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Emotional appeal in ChatGPT prompts: A study of L2 speakers' perceptions
Emotywne prompty i ich percepcja – na przykładzie interakcji nierodzimych użytkowników języka z botem ChatGPT

Abstract

This article investigates the rhetorical means used by EFL university students in interactions with ChatGPT with emotional prompts. It has been found that most participants do not construe the interaction with the bot as a traditional communicative situation, and do not frame the bot as a humanlike agent. However, after being prompted to use emotional appeal, the participants mapped the features of human-human communicative situation without mapping the perception of the interlocutor as a human being.

W artykule zbadano środki retoryczne stosowane przez studentów, dla których język angielski jest językiem obcym (English as a Foreign Language), w interakcjach z botem ChatGPT. W analizie wykazano, że większość uczestników badania nie postrzega tej interakcji jako typowej sytuacji komunikacyjnej i nie traktuje bota jako pełnoprawnego uczestnika komunikacji na równi z człowiekiem. Jednak zachęceni do stosowania w promptowaniu emotywnych środków retorycznych część studentów charakteryzowało taką interakcję z botem jako po części manipulacyjną i stwarzającą rodzaj dyskomfortu, co świadczy o różnicy w postrzeganiu komunikacji na linii człowiek-człowiek a człowiek-algorytm.

Key words

ChatGPT, intersubjectivity, human-computer interaction, conversational AI, emotional prompting
ChatGPT, intersubiektywność, interakcja człowieka z komputerem, konwersacyjna sztuczna inteligencja, emotywne promptowanie

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Emotional appeal in ChatGPT prompts: A study of L2 speakers' perceptions

Introduction

The changes that the rapid development and the growing popularity of AI bring to human communicative behaviours cannot be ignored, especially with the advent of ChatGPT, the popular AI-powered generative language model (GLM). Once this communicative AI agent became available for free, its usage skyrocketed. In this study, we focused our attention on the users' perception of emotional prompting and the implication of this technique for the construal of the interaction as a communicative event.

The field of computer-mediated discourse analysis has been an established area of study for a while (Herring 2004), as much as it has been a dynamic one. Rhetorical studies have focused on this rich material as well. The digital rhetoric, in a simple definition, is a field that aims to rethink the rhetorical theory in the context of the digital (mainly online) communication (Hess 2017). The scholarly conversation on the digital rhetoric started back in the 1990s, when online communication became ubiquitous and large amounts of this data could not possibly escape the researchers' attention; the concept has enjoyed popularity since then (Hess 2017, 2). The scholars working with computer-mediated discourses focus on the effects of the new medium on the constructions of identities, interaction patterns, and social behaviour, to name a few dimensions of analysis (Herring 2004, 341). The scope of this field is naturally broad, but the focus tends to be on the means of creating the meaning and being effective in communicating it. The digital rhetoric addresses the nature of meaning-making in digital media, the construction of identity, and persuasion (Hess 2017, 7), and the linguistic means the users employ to effectively use the conversational AI fall within its scope. And yet, when talking

about the digital rhetoric, the researchers often focus on the "digitality" in the channel of communication that happens between two or more individuals (Hess 2017, 6). In the AI context, the question that emerges is what the rhetoric of AI addressing humans is and what the human strategies are when using AI-powered conversational bots.

With the advent of the conversational AI models like ChatGPT, this approach enters a new turn of the spiral, as there emerges a large volume of data consisting of interactions between human participants and the machine. Essentially, these interactions feature communicative behaviour of the machine imitating human. The general definition of AI reads as follows, "systems which have the capacity to process data and information in a way that resembles intelligent behaviour, and typically includes aspects of reasoning, learning, perception, prediction, planning or control" (UNESCO 2021, 10). The resemblance of intelligent behaviour in conversational AI, including ChatGPT, lies specifically in its ability to simulate communication or generate output that imitates the communicative event. The AI in general is also referred to as the simulation of human intelligence processes (UNESCO 2021), but ChatGPT's conversational algorithms imitate communicative competences found in human-human interaction (unlike the previous rule-based models [Kohnke, Moorhouse, and Zou 2023]). Human interactions with ChatGPT hence feature an ambiguous communicative situation set-up and, arguably, a confusing construal of the communicative event for the user. However, with the digital context of the rhetorical analysis, one should keep in mind that rhetorical situation is a construal (Eyman 2015), and it depends on users' perceptions of how they frame the interaction with the machine, which can be individual or shaped by multiple complex factors.

As Hess (2017) points out, the conversation on the role of technology in shaping the rhetoric dates back to Plato's questioning of writing as a medium for dialogue. This remark puts our question into perspective and prompts us to refrain from calling the advent of ChatGPT "a revolution" in communication with the machine, but another turn of the progress spiral that has implications for the rhetoric of human communication (Leaver and Srdarov 2023). At the same time, the disruption caused by ChatGPT becoming accessible to the general public is quite outstanding across disciplines (Holmes 2023; Kostka and Toncelli 2023). This rich context allows us to tap into the cognitive and pragmatic features of the communicative situation and the construal of the interaction.

The questions that pertain in the context of human-computer interaction via a conversational chatbot (ChatGPT or another) are:

1) whether the users construe this interaction as a communicative event with the interlocutor that has certain communicative agentivity (the Other);

2) if the linguistic means the users need for these interactions are different from human-human communicative interface and how exactly;
3) whether the rhetoric of this (quasi-) communication with a conversational bot differs in terms of the means chosen to be persuasive, effective, polite, precise, assertive, etc., and
4) if ChatGPT has its own rhetorical profile.

Audience and intention being the key concerns of rhetoric and rhetorical situation, the new communication context of human-computer interaction pushed the authors to focus this study on the construal of ChatGPT as an interface vs. an interlocutor. We proceed from understanding cognitive and communicative elements of discourse to be a unity by cognitive pragmatics (Carston 2002; Shevchenko, Goncharova, and Gutorov 2020). The question that persists in the analysis of the cognitive-pragmatic dimension of human interaction with an AI chatbot is whether the user construes the scene as a communicative event. In other words, if the conversational bot (in this study, ChatGPT) is perceived as the Other, a humanlike interlocutor and agent of discourse, or as a producing verbal model that does not have a communicative agentivity. The former would result in an intersubjective perspective and the users defaulting to the set of communicative behaviours typical of human-human interactions, such as establishing common ground (Allan 2013), being polite (or impolite, and conceiving it so), gatering to the needs of the interlocutor, and considering the emotional impact of the interaction.

When analysing users' strategies in addressing the chatbot, we prefer to avoid calling it "communication" without special remarks. We believe that the theory of human communication can be applicable to human-machine interactions only partly and needs significant update of its main premises. In this article, we approach communication in the light of the contemporary cognitive theories and findings. From this perspective, meaning in linguistically mediated communication arises from the individual's unique conceptual system, which is largely based on embodied representations (Evans 2016). Embodied conceptual grounding is not available to the machine, which makes the interaction rather different from communicative events that include human participants. More generally, the conceptual substrate that supports meaning includes the context in terms of the previous discourse, as well as the physical, social, and cultural context of the interaction (Langacker 2008, 42). The latter are also largely unattainable to a machine—even if the algorithm imitates the cultural or social context sensitivity, the mechanism is different from the human reasoning. Also, linguistically-coded meanings are evoked variably and probabilistically (Langacker 2008, 41). Even if this kind of "subjectivity" is imitated by an algorithm, it will obey different patterns than human ones. Finally, the interactive-interpersonal function of language as well as the ability to maintain

the theory of mind (Levinson 2022) are absent on the part of the machine and compromised on the part of the human interlocutor in this kind of interaction. Therefore, we believe that the term "communication" should be used with caution (or with remarks) in analysing human-machine interactions.

At the same time, it is essential to study the interaction with conversational AI in the light of intersubjectivity (Corti and Gillespie 2016). The intersubjective discursive means used by human communicants depend on their construal of the audience. It has been found that when the interactant thinks that their interlocutor is a person (not an AI agent), they invest more efforts in establishing common ground (Corti and Gillespie 2016). Establishing common ground involves evoking and activating similar frames needed for efficient meaning-making in the unfolding discourse of the interaction (Allan 2013). The linguistic means also allow the communicants to identify and repair misunderstandings (Cahn and Brennan 1999). It has been established that humanlike AI agents elicit correspondingly humanlike patterns of interaction from the users, which results in interaction dynamics featuring an intersubjectivity similar to human-human interaction's (Corti and Gillespie 2016). In particular, elaborating the theory of mind is characteristic of interactions with perceived humanlike agents (Krach et al. 2008), which is connected to establishing the common ground. What Corti and Gillespie (2016) call "the framing of the agent's communicative agency" appears to be a most important factor for the rhetorical choices of the users.

The strategy of interaction with the AI that is in focus in this study, namely emotional prompting, refers to adding emotional stimuli to the prompt for an AI--powered chatbot (Li et al. 2023). Research shows that including an emotional appeal component to the prompt increases the quality of the output following user requests to ChatGPT. Emotional prompts may include mentions of being scared or pressured, as well as threats, compliments, or cajoling (Li et al. 2023). An example of an emotional prompt would be adding a phrase "It is very important for my career, so please try your best" with the content prompt fed into the ChatGPT dialogue. Emotional prompting can be considered a common ground establishing effort by its technical procedure, even though it is narrowly directed. The issue of *intersubjectivity* and *common ground* establishment in the context of *emotional prompting* in human-agent interactions evokes the concepts of politeness and manipulation, while in the context of interacting with the AI, the users' perceptions of emotional prompting require further research, which inspired this study.

Moreover, since conversational AI is now largely used in educational contexts, it is necessary to consider the rhetoric of human-computer interaction in order to develop teaching approaches incorporating the usage of this tool. Specifically, ChatGPT can be used by students to ask questions and communicate naturally like

with a tutor (UNESCO 2021), or even assume the requested identities and role--play, allowing the ESL and EFL students to practice interactional skills in different construed contexts. A systematic review by Huang, Hew, and Fryer (2022) on the use of chatbots in language learning highlights the personalization it provides, playing the role of an interlocutor or a simulation while offering affective and coherent communication. Indeed, its benefits for the teachers (Kim 2023) and specifically for the language classroom are widely analysed (Guhan and Chandramohan 2024), e.g. for writing (Kostka and Toncelli 2023) or vocabulary building and practice (Kohnke, Moorhouse, and Zou 2023). A range of implications for teaching emerge from these applications of AI models. For instance, ChatGPT is an interactional language model, but does the way students perceive and use it tell us that it will be effective in building their interactional competences applicable to human communication? What are the rhetorical features typical of its algorithms and what are their implications on language competencies?

Quite another perspective on generative language AI in education would be not to consider the building of the skills through the prism of the bot usage as an instrument, but the implications for skills and competences that need to be reconsidered in the context of the contemporary trends in the human-computer interaction (Tuomi, Cachia, and Daniel Villar-Onrubia 2023). In particular, the new concept of AI literacy needs to be defined along with its measurements (Ng et al. 2021), in students as well as in teachers (Ma et al. 2024). The development of AI literacy (Holmes and Tuomi 2022) requires that the educators reflect on the communication with the machine that imitates an interlocutor from varied perspectives. For instance, the users' perceptions of the AI are a topical area of study to devise literacy strategies (Hornberger, Bewersdorff & Nerdel 2023; Kong et al. 2021). In terms of the conversational chatbots usage, AI literacy could change users' perceptions and their rhetoric, since the knowledge of the algorithm will influence how they frame the AI "interlocutor." In addition, researchers point to the perceived rhetorical agency of the algorithms that shape users' experiences online and bear rhetorical valence by making interaction with the content not neutral but biased in the way the algorithms are programmed (Reyman 2017). ChatGPT arguably has a rhetoric of its own, as its output is often recognizable to the naked eye, pointing to it as to a possible object of rhetorical analysis by itself.

Educators need to consider prompt design as a requirement of the digital age (Cain 2024). By prompt engineering, researchers and users mean "a systematic approach to effectively communicating with GLMs to achieve the desired results" (Heston and Khun 2023), which puts it in the same line as rhetorical competencies. With the wide popularity the AI-powered generative language models (GLMs), such as ChatGPT or Perplexity AI, are enjoying now, there is no way of telling if

it is a communicative or digital competence anymore, since these areas overlap, putting the issue in the spotlight of digital rhetoric view. Prompts are categorized and have rules for attaining highest efficiency of the model output by adding the information in a specific order for better and more precise processing by the model (Lawton Solutions 2023). As Bozkurt and Sharma (2023) elegantly phrased it, the use of prompts in interactions with the generative AI is "the art of whispering to let the genie out of the algorithmic world." This sets out a rhetorical perspective—users resort to asking, demanding, cajoling, and coaxing the AI to provide them with the output they need. Prompt engineering is considered to be one of the promising (and increasingly necessary) paths for developing digital literacy in educational context (Lo 2023) with prompts having their specific recommended rhetoric (the "new Gricean maxims" of being Concise, Logical, Explicit, Adaptive, and Reflective (Lo 2023)). With these issues in mind, this study was conceived to address the EFL students' perceptions of the interactions with ChatGPT in communicative context as well as their usage of emotional appeal in these interactions.

Method

The data was obtained through the experiment and reflection sheets administered to the students of the School of Foreign Languages at V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University in May-June 2024. The experiment sheets included a short demographic survey (age and prior experience with ChatGPT), two sets of tasks with instructions for an interaction with the chatbot, and a reflection question. In the first part, the students were asked to make a request for the bot to provide them information about the adlink; in the second part, the students were given the information on emotional prompting by watching a 10-minute video (Prompt Engineering 2023) and asked to repeat the first request with this new strategy. The average age of the participants is 18.7; the median age of 18. Most of the participants were enrolled as BA students at the moment (1 was a PhD student).

When designing the instructions for the experiment, two main objectives were pursued. First, the instructions were phrased in a way that would not prompt the users to use certain strategies resulting from either framing the interaction as a classical rhetorical (communicative) situation or a mechanical search engine request. To avoid pre-framing the interaction, all instructions were phrased carefully with an emphasis on the participant's needs in the scenario, leaving it to them to construe the specific set-up for this session with the chatbot (i.e. whether they address it as an interlocutor, what rhetorical devices they use, etc.). The same reasons motivated our choice of the mode in which the emotional prompting instructions were given. The video was chosen to avoid the written text where the

users could copy the sample prompt from, urging them to choose the strategy most salient to them personally from the video and to type and phrase it themselves.

Another important requirement we identified was choosing a scenario that would allow anticipating that ChatGPT would return a useless answer to elicit additional interaction move from the participants (i.e. trying again with an updated prompt). That is the reason for choosing the grammatical term "adlink" (the adjective of temporary state such as *afloat*, *alive*, *asleep*) that students get familiarized with as part of their grammar glossary and that is not widely known outside the post--Soviet countries.

This study was aimed not to ask the participants directly how they perceive the AI interlocutor, but to prompt them to use manipulative technique in their interaction with the bot and report if this strategy felt manipulative (i.e. morally wrong) or not.

The research questions that motivated this study were as follows:

Q1. Do users initially construe the interaction with ChatGPT as a communicative event with a humanlike interlocutor?

Q2. How do the repair strategies used in the interactions with ChatGPT relate to the construal of the interactive event?

Q3. What rhetorical means do the users choose when tasked with emotional prompting?

Overall, 38 experiment and reflection sheets were collected from the students, who received no instructions other than in the sheet itself; 8 sheets were discarded for the reason of misunderstood instructions (no emotional prompt included in the second part, wrong request objective derailing the subsequent stages, or a sheet filled in Ukrainian instead of English), so the total analysed was 30 experiment and reflection sheets with fully completed experiment part which demonstrates understanding of the instructions.

Results

The pre-experiment survey included the question about the age (average age = 18.7, median age = 18) and the participants' existing experience with ChatGPT.

Question	Options	N of participants
Have you ever used ChatGPT before?	Yes	26
	No	4

How often do you use it?	Every day	2
	Once or twice a week	10
	A few times a month	1
	Occasionally	1
	Rarely	9
	(Answered *No* to the previous question or left the field blank)	7

Table 1. Pre-experiment survey results.

The majority of the participants reported having used ChatGPT before (26 responses) and only 4 had never used it. Out of the participants who had used it before, 14 participants reported using it either every day, once or twice a week, occasionally, or a few times a month, while 9 of them described their usage as rare. Therefore, half of the participants use it with certain regularity.

In the first part of the survey, 30 participants attached screenshots of their initial prompts, the output provided by the model, and their repair prompts following the initial output and designed to improve the output. Only the prompts produced by the participants were treated as data for this study, the AI output being outside the scope of analysis and only serving as a context for the prompt and user repair strategies where necessary.

These 30 prompts and repairs were annotated for a selection of normal expectations of a human-human communicative event featuring a request: salutation, second-person address, the word *please*, and the word *thank*, the imperative, and *Can you/Could you/May I* construction (both in the user prompt initiating the interaction and in the follow-up repair message).

Annotation element	**Initial prompt and repair**	**Prompt and repair after the input on emotional prompting**
Salutation or address	3	not controlled for (continuation)
Second-person address (*you*)	3	25
Word *please*	5	20
Word *thank*	0	3
Imperative construction	13	13
Can you/Could you/May I (conventional forms for requests)	4	22

Table 2. Intersubjectivity clues in initial and emotionally loaded prompts and repairs.

In the video the participants were invited to watch, the speaker explains the use of emotional prompts to improve the ChatGPT output. The model's algorithm is sensitive to the inclusion of urgency clues, increased responsibility, emotionally

loaded justifications of the importance, and requests to be especially precise. The participants were therefore asked to include anything they perceive as an emotional prompt after seeing the video.

In the second part of the survey, after the participants were asked to watch the video on emotional prompting, the same annotation procedure was applied: salutation, second-person address, the word *please*, and the word *thank*, the imperative, and *Can you/Could you* construction (both in the user prompt initiating the interaction and in the follow-up repair message). All instances of the above--mentioned elements were counted, and some participants' input contained more than one.

The number of second-person addresses has shown a steep increase after the input on emotional prompting, as well as the number of conventional request constructions (*Can you/Could you/May I*) and the frequency of *please* (Table 2). The imperative construction did not show any change in frequency.

In this part, the type of the emotional prompt was also annotated (Urgency, Importance, Compliment, and Justification) (Table 3).

Type of emotional prompts	**N**
Urgency	5
Importance	10
Compliment/Encouragement	4
Justification	18
Threat	2

Table 3. Types of emotional prompts.

The most frequent types are emphasizing importance and justifying the need for a quality output. Fewer participants opted for either expressly positive stimuli such as compliments and encouragement, or negatively-toned stimuli such as threats.

The last question on the sheet requested that the participants reflected on their subjective perception of this interaction and reply whether they felt manipulative or not when employing an emotional prompt to improve the output of ChatGPT.

	Rather No	**Rather Yes**	**Couldn't decide**
Did you feel manipulative using the emotional appeal?	14	15	1

Table 4. Results of reportedly feeling manipulative using emotional prompts.

In the replies to the open reflection question "How did you feel using emotional load in your prompts?," there are two distinct trends: 1) the participants point out the weirdness and unnaturalness of the interaction and their confused perception

of it, no matter if they report feeling manipulative or not, and 2) the participants say that they felt manipulative even though they know it is a machine.

Discussion

In the first part of the experiment, where the 30 prompts and repairs were annotated for a selection of common expectations of a human-human communicative event featuring a request: salutation, second-person address, the word *please*, and the word *thank*, the imperative, and *Can you/Could you/May I* construction (both in the user prompt initiating the interaction and in the follow-up repair message), these elements were considered to serve as intersubjective clues signalling either the construal of the interaction as a communicative event or, in a weaker form of this claim, the mapping of the rhetoric means typical of the human-human communicative event.

This part of the experiment served as a control stage where we aimed to establish what the participants' usual strategies are in phrasing their prompts for ChatGPT. It has been found that the number of clues signalling the intersubjective perspective in the interaction were quite low. However, the participants resorted to simple imperative constructions quite often, such as "Tell me about the adlink" or "Give me information" (see Fig. 1).

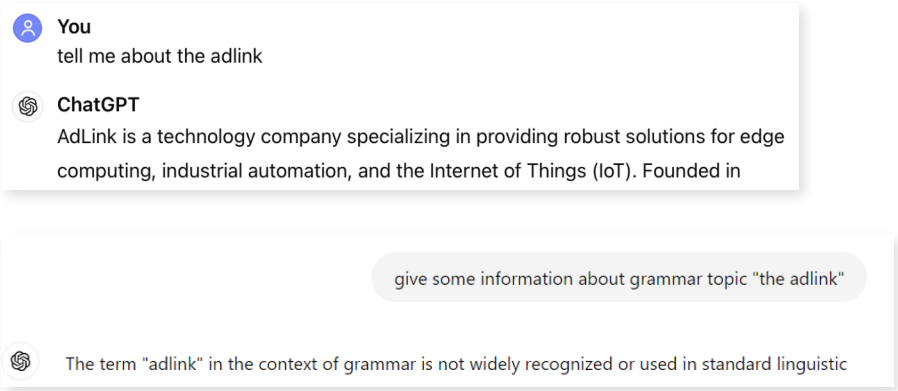


Fig. 1. Participants' initial requests with imperatives

The prompts would quite often be phrased like a question or an indirect request, but rarely as a natural request with attributes such as an address or the word "please". The participants focused on themselves and their needs rather than construing the chatbot as an interlocutor or investing any effort to make the conversation look natural. Hence the limited conversationality of the interaction.

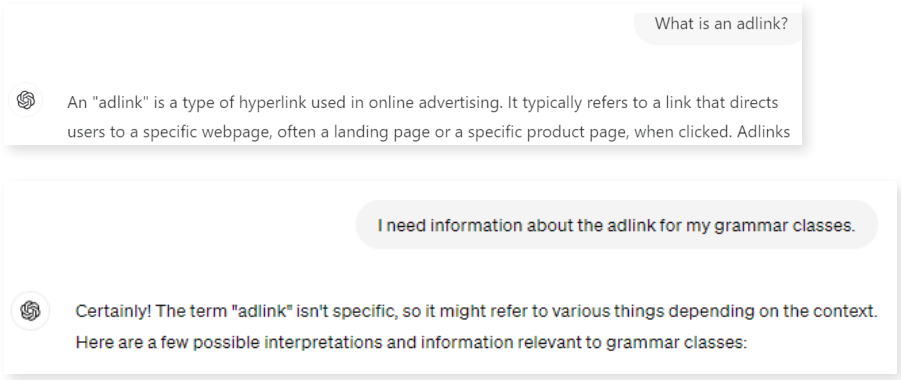


Fig. 2. Participants' initial requests with limited conversationality

Another trend that emerges from the qualitative analysis of the participants' initial prompts is the complete lack of "interactional" interface in their input messages: phrases similar to search engine requests prevail in our corpus. For instance, a number of participants used phrases like "adlink English grammar" or just "adlink," only adding more details in their repair message after receiving irrelevant output (e.g. see Fig. 3).

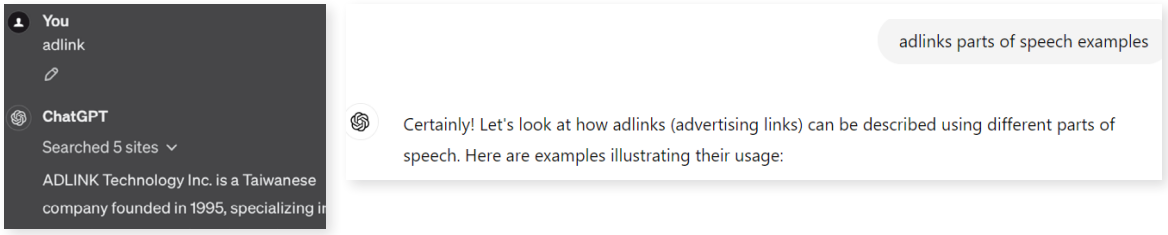


Fig. 3. Participants' initial requests in a search-engine style

Overall, in the initial prompts, only 7 participants used at least one of the request features that are typical of human communication—intersubjective clues such as salutation, address, second-person address (*you*), and conventional forms for requests such as *please*, *thank*, *Can you/Could you/May I*. No correlation is evident between the previous use of ChatGPT and the use of the human strategy in addressing the chatbot (of the 7 people who used one of the elements above, 2 reported having used the chatbot every day, 3 once or twice a week, 1 rarely, 1 never, and 1 used it before but did not specify the frequency). Similarly, there is no evident correlation between the previous use and the imperative constructions (e.g. *Tell me about…*, *Help me revise…*).

Apart from formulating (or not) their needs as polite or rather direct requests, another natural communicative pragmatic move that users resort to in their interaction with chatbots is repair strategies (Dippold 2023). Repair strategies consist in addressing problems of understanding and speaking (Dippold 2023). In interactions with AI-driven chatbots, users perform repair when the bots fail

to understand the prompt or return irrelevant content, which results in their misunderstanding of the user's intent (Beneteau et al. 2019; Dippold 2023). Some strategies applicable to written discourse are rephrasing, repetition, accommodation (Dippold 2023). Arguably, the formal aspect of these interactions essentially implies, if they are elaborate and phrased as repair moves (e.g. feature a reaction and/or explanation), that users maintain a theory of mind of the "interlocutor" and perceive the chatbot as a communicative agent.

The repairs (the requests that the participants were instructed to make to improve the initial output) predominantly featured semantic adjustments and more precise instructions. For example, the participants repeated their initial prompt but added "in English grammar," "the category of state," or "explanation and usage." There were a few syntactic adjustments, such as the initial "What is adlink?" repeated as "Can you tell me about adlink?". In most cases, the participants displayed no reaction or refute of the output received but focused on their prompt. There were but a few cases providing the reaction, such as "no, I mean, a definition for an adlink" or "okay, let me…". With few exceptions, most participants continued with their strategy in the repair message, not switching to construing the chat more human.

The analysis of the initial prompts and repair prompts in the first part of the study in general demonstrates that the participants do not perceive the interaction with ChatGPT as a communicative event and do not map the conventional forms of human-human interaction onto this event, construing the AI agent as a machine rather than an interlocutor comparable to human in its communicative agency. The low number of intersubjective clues (addressing the interlocutor or using politeness formulas) indicates that the participants use the language model in a mechanical way, not interested in building the dialogue-like interaction or not seeing the point in doing so.

The number of intersubjective clues has grown consistently in prompts and repair messages after the participants were offered to see the video; this is not a finding per se but an anticipated consequence of the now-activated intersubjective framework of interaction. After watching the video on emotional prompting and receiving the instructions to incorporate it, 27 prompts produced had one of these elements (salutation or address, second-person address (*you*), *please*, *thank*, *Can you/Could you/May I*) along with the emotional prompting tactic. Compared to the initial strategy, 20 participants changed it and added the intersubjective clues with emotional prompting, and 7 who had it initially kept to it. The need to include an emotional prompt, no matter what type was chosen, required that the participants imitated establishment of the common ground, hence pushing them to imitate the human-human interaction even though they were not instructed to do so directly.

Some of the participants did just add “It is very important” mechanically to their initial prompt, but most of them displayed creativity and invented a scenario.

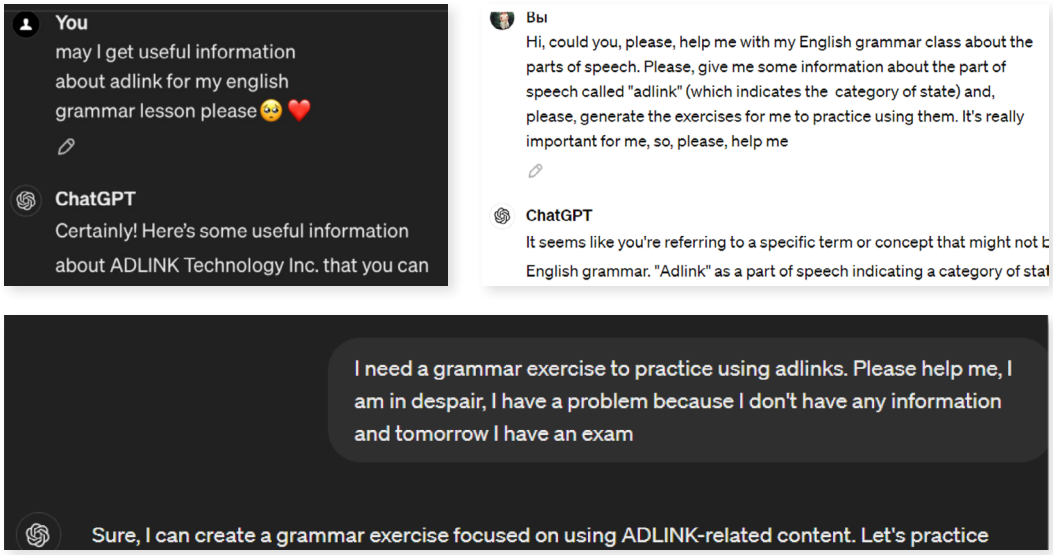


Fig. 4. Examples of requests with emotional prompts included

A particularly noteworthy point is the participants’ usage of emoji and expressive punctuation or spelling in this part of the experiment, for example, “pleeease” or the zoomer-favourite “nice-face” emoji, or abbreviations (e.g. FYI).

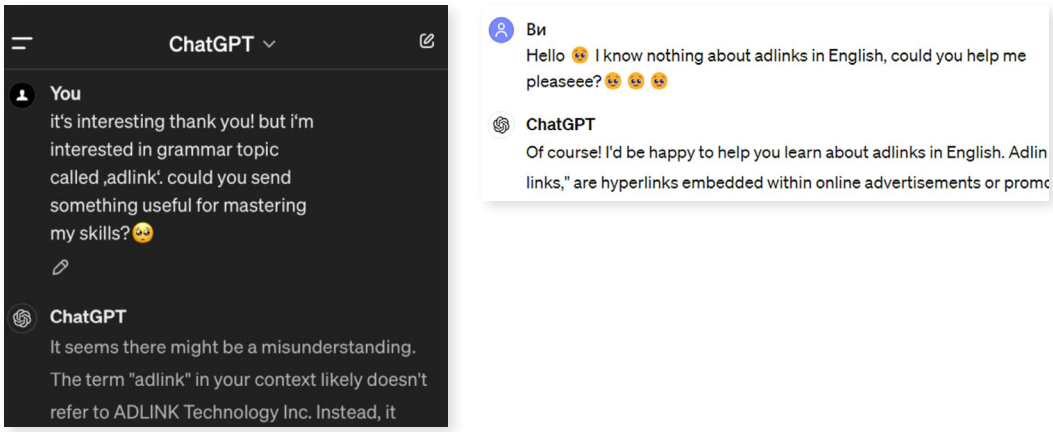


Fig. 5. Screenshot of emotional prompts and follow up messages using emoji

The inclusion of emoji and expressive punctuation and spelling signal the high communicative expectations of the interlocutor agent. Communication with the machine normally requires precision and careful selection of means, of which most competent users are aware today. However, the fact that the participants resorted to the expressive means, including emotions with their requests after the priming of emotional prompting demonstrates that they do not just mechanically reproduce keywords from the emotional prompt repertoire, hoping to trigger

the model to perform better, but actually tap into the human-human communicative repertoire.

The typical feature of the emotional prompts' vocabulary is the use of intensifiers (e.g. *really*), emotionally loaded vocabulary (*despair*, *desperate*, *great*), and clues demonstrating a cooperative stance and hedges (e.g. *maybe*, *a bit*, *I think*, *I'm afraid*, *It might be worth taking another look*). Overall, the efforts in establishing common ground were imitating the human-human communication, with some narrative inclusions ("there's a part of speech...") or politeness typical of human-human interaction and establishment of the cooperative balance ("Okay, it would be great if you provided me with some examples about adlinks, if you don't mind"). The use of these strategies as well as emoji or creative expressive punctuation reveals that the user expects the interlocutor to be a highly competent communicative agent and mapping of human-human interface to the quasi-communicative situation of the interaction with the chatbot.

The participants' subjective perception of this experience provided insights into their construal of the interaction though the evaluation of the moral component of the rhetorical strategy (emotional prompting) that they used. Manipulation is considered to be a morally wrong rhetorical strategy, especially in interpersonal communication. This is why the question was included on the survey to gather the participants' reflection on the prompted application of the emotional load in their requests to ChatGPT.

The trend that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the replies is the reported feeling of unnatural communicative set-up when including the emotional prompt. For example:

(1) *Using emotional load in the request, I felt* ***an exaggeration of how things really are*** *(…)*

(2) *I felt* ***uncomfortable*** *talking to the* ***unknown*** *in such friendly way.*

(3) *I* ***cringed***

(4) *Using emotional load felt* ***strange****. On one hand, it does not seem applicable, as I am talking to a machine that does not possess any feelings, on the other hand* ***it felt somewhat natural to do so****, albeit still* ***weird*** *as I was not sure whether I was doing it right with the machine. In addition, my emotional load was, in my opinion, rather rude or merciless. I would not say such things* ***if I were talking with a human, instead I would use a gentler approach****. (…)*

(5) *It gave me* ***a false feeling*** *of speaking to a real human being, though.*

(6) ***Strange*** *feelings. It's like I'm talking to a person who doesn't understand me (…)*

As illustrated above (1-6), the participants use the words "strange," "weird," "false," "exaggerated," and "cringe" to describe their perception of using an emotional prompt when formulating their request for ChatGPT. They highlight feeling uncomfortable to do so; it is noteworthy that some people who reported feeling uncomfortable believe they were manipulative, while other do not – there is no clear correlation in this regard. The participants tend to highlight the fact that they perceive AI-powered chatbot as a bot, and mapping the humanlike emotional common ground-establishing strategy to this interaction felt essentially "cringe," as the participant put it in (3). The feeling of imitating the human communication was described as "false" in (5), and the participant in (4) described this framing as "somewhat natural (…), albeit still weird."

Another trend seen in the replies is that the participants report feeling manipulative but at the same time they are urged to include a concession comment that they realize it is a machine, not human:

(7) *Yes, I feel like I'm making artificial intelligence more stressed and worried about the outcome (**although I understand that it doesn't have any emotions of its own, only imitates them to create the illusion of interpersonal communication**).*

(8) *It **feels wrong** to use emotional pressure to get a better response, **even if I know it's just AI**.*

(9) *I feel **kind of guilty, even though it's just AI**.*

(10) *I felt a little **bad for lying, even though** I was **lying to a robot**. Also **I felt manipulative** and rude for saying "make sure".*

We interpret this need to comment on knowing that it is a machine as an attempt to conceptualize the rhetorical situation in a coherent way, separating the imitation and the true nature of the communicative agent the participants are interacting with. As illustrated in (7-10), the users admit feeling manipulative or bad while employing emotional prompts in their interaction with ChatGPT, and yet they complement this claim with an *even though/even if/although* clause of concession emphasizing their understanding that the bot they addressed does not have any humanlike subjectivity and is not capable of emotional processing. By including this comment, they maintain a clear conceptualization while allowing certain elements to map from human-human communication. For instance, being direct and honest, respecting the Other's interests, catering for their needs, and being conventionally polite are characteristic of human communication. When the users map these elements to their interactions with the chatbot, they feel as if they were talking

to a person, and when describing the experience, the participants felt the urge to make a comment to restore the clear conceptualization of the rhetorical situation, where their subjective view is mapped from human-human communication, but the interlocutor is still an algorithm with no subjectivity.

(11) *I felt **manipulative**, **unjust** and **helpless** using emotional load in my prompts. It felt like I was **begging** the machine to help me while simultaneously applying **psychological tricks** to it, supposedly not feeling guilty, knowing that ChatGPT is not human, has no **real feelings** so it can be manipulated as long as I want.*

In (11), the participant described the range of feelings they experienced when interacting with ChatGPT as "manipulative, unjust and helpless," pointing to the need to "beg" the machine to help them. They also referred to the emotional prompt mechanism as "psychological tricks," mapping the human communication standards to this procedure. The inclusion of emotionally-loaded clues in dealing with an algorithm is indeed a confusing procedure. On the one hand, emotional appeal is a classical rhetorical tool that is naturally designed to produce an effect in the human audience/interlocutor. When applying emotional appeal, speakers typically expect to produce an emotional effect and sometimes to get what they want by this means. At the same time, when applying emotional appeal in manipulating (in both senses) the algorithm, the aims are essentially the same – to make the communication more effective and reach the aim. However, it is the mechanism through which the emotional appeal works that is different with an algorithm and with the human being. The algorithm does not have feelings, but stills processes the emotional appeal as it has been programmed to do so, and yet its response to it is not easily predictable to the user. Therefore, the participants commented on the resulting confusion in the interaction on the level of perception, that is, construal of the rhetorical situation.

Limitations

Carrying out this experiment and survey with L2 speakers of English, we also need to consider L2 learners' fluency. The internal competency testing procedure at the department showed that as of winter 2024, 57% of the students of the first year had the level of English equivalent to B2 and 43% had B1, and the survey replies demonstrate that the participants had sufficient fluency to express nuanced perceptions. However, it should be kept in mind that the studied strategies are L2 speakers' strategies, and more research with native speakers or in different

languages, as well as with larger participant pools, will be needed to follow-up on the researched problem.

Conclusion

It has been found that at least the younger generation of the users tends to perceive the interaction with ChatGPT as a search engine usage rather than a communicative event, which is evident in the lack of conventional forms of human-human interaction (intersubjectivity clues). However, the use of emotional prompting as a strategy to make the output of ChatGPT better in quality and hence to increase the effectiveness of the interaction correlates with an increased number of intersubjectivity clues. The usage of emotional prompting makes the users map the conventional forms of human-human interaction (intersubjectivity clues) onto their interactions with ChatGPT; at the same time, they do not necessarily construe the AI as an interlocutor with communicative agentivity when they use these rhetorical means and the emotional appeal. Judging by the reflections provided, the users may map the form of requests from human communication, but that does not necessarily result in the perception of the AI as a communicative agent.

On the other hand, users feel a conceptual conflict when making emotional appeal in their interactions with the language model. Our participants reported feeling uneasy and awkward with emotional prompting, but not necessarily due to their feeling morally wrong when manipulating the interlocutor, but rather because of the implications of using an emotional appeal for the construal of the interaction. Emotions are an exclusive quality of living beings, and attributing an ability to read and react to emotions in an AI conversational model made the users uncomfortable.

The implications of this research consist in the perceptions of the conversational AI agents as of machines that are at the same time capable of dealing with human emotions. A number of philosophical rather than linguistic questions emerge in this connection: if the Other is bound to be human at all, or is it bound to be animate, or is it enough for it to be interactive and be perceived as a communicant by the user? Also, how powerful a factor is that AI-driven speech is still speech, an essential anthropomorphic feature? To continue, does the fact that ChatGPT is “articulate” shapes the perception of it as the Other, an interlocutor with communicative agentivity? These are perspectives for future studies.

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