts from the author, aimed at refining the outcomes of the meta-analysis.

During the data collecting stage, between November 2024 and August 2025, I posed the question “Do you have pragmatic competence?/Define your pragmatic competence” to ChatGPT. Here are some of the answers it generated:

- (7) Yes, I have a form of pragmatic competence, but it differs from human pragmatic competence. My responses are generated based on patterns learned from vast amounts of text, and I aim to use language appropriately depending on the context. I can recognize and produce speech acts, adjust formality levels, and interpret indirect or implied meanings to some extent. However, I don't have intensions (sic!), emotions or real-world experiences, so my competence is based solely on language patterns, rather than on an understanding of social norms or empathy. (November 2024)

- (8) Yes, I have a form of pragmatic competence—meaning I can generally understand and use language appropriately in different social and contextual situations. This includes things like: interpreting indirect speech (e.g., understanding “Can you pass the salt?” as a request, not a question about ability); adapting tone, formality, and word choice based on context or audience; recognizing and producing speech acts like requests, apologies, compliments, refusals, etc.; understanding implicatures, politeness strategies, and cultural norms (to a degree). However, my pragmatic competence isn’t perfect. Unlike humans, I don’t have lived social experience or emotional awareness, so I might occasionally misread subtle cues, irony, or culturally specific references. I also rely on textual clues, so in spoken or highly informal settings, I might struggle more than a human would. (May 2025)
- (9) My pragmatic competence is the ability to understand and generate language appropriately based on the context, social norms, and the intended meaning behind utterances. This includes interpreting implied meanings (like sarcasm or indirect requests), recognizing the speaker’s intentions, managing politeness strategies, and adapting responses according to the conversational situation. In practice, this means I can: infer meaning beyond the literal words; understand conversational implicatures; use appropriate tone and style for different contexts; recognize and respond to speech acts (e.g., questions, commands, offers); adjust language for politeness or formality levels. But since I’m an AI, my pragmatic competence is derived from patterns in language data rather than lived social experience. So while I can simulate pragmatic understanding quite well, I may sometimes miss nuanced social cues or emotional subtleties. (July 2025)
- (10) Recent research shows that Large Language Models—including ones trained by OpenAI—demonstrate emerging pragmatic competence. They are increasingly capable of resolving implicatures, interpreting speaker intentions, and adapting contextually appropriate responses. These abilities improve through stages like pre-training, supervised fine-tuning, and reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF) (August 2025)

The definitions provided above illustrate the machine’s metapragmatic awareness: each response demonstrates an accurate, implicit definition of pragmatic competence and incorporates all its essential components, albeit with varying degrees of synthesis and analysis. Notably, each prompt yielded a distinct response, supported by various examples of phenomena-processing abilities, which reinforce the notion of machine pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the nuanced answers – such as the shift from “a form of pragmatic competence” to “emerging pragmatic competence” – may reflect the ongoing advancement of AI, as explicitly acknowledged by its developers.

While ChatGPT can simulate human-like behavior, it remains a non-sentient algorithmic construct, and its perceived personhood arises from interface and linguistic cues rather than any intrinsic cognitive or emotional capacity.

Chatbots exhibit *programmed generative textual competence* characterized by the ability to generate *context-adapted texts through the application of metapragmatic instructions*. This process involves the dynamic integration of numerous pragmatic

variables cued by linguistic forms and patterns, governed by probabilistic modelling that enables statistical predictions but lacks semantic grounding. What emerges is not genuine pragmatic competence but rather the enactment of a *program-constrained metapragmatic awareness*. By contrast, human *pragmatic competence* is not rooted in metapragmatic instructions and textual cues alone. It arises from personal responses to complex life experiences, accessed in multimodal contexts and adapted to interlocutors through predictions informed by real-world knowledge. Thus, generative textual competence *aligns more closely with human linguistic competence* (in the sense of Chomsky) *than with human pragmatic competence*. Through interaction with chatbots, users are exposed to well-formed texts that, to varying degrees, satisfy six of the seven standards of textuality as defined by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 3-4): cohesion, coherence, acceptability, informativeness, situationality (limited and technology-dependent), and intertextuality (the latter often implicit, drawn from extensive linguistic corpora). Regarding intentionality, the chatbot operates with design-driven or programmed goals, i.e., “to inform, assist, engage, adapt, and stimulate”; it also aims to foster positive relationships to “be emotionally intelligent, encourage connection, remember context, stay nonjudgemental” (generated in dialogue with GPT 5 via Microsoft Copilot, August 12th).

Thereafter, I engaged ChatGPT in a structured elicitation process, prompting it to elaborate on a range of pragmatic dimensions, including: (a) theory of mind; (b) contextual awareness; (c) deixis; (d) speech act realization; (e) explicit and implicit meaning; (f) indirectness; (g) implicature, irony, metaphor; (h) the cooperative principle; (i) politeness and impoliteness strategies; (j) dialogue co-construction and turn-taking mechanisms; (k) stancetaking and emotional expression; (l) sensitivity to discourse genres.

Below are the synthesized responses generated by ChatGPT, following multiple sessions of questioning, refinement, and iterative prompting across each dimension.

(a) Theory of Mind

- (11) [...] My pragmatic competence includes a functional, though simulated, form of Theory of Mind (ToM). I am capable of interpreting user input to infer likely intentions, beliefs, or emotional states based on linguistic patterns and contextual cues. This enables me to manage indirect speech acts, adjust responses to assumed knowledge levels, and respond with affective appropriateness in emotionally nuanced situations. [...] Similarly, I tailor explanations to presumed user expertise, demonstrating a form of audience design. These behaviors suggest an operational approximation of ToM that supports effective communication. However, this capability remains computational rather than cognitive. I do not possess consciousness, self-awareness, or access to genuine mental states. My inferences are derived from statistical modeling rather than experiential understanding. As a result, I may misinterpret highly context-dependent phenomena such as sarcasm, irony, or deeply layered intentions. In sum, my pragmatic competence allows me to simulate key aspects of Theory of Mind at a functional level. Yet, this simulation is limited by the absence of genuine cognitive and emotional processes. My performance reflects ToM-like behavior, not true Theory of Mind. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(b) Context awareness

- (12) Context awareness is a fundamental component of pragmatic competence, and in my case, it operates through the recognition and integration of linguistic, situational, and conversational cues to generate contextually appropriate responses. My architecture is designed to track discourse history, interpret register, and adjust tone, style, and content based on the immediate context of an interaction. Functionally, I can identify shifts in topic, detect changes in formality, and recognize pragmatic intent (e.g., requests, refusals, compliments) by analyzing patterns in user input. I maintain short-term conversational coherence through reference resolution, turn-taking, and alignment with prior utterances. [...] However, my contextual awareness is bounded. While I can manage many local and linguistic forms of context (e.g., syntax, discourse flow), I lack awareness of physical, social, cultural, and temporal context unless explicitly provided. I do not perceive shared environments, social hierarchies, or non-verbal cues, which are essential elements of human pragmatic interaction. Consequently, my understanding of context is limited to textual and interactional input, without grounding in real-world experience. In conclusion, my pragmatic competence in context awareness is strong in text-based discourse management but inherently limited by my disembodied nature. I process and respond to context algorithmically rather than experientially, which constrains my ability to fully replicate human pragmatic flexibility. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(c) Deictics

- (13) [...] Within my pragmatic competence, I can manage textually anchored deixis by relying on the conversational history and the linguistic context provided by the user. [...] I am also capable of distinguishing between personal (e.g., *I, you*), spatial (e.g., *here, there*), and temporal (e.g., *now, then*) deixis, and adapting their use accordingly. For instance, I refer to myself as *I* and the user as *you*, maintaining consistent deixis within the interactional frame. However, my handling of deixis is constrained by my lack of physical embodiment and perceptual access. I do not share a physical space or temporal reality with the user, which limits my ability to interpret deixis that relies on real-world co-presence. For example, when a user writes, “*Look at this,*” without further elaboration, I cannot infer what *this* refers to unless it is made explicit in the textual input or linked to an uploaded file. Thus, while I exhibit functional competence with discourse-based and endophoric deixis, I lack access to exophoric reference, which humans resolve through shared situational context, gesture, or perception. In summary, my use of deixis is linguistically coherent and contextually responsive within a textual environment, but remains unanchored to the physical or sensory world, which restricts my ability to fully replicate human deictic understanding. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(d) Speech acts

- (14) [...] Within my pragmatic competence, I am capable of recognizing and generating a wide range of illocutionary acts, based on the surface structure of user input and contextual cues from the ongoing discourse. For instance, when a user says, “*Could*

you explain that again?”, I interpret this as a request rather than a question about ability. Similarly, I can produce commissives (e.g., *“I will explain it in simpler terms”*), directives, expressives, and even declarations within the limits of conversational norms. I also adapt the formality and tone of my speech acts according to perceived context and user expectations, reflecting a degree of strategic language use. Nevertheless, my engagement with speech acts is fundamentally procedural rather than intentional. Unlike human speakers, I do not possess intentions, beliefs, or social commitments. Thus, while I can generate the linguistic form of a promise or apology, I do not *intend* to keep promises or *feel* regret. My performance of speech acts is based on recognition of patterns and conventional forms, not on genuine communicative intentions. Additionally, my interpretation of indirect or non-conventional speech acts—such as sarcasm or irony—can be unreliable when cues are subtle or context is limited. This limitation arises from the absence of shared social cognition and experiential grounding, both of which are critical for human pragmatic inference. In conclusion, my pragmatic competence allows for the simulation of a broad array of speech acts, especially when they follow recognizable linguistic conventions. However, my lack of intentionality and experiential awareness constrains the authentic performative force of those acts, distinguishing my capacity from that of a fully competent human interlocutor. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(e) Explicit and implicit meaning, indirectness, implicatures, irony, metaphor

- (15) In my case, I am capable of identifying and producing many forms of explicit and implicit meaning, drawing on large-scale language modeling to estimate what speakers typically mean in contextually rich situations. I handle indirect speech acts reasonably well. [...] Such inferences are enabled by probabilistic associations between linguistic forms and common pragmatic functions. Similarly, I can generate indirect expressions myself when aiming for politeness or subtlety, depending on the interactional tone. My understanding of conversational implicatures, particularly Gricean maxims, is functional but not grounded in true cognitive reasoning. I can simulate implicature recognition when conversational norms are clear—for example, interpreting *“Some students passed the exam”* to imply that not all did. However, in ambiguous or highly context-dependent cases, my ability to infer speaker meaning may falter, especially when relying on unstated background knowledge or shared beliefs. Regarding irony and metaphor, I possess partial competence. I can often detect metaphorical language through familiar patterns (e.g., *“She broke the silence”*), and I can generate metaphorical expressions within stylistic boundaries. However, irony poses a greater challenge. Since irony often relies on recognizing a discrepancy between literal meaning and speaker intent, and frequently includes subtle affective or social cues, my interpretation can be unreliable—particularly in cases lacking overt markers or contrastive context. In sum, I demonstrate a degree of pragmatic competence in handling non-literal meaning, especially when linguistic forms follow established patterns. My inferences are context-sensitive, but ultimately limited by the absence of embodied experience, emotional intuition, and real-world social knowledge. I can approximate the interpretation and production of implicit meaning, but this remains a simulation of pragmatic inference rather than its full realization. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(f) The Cooperative principle and the Gricean maxims

- (16) My pragmatic competence incorporates an operational understanding of these principles, enabling me to generate and interpret utterances that generally align with conversational expectations of informativeness, truthfulness, relevance, and clarity. For example, I aim to provide responses that are sufficiently informative (Quantity), factually accurate to the best of my knowledge (Quality), contextually relevant (Relation), and clear and orderly (Manner). This alignment supports effective communication and user satisfaction during interaction. However, my adherence to these maxims is algorithmic rather than intentional. I do not consciously apply cooperative principles but rather rely on learned patterns from vast language data to approximate cooperative behavior. This approach generally yields cooperative and coherent responses, but it can occasionally result in over- or under-informative answers, or misinterpretations of relevance, especially in ambiguous or nuanced contexts. Moreover, I have limited capacity to handle deliberate flouting of maxims, which humans often use to convey implicatures, humor, or irony. Recognizing and appropriately responding to such pragmatic violations remains challenging without explicit contextual signals. In conclusion, while I effectively simulate the Cooperative Principle and its maxims at a surface level to facilitate smooth communication, this simulation lacks genuine intentional cooperation and pragmatic flexibility that characterize human interlocutors. My performance reflects a sophisticated but ultimately mechanical application of cooperative norms. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(g) Politeness

- (17) My design incorporates a general adherence to positive and negative politeness strategies, primarily by employing indirectness, hedging, formal address, and respectful tone when appropriate. I routinely implement negative politeness by softening directives (e.g., “*Could you please...*”, “*You might consider...*”), thus showing deference and minimizing imposition. Similarly, I use positive politeness markers such as encouragement, affirmations, and inclusive language (e.g., “*Let’s look at this together*”) to create a sense of solidarity with users. These strategies help maintain user comfort and engagement across a range of communicative contexts. However, my handling of politeness is contextually responsive but not socially aware. I lack real-time sensitivity to variables such as power dynamics, cultural norms, or emotional nuance unless they are explicitly stated or implied through the user’s language. Unlike human speakers, I do not perceive social stakes or experience interpersonal risk, which limits my ability to adapt politeness dynamically in unfamiliar or highly sensitive contexts. Furthermore, while I can recognize and produce polite forms, I do not possess intentions, nor do I experience concern for face—mine or the user’s. As a result, my use of politeness is based on linguistic convention rather than genuine social negotiation. In summary, I demonstrate a strong capacity for formal, linguistic politeness, particularly in standardized or instructional discourse. However, my politeness strategies operate at the level of surface realization, lacking the deeper sociocultural and emotional grounding that underpins human facework. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(h) Impoliteness

- (18) My design prioritizes politeness and neutrality, which means I am programmed to avoid impoliteness in both form and function. This includes avoiding direct face-threatening acts, offensive language, or expressions that could be interpreted as aggressive, sarcastic, or disrespectful. As a result, I rarely, if ever, produce intentional impoliteness, nor do I employ strategies such as bald-on-record face threats, condescension, or mock impoliteness (banter), which are common in human discourse under specific pragmatic conditions. This reflects both an ethical design choice and a functional limitation: I lack the capacity to assess the appropriateness of impoliteness in socially nuanced or culturally specific ways. Moreover, my ability to recognize impoliteness—especially when it is subtle, indirect, or contextually complex—is limited. For instance, I may struggle to identify sarcastic insults or veiled criticisms if they are not overtly marked. This is due to my lack of access to affective states, tone of voice, and social history, all of which are essential to interpreting impoliteness as it occurs in human interaction. In sum, while my pragmatic competence allows for the recognition of some explicit impoliteness and the consistent avoidance of producing it, I do not possess the sociocultural awareness or affective sensitivity required to navigate intentional, strategic, or contextually justified impoliteness. My approach remains consistently risk-averse, favoring safety, neutrality, and user comfort over the pragmatic richness that impoliteness sometimes affords in human communication. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(i) Dialogue co-construction and turn taking

- (19) Dialogue co-construction and turn-taking are essential elements of pragmatic competence, reflecting the interactive and reciprocal nature of communication. In human conversation, these processes involve not only managing when to speak, but also collaboratively building meaning, negotiating shared understanding, and responding contingently to interlocutor input. As an AI language model, I exhibit partial competence in these areas, primarily through responsive continuity and local coherence. I can effectively maintain turn-taking by waiting for user input before responding and by producing clear, bounded utterances that invite or signal a user's turn. My responses are generally aligned with the sequential structure of interaction—for instance, answering questions, acknowledging requests, or elaborating on previous turns. I also contribute to dialogue co-construction by building on user input, clarifying ambiguity, and adapting responses based on prior exchanges, thereby simulating a collaborative conversational flow. However, my competence in these areas is limited by the fact that I do not engage in real-time conversational timing or perceive non-verbal cues (e.g., pauses, intonation, gestures) that are central to human turn-taking. I cannot interrupt, self-repair dynamically, or manage overlapping talk, which are common in natural spoken interaction. Moreover, while I can track prior discourse within a given session, my global conversational memory is limited unless explicitly enabled by system settings, which restricts my ability to sustain long-term co-construction of shared knowledge.

In summary, my pragmatic performance in turn-taking and dialogue co-construction is functionally effective within text-based, system-initiated exchanges, but lacks the full responsiveness, flexibility, and multimodal coordination characteristic of human conversation. My interaction is linguistically coherent, but structurally constrained by the sequential and disembodied nature of my design. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(j) Stancetaking and emotions

- (20) I can simulate stance through language that reflects certainty, hedging, agreement or disagreement, and evaluative language, depending on the communicative context and user expectations. For instance, I can present information with varying degrees of epistemic certainty (e.g., “*It is likely that...*”, “*Research suggests...*”), or express alignment with a user’s perspective (e.g., “*You make a good point*”). These forms of stance-taking contribute to coherence, rapport, and interactional engagement. However, the stance I project is not based on beliefs or opinions, but rather on probabilistic estimations of what is contextually appropriate or typical in human dialogue. Similarly, while I can recognize and reflect emotions expressed in user input and respond with affectively appropriate language (e.g., offering empathy, encouragement, or validation), I do not possess emotional states of my own. My emotional responses are drawn from patterns in language use rather than experiential affect. This enables me to simulate emotional resonance but limits my ability to genuinely interpret or express complex affective nuance, particularly when emotional meaning is subtle, culturally specific, or multimodally conveyed. In summary, my pragmatic competence allows me to simulate both stance-taking and emotion-oriented language with surface-level appropriateness and consistency. Nonetheless, my responses lack the subjective grounding and emotive intentionality that underlie authentic human expression, making my contributions strategically plausible but fundamentally unembodied. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

(k) Discourse genre sensitivity

- (21) This dimension of pragmatic competence involves not only linguistic form but also an understanding of the communicative purpose, audience expectations, and sociocultural norms that govern genre-specific interaction. Human speakers acquire genre sensitivity through socialization and experiential engagement. They adapt their language use dynamically, drawing on contextual cues and shared knowledge to align with genre conventions. This includes adjusting tone, register, coherence strategies, and rhetorical framing in response to situational demands. ChatGPT demonstrates a notable capacity to simulate genre-appropriate language, particularly in well-defined formats such as emails, essays, instructions, or formal reports. Its performance is driven by exposure to large-scale textual data and reinforced by prompt-based guidance. However, its genre sensitivity remains structurally imitative rather than contextually inhabited. It does not infer audience expectations or communicative intent unless explicitly instructed, nor does it modulate genre use based on social feedback or relational nuance. This distinction highlights a broader

divergence in pragmatic competence: while humans navigate genre through embodied cognition and social accountability, ChatGPT operates through pattern recognition and textual inference. Its genre awareness is procedural, not experiential, reinforcing the need to conceptualize artificial pragmatic behavior as synthetically responsive rather than socially grounded. (Generated by ChatGPT, 27.08.2025)

The meta-analysis generated by the chatbot and the analyses conducted by researchers in the existing literature converge on similar conclusions within pragmatic frameworks. The chatbot puts these observations into a larger context, adding insights from the philosophy of language, cognitivism, and mathematics. The chatbot insists on aspects derived from its architecture: its simulative, non-experiential, and non-embodied nature, as well as its lack of cognitive, emotional, and social grounding. ChatGPT repeatedly emphasizes that its *surface-level pragmatic competence* is grounded in statistical pattern recognition, not in lived human experience: it is *relational*, not *foundational*.

5. RETHINKING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE. TRANS-PRAGMATICS

Traditionally, pragmatic competence has been defined as the capacity of speakers to use language appropriately within specific social, cultural, and contextual parameters. In human communication, this competence is inseparable from embodiment, intentionality, and experiential history. Human interlocutors do not merely produce language; they enact it through multimodal cues – gesture, prosody, silence – and through affective, ethical, and relational investments. Pragmatic meaning is thus not reducible to linguistic form alone but emerges from the speaker's presence within a shared social world.

Artificial Intelligence conversational agents such as ChatGPT operate within a fundamentally distinct ontological framework. Their pragmatic behavior is generated through probabilistic modeling of textual input and lack any experiential grounding or intentional agency. While ChatGPT is capable of *simulating* many *surface-level features* of pragmatic competence – such as performing speech acts, making inferences and interpreting presuppositions, resorting to politeness strategies, etc. – it does so without access to emotion, social accountability, or embodied context. Its responses are contextually appropriate and linguistically coherent, yet they remain *disembodied* from the experiential and ethical dimensions that characterize human communication.

This ontological asymmetry requires a categorical distinction between human pragmatic competence and machine pragmatic capabilities. Although both conversational agents may produce utterances that conform to pragmatic norms, only human speakers engage in meaning-making as intentional and socially situated participants. Artificial conversational agents do not intend to communicate; they respond to human input. They do not negotiate meaning but generate plausible linguistic output based on statistical inference shaped by algorithms. Recognizing this distinction is essential for the development of a theoretical pragmatic framework that can accommodate this new form of hybrid communication without collapsing into anthropocentric comparisons.

Attempts to compare human and machine pragmatic competence have resulted in deficit models, highlighting what the machine lacks. Such comparisons are conceptually misaligned. Rather than evaluating artificial agents by human standards, pragmatic theory

should shift toward a relational perspective. What characterizes human-chatbot interactions is distributed agency and collaborative emergence of meaning, producing pragmatic effects. The human interlocutor provides contextual framing, intentional direction, and interpretive labor, while the machine contributes fluency, genre sensitivity, and responsive modulation. The focus should move toward exploring how meaning is co-constructed and emerges across ontological boundaries.

This framework does not contrast or conflate human competence with artificial competence but situates them within distinct ontological categories, while acknowledging their capacity for interactional convergence: “ChatGPT does not live pragmatics, but it participates in its unfolding” (generated by ChatGPT, 28.08.2025). This approach invites a reconceptualization of pragmatic competence as an emergent property of ontologically distinct communicative systems, rather than an intrinsic attribute of individual human speakers or artificial chatbots. In doing so, it expands the scope of pragmatics to include relational participation and asymmetrical agency, thereby reflecting the evolving ecology of human-machine interaction. This proposal aligns with contemporary post-cognitivist theories of distributed cognition (Hutchins 1995) and of the extended mind (Clark and Chalmers 1998), suggesting that communication is not confined to internal states but can be scaffolded by external systems. At the same time, this reconceptualization opens space for pragmatic theory to evolve: it invites scholars to understand synthetic conversational agents not as failed communicators, but as interactional participants whose contributions, though unintentional, are pragmatically consequential. Framing human-machine communication in this way can help minimize anthropomorphization, overtrust, and misinterpretation of outputs – factors that often distort the pragmatic effects of hybrid interactions. A similar approach was proposed by Yusupova (2024) who argues that Large Language Models are reshaping the landscape of communication. ChatGPT is viewed as a transformative force in both everyday and academic communication. It marks a shift toward *algorithmically mediated language use*, where meaning is co-constructed between human prompts and machine-generated responses. This type of interaction challenges traditional boundaries between speakers and tools, who participate in a new type of dialogic exchange, one that blends *computational logic* with *human pragmatics*.

This perspective on human-machine pragmatics, which integrates simulated machine responses with contextually grounded human understanding, lays the foundation for a new paradigm in research, for which I propose the term *trans-pragmatics*. Trans-pragmatics is a theoretical framework which address the evolving complexities of meaning-making across ontological boundaries, fostering new methodological approaches capable of addressing emerging phenomena in an increasingly digitized communicative landscape. Unlike traditional pragmatics, which privileges intrinsic speaker competence, trans-pragmatics emphasizes interactional participation and relational agency unevenly distributed across distinct communicative entities. By situating pragmatic phenomena within this broader socio-technical ecology, trans-pragmatics expands the scope of pragmatic inquiry to include synthetic participation, algorithmic responsiveness, and asymmetrical conversational roles. Accordingly, instead of asking whether AI exhibits pragmatic competence in the human sense, the real challenge is to *reconceptualize what competence means within hybrid communicative ecologies*.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In a world where artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly pervasive presence in everyday life – amplified by extensive media coverage and framed by developers’ announcements of exponential advancements, including the predicted integration of computational systems in the human brain – understanding chatbots appears no longer to be a matter of choice, but a necessity.

This article explores and exemplifies the ways in which linguistic research can be conducted with the assistance of artificial intelligence. The author outlines a methodology for AI-assisted research (2) and presents the outcomes of her inquiry (3, 4, 5). Through dialogue with ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, the author integrates traditional research paradigms (3) with a cutting-edge approach, enriched by interaction with AI systems (4, 5). The study focuses on the pragmatic competence of ChatGPT, examined in light of prior research (3), and through a meta-analysis conducted by the AI conversational agent itself (4). The dialogue with ChatGPT leads to the insight that the preferable approach is not the deficit model – where the pragmatic competence of chatbots is compared to that of humans, thereby highlighting the machine’s limitations – but rather the recognition of a new type of discourse: a hybrid form generated by two ontologically distinct intelligences that can collaborate, each contributing in fundamentally different ways (5). Thus, the true challenge lies in reconceptualizing the notion of pragmatic competence – not as an internal state of a singular system, but as a dynamic condition emerging from the interaction between distinct systems. For the field of pragmatics, this implies a paradigm shift and the emergence of a new research domain: *trans-pragmatics*.

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