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**Generative AI and
Generation Z: Redefining
Language, Identity, and
Communication in the Digital
Workplace**

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Abstract: This paper examines the intersection of Generation Z, artificial intelligence (AI), and workplace communication, focusing on how digitalization is reshaping professional discourse, leadership, and identity. As the first fully digital-native cohort, Generation Z operates within hybrid work environments increasingly mediated by AI-driven tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot. These technologies influence tone, feedback, and collaboration, enhancing efficiency while simultaneously challenging authenticity, empathy, and intergenerational understanding. Gen Z's communicative repertoire—marked by multimodality, informality, and visual semiotics such as emojis, memes, and abbreviations—serves both identity construction and peer bonding. Through a narrative review, the paper explores work values, collaboration preferences, and adaptive communication styles, emphasizing the importance of aligning communicative norms with the expectations of emerging generations. As a conclusion, it argues that AI functions not merely as a productivity enhancer but as a transformative linguistic force, demanding that workplaces balance technological fluency with inclusivity, relational connection, and ethical communication practices.

Keywords: Generation Z, Artificial Intelligence, workplace communication, digitalization, generative AI

Introduction

“Information is the oxygen of the modern age”, Yuval Noah Harari famously remarked. For much of human history, creativity—particularly expressed through

written and spoken language—was considered uniquely human. Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) challenge this assumption. AI systems now generate text, images, and other media that are often indistinguishable from human output (Feuerriegel et al., 2024). As AI diffuses rapidly into professional environments, it is transforming not only how tasks are performed but also how individuals communicate, lead, and negotiate identity in increasingly digitalized workplaces.

Unlike prior technological innovations designed to enhance human capabilities, AI systems possess a degree of autonomy: they process and analyze information, make decisions, and generate new ideas and concepts without direct human intervention (Harari, 2024). Broadly, AI is defined as “intelligent systems with the ability to think and learn” (Jarrahi, 2018). Wang (2019) frames intelligence as “adaptation under conditions of insufficient knowledge and resources”, highlighting AI’s capacity for flexible learning, though Dahlke (2024) critiques dominant definitions for neglecting linguistic and human dimensions of intelligence. Within this domain, generative AI (GenAI) refers to systems that produce novel content—text, visuals, or audio—based on extensive training data (Feuerriegel et al., 2024). Yet, uncertainties persist due to the lack of a unified definition (García-Peñalvo & Vázquez-Ingelmo, 2023). Ronge et al. (2025) identify four dimensions—multimodality, interactivity, flexibility, and productivity—that capture the complexity of GenAI. Increasingly, these systems are treated as interactive agents rather than passive tools, engaging in reciprocal relationships with human communicators (Bianchini, 2025).

Large Language Models (LLMs) underpin many generative AI systems, learning statistical patterns among words to produce coherent, contextually relevant outputs. Applications like ChatGPT now generate text, code, and visuals, reshaping professional communication and knowledge work (McKinsey & Company, 2023). While AI enhances creativity and decision-making (Jarrahi, 2018; Sharma & Tiwari, 2023), it also raises concerns about technostress, job insecurity, and overreliance on automation—challenges to workers’ cognitive and emotional capacities (Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). Futurist Ray Kurzweil predicts human-level AI intelligence by 2029, with exponential progress thereafter. Regardless of the exact timeline, it is evident that AI represents a lasting force in work discourse.

As we consider AI's impact on workplace discourse, it is crucial to distinguish between different modes of communication. Workplace communication encompasses both spoken, face-to-face interactions and written, digitally mediated exchanges (Koester, 2010). Notably, the advent of generative AI predominantly influences the written and digitally mediated side of this spectrum—emails, chats, documents—by offering content suggestions or even fully generated text. Face-to-face oral communication, by contrast, remains rooted in human spontaneity and nonverbal cues, with only indirect AI influence (e.g. real-time translation tools or AI-enhanced video conferencing). This paper will primarily focus on the latter category of written digital discourse, where AI's linguistic intervention is most pronounced, while acknowledging that in-person dialogue retains an essential role in building trust and rapport. In fact, organizational communication today is becoming gradually less formal and increasingly resembles discourse that occurs in private settings, partly due to the proliferation of digital channels across all communication forms. These trends pose new challenges—such as managing multilingual communication, cultural differences, and varying workplace norms in a technology-saturated environment (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019). Not all workplace interaction is transactionally focused on tasks; much of it remains relationally oriented exchange aimed at fostering connection. In the AI era, achieving the right balance between efficiency and human warmth in each mode of communication becomes a key concern.

Generation Z and Workplace Discourses

Generation Z, generally defined as individuals born between 1995 and 2010, represents the first generation to mature fully in a digital and algorithmic world (Bencsik et al., 2016; Bejtkovsky, 2016). Twenge (2023) refers to them as “iGen”, reflecting their smartphone-era upbringing, while the label “Zoomers” highlights their immersion in virtual interactions (notably via Zoom and other platforms) during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, Millennials and

Gen Z account for approximately 38% of the global workforce, a figure projected to rise to 58% by 2030 (PwC study, 2020).

As digital natives, Gen Z has developed a communication style characterized by constant connectivity, multimodality, and irony (Turner, 2015; Hosli et al., 2024). They navigate workplaces mediated by AI-driven tools that generate content, feedback, and even leadership messages (Yang et al., 2024). Despite their technological fluency, many members of this generation may lack the strategic digital literacy required for long-term career development (Hammad, 2025). Their online identities are co-constructed via platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, where cultural norms, linguistic innovation, and community values are continuously remixed (Parsakia et al., 2023). These formative experiences shape how Gen Z expects to communicate and be communicated with in professional settings.

Research indicates that Generation Z values flexibility, autonomy, and meaningful work, yet also seeks in-person connection—a desire amplified by the isolation many experienced during the pandemic (Katz et al., 2021; Becker, 2022). Even when assigned individual tasks, Gen Z employees often prefer to complete them within a group context, reflecting a desire for collaboration and shared engagement. This duality—virtual fluency alongside a craving for authentic belonging—defines their communication preferences. Digital technologies expand opportunities for global collaboration, yet they can also risk diminishing the interpersonal and cross-generational communication skills fundamental to strong leadership and cohesive teamwork.

Within this context, workplace discourse has gained renewed importance. Koester (2010) defines workplace discourse as “spoken and written interaction occurring in a workplace setting”, while Cooren et al. (2014) emphasize its role in constructing organizational processes and shaping identities. The coexistence of four generations in today’s workforce potentially introduces linguistic and cultural tensions, as each cohort brings distinct communication norms, values, and expectations. Workplace communication spans interactions with clients, colleagues, and other stakeholders, described variously as institutional talk, professional discourse,

organizational communication, or business communication (Koester, 2010). Discourse combines and integrates “language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using various symbols, tools and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (Gee, 1999). Professional discourse is often “goal-oriented and contextually situated, shaped by legal-political, technical, socio-cultural, and linguistic frameworks” (Gunnarsson, 2009). However, as noted above, the discourse of organizations is becoming less formal and more like everyday personal communication. Generation Z is a driving force in this shift—bringing the vernacular, tone, and expectations from social media and group chats into emails, meetings, and even leadership communications. For managers, this means that traditional top-down or formal communication styles may no longer resonate; instead, authenticity and relatability are increasingly key to effective discourse across hierarchies.

Research shows that Generation Z employees prefer brief, direct, and technology-mediated communication, particularly via instant messaging and social platform-based channels that allow rapid, informal interactions (Stillman & Stillman, 2017, p. 96; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018). They tend to disengage from communication that feels bureaucratic, hierarchical, or overly formal, responding instead to conversational, transparent, and inclusive language—even in interactions with senior leaders or external stakeholders (Raslie, 2021). A supportive and empathetic communication climate is critical, as young employees value transparency, psychological safety, and continuous feedback (Waworuntu et al., 2022).

Generation Z is also highly sensitive to whether their contributions are acknowledged: when ideas are dismissed or not taken seriously, employees perceive this as disrespect, which can undermine engagement, motivation, and organizational commitment (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Mosca & Merkle, 2024). Standardized corporate templates or generic training materials that are seen to lack authenticity or fail to reflect diverse identities may feel alienating, whereas communication that demonstrates empathy and cultural awareness strengthens trust and connection (Men et al., 2024). With E-Mail, Slack, Microsoft Teams, and instant messaging shaping professional discourse, organizations

aiming to attract and retain Gen Z talent must adapt their communication practices, fostering a relational, inclusive, and authentic workplace culture (Waworuntu et al., 2022).

Generation Z and AI-Mediated Communication Tools

AI tools now enable organizations to reduce linguistic barriers by providing translation, summarization, and writing support across diverse teams. Tools such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Grammarly Business help create clearer communication for employees who are non-native speakers or new to a workplace's discourse norms, thereby fostering linguistic inclusivity and professional parity (Mortensen, 2025). Yet this same AI-driven standardization can also risk erasing linguistic individuality and flattening cultural heritage, raising concerns about voice and authenticity in AI-mediated workspaces (Crawford, 2021). When every memo or E-Mail is polished by the same algorithm, the nuances of personal and cultural expression may be diminished or lost. For Gen Z, more than earlier cohorts, language—including slang, code-switching, and meme-based expression—functions as a crucial identity cue, making this kind of homogenization feel especially alienating. As a result, leaders and organizations face growing pressure to strike a balance between consistency and personalization in their communication practices.

Digital and AI tools have undoubtedly increased operational efficiency for Gen Z, but they have also introduced new expectations and potential stressors related to these work values. On one hand, Gen Z expects technology (including AI) to facilitate flexibility, quick solutions, and on-demand feedback in line with their values of autonomy and continuous development. A recent study, for example, found that Gen Z students are more interested in adopting generative AI tools in learning environments than their Gen X and Millennial teachers, reflecting a high comfort level with AI that likely extends into workplace expectations (Chan & Lee, 2023). This suggests that young professionals may look to AI for instantaneous answers or creative inspiration and may even feel empowered by having AI “co-pilots” in their work (Wei, 2023; Selvam & Zakaria, 2024). On the other hand, heavy reliance on AI in communication

can conflict with Gen Z's desire for authentic human connection, mentorship, and empathy in the workplace. AI can emulate empathy, but authentic human interaction remains crucial in contexts demanding emotional intelligence and ethical judgment (Crawford, 2021). For instance, while an AI chatbot might provide a Gen Z employee with quick tips or company knowledge, it cannot fully replace the understanding and encouragement that a human mentor offers. Gen Z workers might appreciate AI tools for efficiency yet still crave personalized feedback from a manager who understands their individual context.

At the same time, AI systems are reshaping the very language of work, influencing tone, perceived authority, and interpersonal dynamics. Concepts such as “agentic AI” and the rise of “superworkers” (AI-augmented employees) illustrate shifting power dynamics in how tasks, decisions, and communication unfold (Bersin, 2025). Algorithms now mediate not only data and workflows but also organizational language, hierarchies, and feedback loops. They may prioritize messages, suggest responses, or communicate directly with customers via chatbots—effectively inserting themselves into everyday workplace discourse. Whenever the communicative context permits, Generation Z often resists mechanized or overly scripted norms, advocating instead for authenticity, inclusion, and values-driven communication in digital workplaces (Tirocchi, 2024). Their comfort with technology (Raslie, 2021; Zahra et al., 2025) does not result in a passive acceptance; on the contrary, young employees readily call out communication they perceive as inauthentic—particularly when it originates from an AI system or a standardized corporate template.

Gen Z's fluency with personalization, meaning digital tools that tailor content to individual interests and usage patterns, and adaptive learning, in which systems adjust feedback and difficulty based on user performance, also positions them as early adopters of AI-driven platforms such as Brainly, Grammarly, and CourseHero (FlexOS, 2024). Many routinely use AI chatbots to brainstorm ideas or obtain quick explanations, treating these systems as extensions of their own cognitive processes. Although overreliance on such tools can reduce certain forms of cognitive engagement (Ovalle, 2025; Kasneci et al., 2023), thoughtfully applied AI has the potential to reinforce Gen Z's motivation and creativity (Kavitha & Joshith, 2024). Emerging AI companions like xAI's

Grok—an animated, voice-enabled avatar designed to form an ongoing “working relationship” with the user—offer a glimpse into hybrid spaces where human and machine intelligence converge. In such scenarios, emotional connection, professional discourse, and machine interactivity intersect in new ways (Geekflare, 2025). For example, a Gen Z employee might collaborate with an AI agent on a project, perceiving it simultaneously as a tool and a conversational partner. This blurring of roles challenges traditional assumptions about communication, including who is the sender and who is the receiver.

Ultimately, AI is not only transforming how work is accomplished, but also how individuals construct and express identity through communication. For Generation Z—whose sense of identity is deeply digital, visual, and dialogical (Stillman & Stillman, 2017, p. 91)—maintaining authenticity and empathy within AI-mediated environments will be essential for preserving human voice and values in the virtual workplace. They will expect employers to apply AI in ways that strengthen, rather than replace, human connection. In practical terms, this may involve using AI to handle routine information exchange while reserving feedback, mentoring, and sensitive discussions for human-to-human interaction. It also means ensuring that AI-supported communication—such as emails drafted with an AI assistant—still reflects the personal voice of its sender rather than appearing generic or impersonal.

Managing Communication in the Modern Workplace

As digital tools become deeply embedded in everyday workflows—and AI-generated writing increasingly shapes workplace communication—establishing clear and shared communication norms has become essential. Hybrid and remote work, supported by platforms such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp, have enhanced operational efficiency but also introduce new forms of communicative strain. When multiple platforms are used simultaneously, information easily becomes fragmented or delayed. AI-assisted writing tools further increase the volume of written communication, intensifying

uncertainty about message urgency and contributing to communication overload. Some employees feel compelled to respond immediately to every notification, while others overlook important messages as discussions sprawl across channels.

Clear guidelines that assign specific communicative functions to designated platforms can reduce this complexity and stress (Rogers & Dorison, 2025). For instance, organizations may reserve urgent issues for a specific chat channel with mandatory notifications while assigning longer discussions to forums where AI tools can support drafting, summarizing, or organizing contributions. By formalizing such norms, organizations ensure that AI-enhanced communication remains manageable, equitable, and structured for all employees—including Gen Z.

AI, Organizational Values and Workplace Culture

Individual work values—defined as motivational beliefs related to work and career—shape attitudes toward job satisfaction, career choices, and engagement (Busque-Carrier et al., 2022). Hossli et al. (2024) emphasize that these values represent the priorities individuals hope will be recognized at work, while personal values guide broader decision-making and expectations. Importantly, “work values differ across generations, career stages, and cultures” (Silva & Carvalho, 2021), meaning AI adoption can either reinforce or undermine perceived value alignment.

Organizational values strongly influence communication practices and signal a company’s identity to employees and external stakeholders. Language norms reveal whether a workplace promotes hierarchy and formality or prioritizes openness and collaboration (Koester, 2010). When AI-generated communication reinforces overly formal or standardized styles, it may inadvertently reflect values misaligned with Gen Z’s expectations—for example, conveying rigidity in a workplace that claims to promote empowerment. Based on current insights, AI can be trained to support value alignment by offering inclusive, accessible language or helping teams maintain transparency through consistent updates and documentation.

Work values may shift in response to workplace changes, while personal values tend to be more stable, though still shaped by socialization processes. The degree of alignment between individual and organizational values influences job satisfaction and engagement (Hossli et al., 2024). For Gen Z employees who value innovation and continuous learning, AI-enabled environments offering experimentation and digital creativity enhance congruence. Conversely, risk-averse environments—particularly those relying on rigid AI-generated communication templates—may feel restrictive.

Work Values of Gen Z in AI-Shaped Environments

Gen Z is often praised for creativity and technological proficiency (Chen & Ha, 2023), though some employers express doubts about workplace readiness and view their expectations as unrealistic (Maloni et al., 2019). Giving these mixed perceptions, understanding how digitalization and AI shape their communication patterns, mental health expectations, and work values is crucial for effectively engaging young talent.

Building on this, Gen Z places strong value on work–life balance, mental health, belonging, and purpose—sometimes over traditional advancement (Mould, 2025; Vieira et al., 2024). Social values, including interpersonal relationships and community, are particularly significant (Silva & Carvalho, 2021; Kapuściński et al., 2023). They seek transparent, frequent feedback (Katz et al., 2021)—a need AI can support through rapid responses but cannot fulfill emotionally. However, this heightened emphasis on belonging and growth also intersects with career expectations. At times, their ambitions for rapid career growth conflict with traditional advancement structures, leading to frustration when progress appears slow (Vieira et al., 2024).

In parallel, AI influences organizational values in two ways: it can support autonomy, efficiency, and flexibility, but can also increase pressure through constant availability, digital surveillance, or standardized communication norms. This duality is particularly significant for Gen Z, who may disengage if AI-driven efficiency compromises their sense of agency or creativity, or if accelerated automation reduces opportunities for learning (Vieira et al., 2024).

Similarly, while Gen Z values autonomy (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021; Katz et al., 2021; Rzemieniak & Wawer, 2021), they also emphasize diversity, transparency, and open dialogue, actively seeking opportunities to contribute to projects aligned with these principles (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Intrinsic rewards—such as a sense of purpose and meaningful involvement—can be as motivating for Gen Z as traditional extrinsic incentives like bonuses or benefits. However, AI can also undermine their aspirations if its systems obscure decision-making or reinforce hidden hierarchies, contradicting Gen Z's commitment to transparency judgement.

Moreover, Gen Z demonstrates a complex orientation toward teamwork: they value individual expression yet seek support and community. They thrive in tech-integrated workflows that facilitate collaboration, such as co-creating in Google Docs while video-chatting or coordinating work across tools like Google Sheets, Trello, or Canva (Ludviga & Sluka, 2023). However, as collaborative platforms increasingly integrate AI, writing and editing tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly) can increase efficiency but also standardize language, reducing variation and potentially suppressing dialects or culturally specific expressions (Amin et al., 2025). Furthermore, a recent study by Kos'myna et al. (2025) revealed significant drop in brain connectivity when performing LLM-assisted writing. Since AI tools increasingly become standard in organizational settings, concerns about linguistic justice and cultural equity grow (Buddemeyer et al., 2021).

Consequently, while AI empowers Gen Z with immediate insights and creative tools, aligning with their technological expectations (Chan & Lee, 2023), yet may undermine their need for authenticity, mentorship, and empathy (Crawford, 2021). Tools that assist with learning, productivity, real-time editing, or idea generation enhance digital strengths but cannot replicate interpersonal nuance. Working across multiple platforms can feel overwhelming, and AI-generated notifications can intensify distraction. Thus, although Gen Z appreciates AI for efficiency, they still rely on human-centered feedback, valuing managers who understand their personal and professional context.

Taken together, these dynamics highlight that organizations must use AI to augment human-centric values rather than replace them. If mental health

and work–life balance matter to Gen Z, AI should automate repetitive tasks rather than reinforce expectations of constant availability. If belonging and purpose are essential, AI should enhance community-building (e.g., intelligent mentorship pairing) instead of functioning mainly as surveillance. Effective use of AI requires workplaces that remain “high-tech yet high-touch”, combining efficiency with empathy and meaning.

AI, Digital Language and Generational Identity

Each generation develops its own linguistic repertoire—through slang, symbols, and expressions—to reinforce peer bonds and assert autonomy. Today, language evolution is heavily driven by digital engagement: social media platforms, messaging apps, and AI-mediated tools accelerate the spread of new words and symbols, often resulting in global youth slang (e.g., “LOL”, emojis, memes). Predictive text, autocomplete, and algorithmic recommendations further amplify this linguistic diffusion. Katz et al. (2021) identify three major transformations shaping contemporary communication: (1) the need to master multiple social codes, (2) the rise of collaborative work modes, and (3) new expectations regarding engagement. Mastering multiple social codes means a Gen Z employee may shift from a formal email to a meme-filled chat, then issue concise commands to a voice assistant—all within minutes.

Gen Z’s linguistic and social identities are strongly intertwined with digital and AI-mediated environments. These environments promote brief, playful, multimodal expression blending visual and textual communication (Prensky, 2009). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Discord, and YouTube shape conversational rhythms that privilege visual storytelling and interactivity (Prensky, 2009). Chen & Ha (2023) also point out that social media consumption increases peer pressure and the desire for social acceptance among Gen Z. Surveys indicate that most Gen Z integrates slang from these platforms into everyday speech, including workplace interactions (Yang et al., 2024). Informal shorthand enables speed and efficiency (Kencana, 2025). Compared to the general population, Gen Z uses terms like cancel, ghost, and block more frequently, reflecting digital social norms (Katz et al., 2021). Memes serve as

emotional shorthand and cultural commentary (Shifman, 2013), conveying complex sentiments efficiently. Their communication style is friendly, relationship-oriented, and empathy-focused (Visser & Terblanche, 2025). Gen Z frequently engages in “style-flexing”, adjusting tone depending on audience and platform—a skill increasingly influenced by AI-generated phrasing tools (Raslie, 2021). While AI can help Gen Z articulate their ideas and participate more confidently in professional discourse, excessive reliance may erode individuality.

Growing up immersed in smartphones and digital platforms, Gen Z blends verbal, visual, and symbolic modes in ways that diverge from face-to-face communication patterns (Prensky, 2009). This hybridity constructs both meaning and identity (Kencana, 2025). They often avoid confrontational communication, favoring styles grounded in psychological safety (Chuah et al., 2025). AI-generated tone adjustment may reinforce softened language while limiting direct dialogue. Gen Z interacts daily with AI—from chatbots to recommendation algorithms—and is comfortable with semi-conversational machine exchanges (Chan & Lee, 2023). This cultivates expectations that communication, human or AI, should be interactive, fast, and feedback rich. Up to 60% use AI assistants daily (Jarco & Sutkowski, 2023), normalizing “always-on” rhythms. Interacting with voice assistants requiring direct commands (“Alexa, set a reminder for 3 PM”) can encourage more concise or imperative styles (Floridi, 2023). Older generations may perceive this as abrupt, highlighting tensions in politeness norms (Tagg & Seargeant, 2017).

As younger generations reshape workplace discourse, organizations must consider the cultural and ethical implications of linguistic standardization in AI-mediated communication. Efficiency should not come at the expense of the linguistic richness that makes communication meaningful. Leadership plays a pivotal role in establishing structures that foster open communication, whether AI-assisted or not.

Generational Differences in Emoji Use

Emojis act as expressive stand-ins for tone and nonverbal cues in digital communication, yet their meanings shift depending on generation, relationship, and context (Derks et al., 2008). A simple symbol like “😊” can convey warmth, irony, or mild sarcasm, with interpretations varying widely across age groups. In multilingual settings, Gen Z often blends English terms with local idioms and uses emojis as universal meaning-making tools (Kencana, 2025).

Gen Z uses emojis deliberately and with strong audience awareness. Xu et al. (2025) show that most Gen Z use emojis with friends (80%) and classmates (70%), but far fewer do so with older generations (25%), reflecting sensitivity to shifting digital norms. They often employ emojis with layers of irony or playfulness (Abbasi et al., 2025), while Millennials tend to interpret them more literally, and Gen X/Boomers favor straightforward emotional signals. Although emojis can function as a cross-cultural visual language (Xu et al., 2025), generational interpretations vary significantly.

These differences appear clearly in the workplace. Gen Z is more likely than older colleagues to use emojis with managers or customers (Ahmed, 2025), while Gen X and Boomers remain more cautious (YouGov & Atlasian, 2025). The thumbs-up (👍) is widely used by Gen Z as quick acknowledgment (Ahmed, 2025), but some older users interpret it as abrupt. Symbols like 💀 (“I’m dying of laughter” for Gen Z) often confuse older coworkers. Likewise, 🙏 may mean “thanks” to younger users but “prayer” to older colleagues.

Emojis can enhance connection in remote or hybrid teams by adding warmth and immediacy (Liegl & Furtner, 2024; Choi et al., 2023). Yet reliance on emojis, GIFs, and acronyms may create cross-generational misunderstandings or blur professional boundaries (Kencana, 2025; Skovholt et al., 2014). What feels natural to a 23-year-old may appear vague or unprofessional to a 50-year-old expecting clearer confirmation.

For leaders, recognizing these patterns is essential. Some organizations now create internal emoji guidelines or glossaries to ensure shared understanding while preserving employees’ ability to express tone authentically. When used

mindfully, emojis can enhance clarity and connection rather than detract from professional communication.

A Two-Dimensional Lens on AI, Authorial Voice, and Organizational Discourse

To examine how generative AI influences personal expression and workplace discourse, we propose a two-dimensional analytical lens. The first-dimension concerns *identity*—including voice, agency, and authenticity—while the second concerns *communication*, encompassing linguistic norms and discourse patterns. Together, these dimensions highlight how AI mediation can alter both self-presentation and the character of workplace interaction.

Identity: Voice, Agency and Authenticity

In human communication, *voice* reflects the personal style through which identity becomes visible in language. Lehman (2024) frames writing as an act of leadership and identity assertion, where effective communication depends on skillfully projecting one's voice. When AI tools intervene—through autocomplete, tone assistants, or automated drafting—personal voice may become muted or reshaped toward an “algorithmic” neutrality. This raises concerns about authenticity: *does the message still sound like me?*

Homogenization is another risk. If many employees use the same AI writing assistant, distinctive voices can converge into similar patterns. This also touches agency: when AI selects most of the phrasing, the locus of authorship becomes blurred. Although the human presses “send”, their influence over content may be diminished.

Research supports the importance of maintaining a recognizable, audience-attuned voice. Lehman, Cybulska-Gómez de Celis, and Sułkowski (2022) found that communication with a clear personal voice increases persuasiveness and engagement. If AI assistance removes too much individuality, the communication

effectiveness and the sense of human touch can suffer. Employees may also feel reduced ownership over AI-shaped messages, potentially weakening engagement and connection to their work.

At the same time, AI can reinforce identity expression when used as a creative aid, for example by suggesting vocabulary that helps articulate ideas more precisely. In such cases, AI amplifies rather than replaces the individual's voice.

Communication: Linguistic Norms and Discourse Patterns

Generative AI also shapes the *form* and *flow* of workplace language. AI tools typically promote clarity, correctness, and stylistic consistency. Tukachinsky Forster, Kee, and Li (2025) note that these systems tend to standardize language and reduce stylistic variation. While this can elevate baseline quality (e.g. fewer typos, clearer sentences), it may also suppress informal characteristics, slang, or culturally grounded expressions—elements that younger employees might otherwise use to signal identity or rapport.

AI mediation also alters discourse patterns. Chatbots may handle initial customer interactions; automated assistants schedule meetings or triage messages. As a result, segments of workplace exchange shift from human–human to machine–human or machine–machine interaction. This raises questions about the depth and relational quality of communication: AI may streamline transactional exchanges but limit opportunities for more exploratory, relational dialogue.

Power dynamics are also encoded in discourse. When leaders rely on AI to draft announcements, AI becomes a form of ghostwriter for leadership voice. Jarco and Sułkowski's (2023) study on business consulting advice illustrates this boundary clearly: while ChatGPT produced plausible recommendations, it could *not replace* expert human judgment (Jarco & Sułkowski, 2023). Applied to communication, this suggests that AI may supply options, but humans must contextualize, interpret, and assert final judgement to retain agency.

Integrating the Two Dimensions

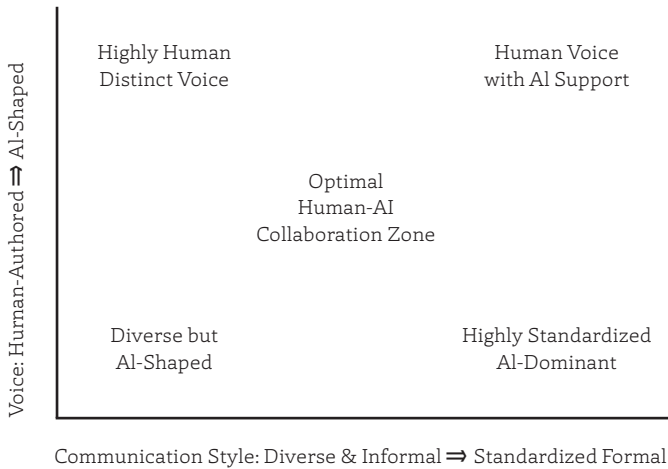
Across identity and communication, AI creates both synergy and tension. It may help individuals articulate ideas or reduce barriers for those who struggle with writing. Yet overreliance risks masking personality, standardizing tone, and diminishing creativity and the authenticity highly valued by Gen Z and others.

A conceptual illustration (Figure 1 below) positions identity on a spectrum from “fully human-authored voice” to “AI-shaped voice”, and communication on a spectrum from “diverse, informal discourse” to “standardized, formal discourse”. The optimal zone is one of *balanced human–AI collaboration*: AI offers scaffolding, efficiency, and clarity, while humans preserve individuality, empathy, and critical thinking.

Practically, organizations can encourage employees to treat AI outputs as drafts rather than final versions, editing and customizing them to reassert voice and agency. This approach aligns with emerging understandings of responsible AI literacy or “AI etiquette”: using tools effectively while safeguarding the human element of communication. By separating *identity expression* and *communication norms* and examining their points of interaction, the model offers mechanisms through which AI may enhance or erode authenticity, agency and discourse quality.

Generative AI therefore influences both *who* is speaking (identity) and *how* they are speaking (communication). Leaders must maintain intentionality in AI-assisted communication. As Lehman (2024) argues, AI-mediated leadership discourse requires a clear personal voice; if AI-generated messages lack this resonance, they risk feeling hollow or impersonal. Maintaining this balance helps ensure that AI enhances communication while preserving the authenticity and human connection that underpin trust in organizational settings.

Figure 1. AI, Identity and Communication Axes



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Concluding Remarks

The evolving landscape of work will be shaped not only by the sophistication of intelligent systems, but also by our ability to integrate them in ways that preserve human judgment, creativity, and empathy at the core of communication. AI is not merely a productivity enhancer, but also a linguistic and cultural creator that is impacting the discourse of modern work. Its integration into professional communication demands critical awareness of how language constructs meaning, power, and belonging in hybrid workplaces. This paper has demonstrated that AI technologies do not simply *mediate* professional discourse—they actively shape its tone, structure, and social dynamics. For Generation Z, communication is no longer confined strictly to separate verbal or written channels; it is multimodal, visual, and often algorithmically co-constructed, blending human creativity with machine intelligence. The findings and discussions presented above indicate that Gen Z's communication preferences—both in face-to-face and written contexts—are marked by informality, immediacy, and the use of visual cues, reflecting a broader shift toward a more relational, participatory model of

workplace communication. However, the same digital tools that enable global connectivity and rapid collaboration can also weaken interpersonal sensitivity and contextual depth if not managed thoughtfully.

Future leadership and communication strategies must therefore balance technological fluency with relational competence, ensuring that efficiency does not come at the expense of empathy. As organizational discourse becomes increasingly standardized by digital systems, maintaining diversity of expression and cultural specificity becomes essential for inclusion and innovation. AI can assist with communication, but it remains a tool that should serve human-centered goals: fostering understanding, sharing knowledge, and building relationships.

For organizations, these insights highlight the importance of cultivating AI-communication literacy by equipping employees—particularly younger cohorts like Gen Z—with the skills to use digital tools responsibly, critically, and empathetically. Training programs should not only cover how to operate AI tools, but also raise awareness of how tone, clarity, and cultural context shape meaning in hybrid communication. For example, employees might be trained to review and edit AI-generated content to better fit the intended audience and to ensure the content aligns with the company's values and the individual's voice. Leaders must also establish ethical and inclusive language policies that safeguard authenticity and linguistic diversity amid increasing automation. Rather than enforcing one “correct” way to communicate, progressive organizations might celebrate a range of expression styles (formal and informal) and encourage employees to bring their “whole self”—responsibly—into communication, with AI as an aid not a filter.

By aligning communication strategies with the values and expectations of Generation Z, organizations can strengthen engagement, trust, and cohesion with their young talent. This might involve rethinking top-down communication in favor of more dialogue and feedback loops, adopting collaborative platforms where Gen Z feels at home, and validating the new forms of language that Gen Z uses (like emojis and gifs) as legitimate workplace expression, within appropriate limits. It also involves conscious efforts by older generations to bridge the communication gap—for instance, learning the basics of new

digital slang or being open to informal check-ins on chat—to create a two-way adaptation.

For scholars and practitioners alike, this is an exciting juncture that calls for ongoing inquiry into how language, technology, and generational identity interact to shape the future of human communication. The conceptual model introduced regarding AI, identity, and communication is one attempt to map this evolving terrain. Additional research could empirically test the effects of AI-mediated communication on outcomes like team cohesion, identity affirmation, and knowledge retention among different age groups. Future studies would also benefit from close discourse analysis of AI-generated communication artifacts—such as onboarding scripts, performance feedback messages, or chatbot interactions—to better understand how language shapes workplace identity, authority, and inclusion when a non-human agent is involved. As generative AI becomes more integrated into daily workflows, each organization will become, in a sense, a micro-laboratory for observing how our species negotiates meaning and connection with the help (or hindrance) of intelligent machines. The challenge and opportunity ahead lie in ensuring that as we embrace the efficiencies of AI, we also reaffirm the human values and cultural nuances that make communication not just effective, but genuinely meaningful.

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ChatGPT was used solely for language refinement and formatting. All scientific content, analysis, and conclusions are authors' own.

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