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Reframing Communicative Competence in the AI Era: A Conceptual Framework for Human-AI Communication in EFL Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the limitations of original Communicative Competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980) and proposes a new framework, AI-Mediated Communicative Competence, to capture emerging dynamics of AI-mediated communication. The framework draws on the Thai context, where English learners continue to face an examination-oriented learning system.

This conceptual synthesis compiles recent studies on AI tools for English learning (Du & Daniel, 2024; Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali, 2025; Klímová, 2023; Yin et al., 2025) alongside research on Thai learners' anxiety and confidence (Poonpon, 2017; Kitikanan & Sasimonton, 2017). These empirical findings inform the development of a framework that extends traditional Communicative Competence to align with digital-age learning. The synthesis shows that while AI tools can enhance skills such as fluency and accuracy, existing research does not yet provide systematic explanations of AI's impact on discourse competence, strategic competence, and affective resilience. The proposed framework introduces five dimensions: AI-assisted grammatical competence, AI literacy as part of sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence under AI-mediated interaction, strategic competence for AI interaction, and affective resilience. Thailand is presented as a contextual case illustrating the need to adapt traditional Communicative Competence.

The framework contributes to theory and practice by expanding Communicative Competence to address communication in the AI era and by offering insights for instructors and policymakers on balanced AI integration. Future research should conduct empirical investigations and develop hybrid competence assessment tools to validate the framework in authentic classroom settings.

Key Words: Communicative Competence, AI-Mediated Communication, Human–AI Interaction, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Conceptual Framework

1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of digital technology in 21st century has considerably affected language teaching and learning, especially with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, which can serve as a conversational partner, a language assessment tool, and a supplementary space for English practice. Many studies affirm that AI tools, such as chatbot and mobile application, can increase speaking practice opportunity and truly improve the grammatical accuracy of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Du & Daniel, 2024; Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali, 2025). This phenomenon expands language learning beyond communication with instructors or classmates, to include interaction with intelligent systems that possess near-human capabilities.

However, most existing studies tend to emphasize performance outcomes, such as fluency, accuracy, and motivation, rather than explaining the effects on overall Communication Competence. According to a systematic review by Du and Daniel (2024), while AI chatbots positively influence the development of fluency and accuracy, the assessment of their effects is largely confined to quantitative measures, including speaking scores and motivation surveys. In addition, the study conducted by Mingyan, Noordin, and Razali (2025) insists that mobile AI apps can increase grammar accuracy, it focuses on pre-posttest without relating to discourse competence or affective accuracy.

Meanwhile, Klímová (2023) also reported the study's output of chatbot that its formulaic nature and rapid topic shifts poses a new challenge to learners' discourse management.

The theoretical gap consequently occurs among efficiency research findings and overall communication competence understandings. The original Communicative Competence, developed by Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980), emphasizes solely on human-to-human communication and includes four main dimensions: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Although this framework lays the foundation of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), it is insufficient to define the new interaction mediated through AI, which serves as both interlocutor and language assessor.

The Thai context highlights the critical need to align this framework with the realities of English language learning. The existing education system's strong emphasis on exams over authentic communication means that many learners, while possessing knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, often struggle with high anxiety and a lack of confidence in real-world communicative settings (Poonpon, 2017; Kitikanan & Sasimonton, 2017). This circumstance leads many Thai learners to apply AI as their conversational partner and linguistic sandbox that is free from social pressure. This also reflects that AI is not considered just a language-learning tool, it becomes one of the learners' actual communication experiences.

Therefore, this article aims to propose the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework expanded from the traditional Communicative Competence framework to perceive the new communication dynamic in the age of AI. This new framework proposes additional components, namely, AI-assisted grammatical competence, AI literacy, discourse competence under mediated interaction, and strategic competence. With a focus on AI communication and affective resilience, this work uses Thailand as a contextual case study to highlight the need for adjusting global communication frameworks. The proposed framework is not meant to replace traditional theories but instead serves as an extension to better reflect and more accurately account for 21st-century English language learning and the reality of learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Traditional Communicative Competence

The concept of Communicative Competence had been initially developed, by Hymes (1972), to criticize traditional approaches of language learning and teaching that focus solely on grammar and language structure. He revealed that linguistic knowledge might insufficient if the learners are unable to use language appropriately in social and cultural contexts. Later in 1980, Canale and Swain had portioned Hymes's concept out into four components. i.e., grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence refers to learners' knowledge on language structures, grammatical rules, and phonology that enables leaners to create grammatically correct sentences. Sociolinguistic competence shows learners' ability in appropriately using language within social and cultural contexts, such as politeness adjustment, the use of language appropriate to the conversational partner's social status, and the interpretation of cultural nuances hidden within the language.

Discourse competence indicates the ability to link sentences and various texts to create content that is both cohesive and coherent, as well as the skill of interpreting texts that have connections between different parts of the language. Strategic competence refers to the ability to employ strategies to overcome communication breakdown, i.e., rephrasing, using substitutes, or employing gestures to maintain the flow of conversation.

The developed framework of Communicative Competence is considered more than grammatical rules literacy. It also relates the use of language as a real-world communication tool and becomes the basic instruction of English as a Foreign Language. Subsequently, this framework has been widely applied in curriculum designs, researches, and assessments.

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2.2 Limitations of Communicative Competence in the AI Era

Since the traditional Communicative Competence framework does not completely cover the new dynamic of AI-mediated communication, especially when AI serves as learners' conversational partner instead of real human.

The systematic review of Du and Daniel (2024), studied the usage of AI-powered chatbot for speaking practices of EFL, showed that chatbot positively affects the development of fluency, accuracy, and motivation of the learners. However, while these studies often measure performance using indicators like fluency and accuracy, they fall short of explaining the changes in learners' discourse or sociolinguistic competence.

Therefore, even though numbers of studies insisted that AI tools positively affect speaking skills, the scope of measurement is still too narrow to completely reflect the shift of communicative competence. This results in the adaptation and expansion of communicative competence to support this new dynamic.

2.3 Emerging Role of AI in Language Learning

AI plays crucial role in language learning as both conversational partner and language assessor that fosters private and flexible learning environment.

The experimental research by Mingyan, Noordin, and Razali (2025) investigated undergraduate students who used an AI-powered mobile application for after-class speaking and grammar practice. Using pre–post tests to measure speaking performance and grammar accuracy, the study's findings showed that the experimental group scored significantly higher in both speaking accuracy and grammar compared to the control group. This suggests that the AI-powered application has the potential to function as a "language monitor" providing real-time feedback.

The stated empirical evidence indicated that AI does not solely support accuracy skills, it allows learners to use language in flexible environments. Nevertheless, this study mainly evaluated skill-based outcomes (fluency and accuracy) and did not explain deeper on competency level, such as strategic competency or affective resilience, which can be additionally clarified within the new framework.

2.4 Summary and Conceptual Gap

While the previous researches could affirm the efficacy of AI tools on English language development, there are still limitations in explaining the results at the level of overall Communicative Competence. As shown in Table 1, the systematic review of Du & Daniel (2024) insisted that AI chatbots help increase learners' fluency, accuracy, and motivation, using assessments on fluency scores, accuracy scores, and motivational questionnaire. Nevertheless, the assessments still emphasize on efficiency-based results rather than illustrating discourse dynamics or sociolinguistic competence.

In addition to Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali (2025)'s study applying experimental design with undergraduate learners, those who used AI-powered mobile application showed significant progress on grammar and speaking accuracy, compared to the control group. The measurement relied on pre-post speaking tests and grammar tests, which indicated that the AI tool genuinely functions as a language assessor. However, the evaluation framework is still limited to the outcomes related to the grammatical competency and speaking accuracy without extending to more complex dimensions such as affective or strategic competence.

Furthermore, the work by Klímová (2023), which studied the use of AI chatbots in university classrooms, found that students perceived the benefits of the chatbot for language practice. However, a discourse analysis indicated that the AI's output often consisted of formulaic patterns and featured sudden topic shifts, which do not align with authentic human interaction. This reflects limitations that affect the development of discourse competence and topic control.

In summary, although existing research confirms the efficiency outcomes of AI tools, it cannot yet explain how the use of AI impacts the development of overall communicative competence. This challenge reflects a conceptual gap that leads to the necessity of proposing the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework in Section 3.

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Table 1. Evidence-Based Summary of Limitations in Existing Research on AI and Communicative Competence

Claim	Evidence	Warrant/Gap
The study affirms that AI chatbots helps increase fluency and accuracy.	The systematic review of Du & Daniel (2024) on AI-powered chatbot for English speaking practice applied measurements related to fluency and accuracy scores, and motivational questionnaire.	The evaluation focuses solely on performance outcomes such as fluency and accuracy, and does not explain the outcomes on discourse or sociolinguistic competence.
AI-powered apps help increase speaking and grammar accuracies.	The experimental study by Mingyan, Noordin & Razali (2025) showed that the experimental group had the significantly higher scores, based on pre-post speaking and grammar tests measurement.	The outcomes are limited only at grammatical competence and speaking accuracy, and do not cover affective or strategic competence.
The learners acknowledge the benefits of chatbot, which generally provide formulaic outputs.	The study of AI chatbot usage in university setting of Klímová (2023), using discourse analysis, found the formulaic pattern and unnatural topic shift.	This affects the discourse competence and topic control, which lacks theoretical framework to describe the mentioned dynamic.

This table was developed by the authors based on a synthesis of existing studies rather than reproduced directly from prior work. It adopts the Claim–Evidence–Warrant (CEW) structure to highlight conceptual gaps that motivate the proposed framework of AI-Mediated Communicative Competence.

2.5 Definitions and Scope of AI Tools in Language Learning

To clarify the discussion of AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework, this article defines and categorizes the types of AI devices related to English language teaching in the EFL Context, which can be categorized into four groups, based on their functions, limitations, and dimension of Communicative Competence that is directly affected.

Firstly, AI-interlocutor (LLM-based) refers to Large Language Models, such as ChatGPT or Claude, that are available for multi-turn interaction, and maintain flexible conversational context. The research found that even though this type of model provides continuous and fluent text generation, it still responds with formulaic style and lacks socio-pragmatic nuance in some contexts (Klímová, 2023). This causes learners to additionally enhance their ability in discourse competence and strategic competence.

Secondly, AI-powered chatbots (task-oriented) are those designed for specific functions, such as customer service or role-play simulations that use a set of scripted responses. A systematic literature review by Du and Daniel (2024) shows that this type of chatbot is effective in increasing English communication fluency, accuracy, and motivation. However, their limited flexibility means that learners cannot practice language use in highly complex contexts. Consequently, they only affect the development of sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence within specific boundaries.

Thirdly, voice recognition or pronunciation checker (ASR & scoring system) systems, such as ELSA Speak or SpeechAce, use Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology to analyze pronunciation and provide quantitative scoring. Experimental research by Mingyan, Noordin, and Razali (2025) found that learners who used this type of mobile application showed a significant improvement in grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. However, the

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limitation of the tool is its focus on evaluating only acoustic accuracy, without the ability to reflect language use at the level of meaningful interaction.

Finally, the LLM tutor refers to an AI system designed to function as a 'tutor' by providing both corrective and explanatory feedback. However, a study by Yin et al. (2025) that experimentally compared the characteristics of chatbot feedback found that affective feedback (feedback with an emotional dimension) was better at reducing learner anxiety and improving learning outcomes than neutral feedback. This case reflects that the role of the LLM tutor significantly impacts the development of learners' affective resilience and strategic competence.

Table 2. A proposal to link the main AI tool types, empirical evidence, and the affected dimensions of Communicative Competence

AI Tool Type	Empirical Evidence	Affected Dimension(s)
Pronunciation checker (ASR & scoring)	Mingyan et al. (2025): quasi-experiment, improved grammar accuracy	Grammatical
AI-powered chatbot (task-oriented)	Du & Daniel (2024): systematic review, enhanced fluency, accuracy, motivation	Discourse, Strategic
AI interlocutor (LLM-based)	Klímová (2023): learner performance/perceptions study, formulaic turn-taking	Discourse, Sociolinguistic
LLM tutor	Yin et al. (2025): experiment with feedback types, affective feedback reduced anxiety	Affective, Strategic

3. REFRAMING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE AI ERA

The literature reviews in Section 2 revealed that although a number of studies insist the effectiveness of AI tools towards English language skills development, there are theoretical limitations that cannot fully explain the results at the level of overall communicative competence. Most empirical evidences emphasize on performance indicators such as fluency, accuracy, and learners' motivation. Meanwhile, the impact on more complex dimensions, such as discourse competence, strategic competence, and affective resilience, has not yet been systematically explained. The existing gap brings the necessary in reframing Communicative Competence from the traditional theory to be aligned with communicative dynamics in the age of AI.

To achieve this goal, Section 3 will present a three-tiered reframing. It begins by describing the specific characteristics of the English language learning context in Thailand (3.1), then proposes the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework—an expansion of traditional Communicative Competence (3.2)—and concludes with a discussion of the implications of this framework for Thai learners (3.3).

3.1 The Thai EFL Context

The English language learning environment in Thailand continues to feature an instructional approach geared towards exams (test-oriented) rather than genuine communicative use. This leads to a situation where many students, while knowledgeable in grammar and vocabulary, struggle to apply them in natural conversation.

A variety of survey research and policy reports support this observation, including the studies by Wongsothorn (2010) and Noom-ura (2013), which show Thailand's intensive English instruction focuses on areas such as grammar, translation, and exam preparation, rather than on real-life speaking practice. Previous studies have reported that Thailand's English education remains largely exam-oriented and focused on grammatical knowledge rather than communicative use (Hayes, 2016). In addition, Poonpon (2017) and Kitikanan & Sasimonton (2017) also reported the high language anxiety and low self-confidence in English use among Thai learners, especially when it comes to public speaking.

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This evidence indicates that the primary problem of Thai learners is that they not only lack language proficiency, but are also short of both the experience and confidence necessary for genuine communication. Therefore, an expansion of Communicative Competence of Thai learners requires safe and adaptable practice areas. AI tools like ChatGPT or ELSA Speak can serve as 'supportive interlocutor' that eases social pressure and creates opportunity for them to practice in real-life circumstance.

Teachers' workload and fundamental structural flaws of the Thai education system remain an obstacle for the development of English communication skills for the learners.

Report from the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) (2022) indicates that many English teachers in Thailand have a high administrative and paperwork burden which results in reduced time for instructional material preparation and practical communication training. In addition, National Standardized Test such as O-NET also emphasizes on reading skill and grammar rather than practical communication testing. This causes both instructors and learners still prioritize rote memorization skills over using language for communication.

These structural factors mean that even though curriculum reform emphasizes the Communicative Approach, its full practical realization remains unachievable. This challenge infers that the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework is crucial for designing supportive safe place where AI helps lessen teachers' workload and create favorable circumstances for Thai learners to communicate more under the flexible and safe conditions.

3.2 The Proposed AI-Mediated Communicative Competence Framework

The initiative Communicative Competence, proposed by Hymes (1972) and then developed by Canale and Swain (1980), is considered the key theoretical foundation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, which includes four core competences: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. This framework has laid an explicit theoretical foundation and essential approaches for language instruction in recent decades. Nevertheless, while AI technology has come into play for language learning, the traditional Communicative Competence has been criticized for its limitations, as it still focuses exclusively on human-to-human interaction and neglects the dynamics of communication mediated by AI (Klímová, 2023; Yin et al., 2025).

Due to the following constraints, the Communicative Competence framework should be adjusted to the emerged AI era.

The systematic review work of Du & Daniel (2024) insisted that while AI chatbots are efficient in fostering fluency and accuracy, but their effectiveness is still only measured using performance-based indicators, such as fluency and accuracy. Meanwhile, the experiment of Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali (2025) found that AI-powered mobile application with feedback can effectively enhance learners' grammar and speaking accuracy, but they have not yet accounted for competence changes at the discourse or affective level. Furthermore, Klímová (2023) reported that chatbot output is formulaic and abruptly changes topics, causing learners confront with a new challenge in controlling the discourse.

Therefore, this study proposes AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework, which is not intended to replace traditional Communicative Competence but rather to expand it to cover the dynamics of human-AI communication by reinterpreting its original components and adding elements necessary for the current context.

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Table 3. The elements of AI-Mediated Communicative Competence

Dimensions of Competence	Explanations	Evidence & Mini-case
1. AI-assisted grammatical competence	Leaners should be able to interpret and adapt automatic AI feedback to develop grammatical accuracy and pronunciation.	Mingyan et al. (2025) reported that the use of mobile application that provides real-time feedback significantly enhances grammatical and speaking accuracy of the learners. For example, learners received feedback from pronunciation checker to "stress the second syllable" and promptly adjusted their pronunciation.
2. AI literacy as part of sociolinguistic competence	Learners must be aware of sociocultural constraints of AI including its bias in language use to select contextually appropriate register.	Klímová (2023) analyzed the response of chatbot which provides formulaic pattern, contrary to human pragmatic nuance. In the study, AI provided language that is overly formal. Learners had to adjust their register to align with the more informal conversational context.
3. Discourse competence under AI-mediated interaction	Learners must practice managing discourse under AI interactions that are formulaic and involve rapid topic shifts.	Klímová (2023) indicated that AI tends to change the topic without reference to the prior context, which might reduce conversational continuity. For example, when AI changed topic from "Let's talk about travel" to "Do you like sport?", learners had to use signposting, such as "Before we move on, I'd like to finish my point.", to maintain discourse coherence.
4. Strategic competence for AI interaction	Learners should improve new communication strategies to communicate with AI, such as designing prompt, clarifying of misunderstanding, and rephrasing for accurate AI interpretation.	Du & Daniel (2024) indicated that users who use chatbot often need repair strategies and clarification requests to fix AI misinterpretation. In case when AI did not understand a polite request, learners must rephrase from "Would you mind…?" to "Please do this…" for a clearer and more direct request.
5. Affective resilience	Learners have to carefully handle with prompt and direct feedback of the AI, which helps reduce language learning anxiety.	Yin et al. (2025) showed that an affective feedback provision of AI can significantly reduce learners' language anxiety. For example, the AI gave corrections for every single sentence, which made the learners feel pressured. Therefore, the teacher managed the scaffolding by using delayed feedback and increasing the praise-to-correction ratio to create a balance between positive reinforcement and error correction.

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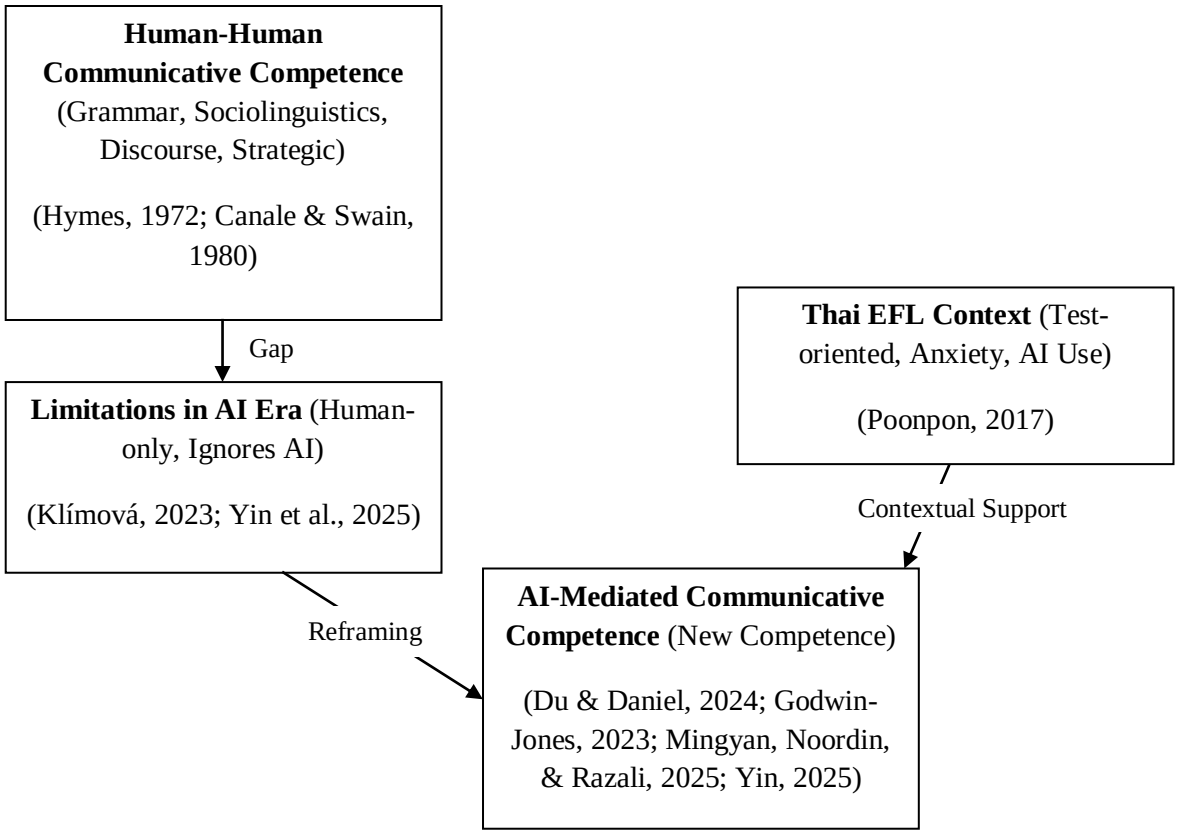

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of AI-Mediated Communicative Competence

As shown in Figure 1, although the traditional Communicative Competence framework (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980) is a vital foundation of language instruction, it merely focuses on human communication. The recent studies showed an insufficient description of communicative dynamics that was mediated through AI (Klímová, 2023; Yin et al., 2025). This gap highlights the necessity for 'reframing' by proposing AI-Mediated Communicative Competence, which explains how AI functions both as an interlocutor and a language assessor (Du & Daniel, 2024; Godwin-Jones, 2023; Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali, 2025; Yin, 2025). This need is further shown by the English language learning environment in Thailand (Poonpon, 2017), where learner anxiety and the test-focused educational system make AI a valuable platform for language experimentation and an additional conversational partner.

Table 4. A Comparison between Traditional Communicative Competence and AI-Mediated Communicative Competence

Dimensions	Traditional Communicative Competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980)	AI-Mediated Communicative Competence (Proposed Framework)
Interactional features	Focus solely on human-to-human communication.	Cover both human-to-human and human-to-AI communication.
The main goals of communication	Emphasize on accurate and appropriate use of language in a sociocultural context.	Focuses on the competence to manage technologically-mediated communication while recognizing the limitations of AI.
Core components	Grammatical, Sociolinguistic, Discourse, Strategic	AI-assisted grammatical, AI literacy, Discourse under AI mediation, Strategic for AI interaction, Affective resilience

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Feedback features	Originate from instructors or peer learners.	Arise from real-time feedback of AI.
Relevant challenges	Disrupted communication or a lack of repair strategies when miscommunication occurs.	AI misinterpretation, feedback speed, lack of sociocultural nuance
The instructor's role	Knowledge transmitter and assessor	Activity designer and scaffolder that helps contextualize AI feedback
Expected outcomes	The development of accuracy and appropriateness in language use	The development of flexible "hybrid communication competence" in the digital era

The above table shows the structural differences between the traditional Communicative Competence and AI-Mediated Communicative Competence the authors proposed, by underlining new dimensions related to AI technology and its impact on English language instruction in the digital age.

3.3 Implications for Thai Learners

English language instruction in Thailand has been dominated with test orientation and learning culture that underlines formal accuracy over using language for real-world communication. This circumstance results in the lack of confidence and language use anxiety of the learners.

According to studies of Wongsothorn (2010) and Noom-ura (2013), it is found that Thai education still relies on grammar-translation method and rote memorization for exam preparation, over developing communication skills. In addition, Poonpon (2017) and Kitikana and Sasimonton (2017) revealed that Thai learners have high language anxiety with low confident in English language uses, particularly in the situations involving speaking in front of others.

These findings reflect that although Thai learners have a foundation in grammar and vocabulary, they lack a safe space to practice using the language naturally, which AI tools can compensate for.

AI tools, such as ChatGPT and ELSA Speak, can serve as supportive interlocutor that help reduce anxiety and increase Thai learners' motivation to continually practice language skills. Godwin-Jones (2023) reported that AI chatbot can function as "conversational partner" that creates language practice opportunity without confronting social pressure. In addition, Yin et al. (2025) found that the affective feedback from AI can diminish learners' language anxiety and willingness to use the language in conversation.

Consequently, in Thai context where learners often hesitate or are afraid to use English in real life, AI tools can serve as linguistic sandbox that helps reinforce confidence and enhance affective resilience of the learners.

An application of AI-Mediated Communicative Competence as a conceptual framework may support English language instruction in Thailand, which can evolve human-human communication into a balanced human-AI communication.

Curricula that integrate human–AI interaction with human–human interaction have the potential to help learners develop comprehensive language skills, encompassing both grammatical accuracy from AI feedback and pragmatic appropriateness from real human communication (Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali, 2025; Du & Daniel, 2024).

This development enables Thai learners to use AI critically (AI literacy) and prepares them for authentic communication in a world where English functions as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2007).

The implication for Thai context is that an integration of AI to English language instruction should not consider as a replacement of human teacher or human communication. Instead, it should be regarded as an expansion

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of "additional space" that helps Thai learners to develop comprehensive communication competence in all dimensions.

3.4 Pedagogical Implications for EFL Instruction in Thailand

The integration of AI and English language instruction should be designed in a balanced way in order to create safe and effective practice space, without causing learners to become too dependent on technology. The study of Du and Daniel (2024) explored that chatbot-based practice can truly enhance learners' fluency and accuracy in English speaking. However, some learners were discovered using chatbot in practicing communication over real human, which might reduce learning opportunity on pragmatic and discourse dimensions. Similarly, according to Mingyan, Noordin and Razali (2025), mobile AI applications significantly improved learners' English grammar and accuracy skills. However, without scaffolding from the teacher, the outcome might be limited only to the correction of structural forms, without connecting to language use in more complex contexts, such as sociolinguistic or contextual competence.

Practically, English language pedagogy should be methodically blended Human and AI communication, for example using a chatbot as an initial conversational partner before entering a role-play activity with classmates, or using a pronunciation checker to verify speech before speaking in front of the class. Meanwhile, AI summarizer can provide learners rapid feedback with context-based description from instructors to foster a more profound understanding. Furthermore, AI literacy development should be conducted in conjunction with building communicative competence. Learners have to be trained to be aware of AI's limitations, such as linguistic bias and pragmatic inconsistency, and using rubric or checklist such as AI literacy scale, which will allow students to critically analyze and assess the output generated by AI.

One important issue is addressing learners' emotions and anxiety. Applying limited-turn or delayed feedback mode may help cognitive overload. Meanwhile, defining criteria of "Feedback Tolerance Index" enables instructors to assess and adjust feedback's speed or frequency to be align with learners' readiness. Classroom assessment should also be developed to comprehensively cover both human-to-human communication and interaction with AI. This can be done by using rubrics that measure accuracy, fluency, as well as the ability to employ repair strategies when the AI misinterprets the meaning. Furthermore, the analysis of log data from AI interactions should be utilized to reflect learners' discourse behavior and the procedural strategies they choose to employ.

Therefore, to streamline English instructions in Thailand, the integration of AI and classroom activities should be thoughtfully conducted, together with instructors' scaffolding, varied assessment, and AI literacy enhancement. This approach not only helps Thai learners develop skills in fluency and linguistic accuracy, but also enables them to build complex and sustainable communication competence, which prepares them for communication at both the local and international levels in the 21st century.

A tangible example from applying this framework can be witnessed from English class of Thai university that uses ChatGPT as an additional interlocutor before peer discussion activity. Learners are assigned to practice conversation with AI under the topic of "Environmental Problems". They are also required to analyze AI's feedback on grammar and register before bringing those results to face-to-face discussion. The expected outcome is that learners will exhibit greater confidence in using vocabulary and sentence structures, and demonstrate effective use of signposting to ensure natural topic coherence. This is to indicate that the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework can create language experimentation space and a bridge between AI interaction and real-life human communication.

3.5 Scope and Limitations

The AI-Mediated Communicative Competence proposed in this study has clear scope as a conceptual framework, not an empirical study. This framework intends to clarify the dynamics of communicative competence occurred when the EFL learners interacts with varied AI devices, especially in contexts where instruction remains test-oriented, such as the Thai educational system.

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3.5.1 Scope of the Framework

This framework covers five main dimensions, including:

1) AI-assisted grammatical competence,
2) AI literacy as a part of sociolinguistic competence,
3) Discourse competence under AI-mediated interaction,
4) Strategic competence for communicating with AI, and
5) Affective Resilience of learners towards AI feedback.

This scope focuses on theoretical interpretation of how human-AI interaction affects communicative competence, rather than quantitative measurement or statistical testing.

3.5.2 Limitations of the Framework

This framework does not aim to propose empirical measurement instruments or experimental models for hypothesis testing, nor does it intend to resolve all dimensions of EFL instruction in Thailand; rather, it is a conceptual approach that can be extended to curriculum design, instructor development, or further empirical studies.

3.5.3 Target Audience and Applications

This framework is essential for English language instructors, curriculum designers, EFL educational policymakers, who demand to critically in integrate AI use with the instructions. However, while this framework was developed using the Thai context, the core concept can be applied with other contexts characterized by test-oriented education systems and high learner anxiety.

3.5.4 Contextual Constraints

The description and proposition of this framework closely relate to English language instruction of the Thai context where learners have limited opportunities for authentic language use. Accordingly, an application in other contexts should consider cultural difference, technology access, and learners' AI literacy.

Identifying the constrains of this framework does not to indicate its fault, but rather determines its scope of use and opens up space for future creative assessment. Be recognizing the contextual constraints, such as technological distinctions, learners' AI literacy, and form-focused assessment systems, will assist researchers and instructors in applying this framework more appropriately and effectively.

4. DISCUSSION

The AI-Mediated Communicative Competence framework proposed in this article remarkably elaborates theoretical understanding on communicative competence in the digital age. On the one hand, this framework was built upon the traditional framework developed by Hymes (1972) and Canale & Swain (1980), not to replace the original one, but to extend AI-mediated communication. Following the current studies (Du & Daniel, 2024; Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali, 2025; Klímová, 2023; Yin et al., 2025), AI communication reflected different aspects from human communication in discourse, strategic, and affective competence. Therefore, this framework has been necessarily adapted to explain and support learning dimension resulting from this type of interaction.

Theoretically, this proposed framework provides at least three benefits. First, it bridges between traditional framework and trends of using AI in language learning, which allows ELT and TESOL research to pose new research questions regarding AI literacy, affective resilience, and discourse management. Second, this framework suggests ideas that learners do not merely develop their communicative competence from humans, they enhance it along with systematic interlocutor, which may change language acquisition approaches and language use facilitated by technology. Third, this framework paves the way for future studies to examine "hybrid competence" that integrates communicative competence between human and AI.

Practically, this proposed framework suggests approaches to designing more effective English language curriculum and instruction by proposing that instructors and policymakers recognize AI as a "supplementary interlocutor", not a "replacement interlocutor". The structured AI use, such as allowing students to rehearse dialogue with a chatbot prior to peer communication, or using pronunciation checker before speaking to the class, can reduce anxiety and build confidence. At the same time, instructors play a vital role in scaffolding and contextualizing feedback of AI to clarify learners' understanding of culturally and contextually appropriate language use. This

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framework accordingly emphasizes that AI literacy should be integrated with Thailand's English curriculum, together with fostering human communication proficiency.

In addition, this proposed framework also reflects challenges beyond the Thai context, as EFL in other Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and China, also confronted with similar problems in addressing instructional systems that still prioritize testing over authentic communication. The framework's use of Thailand as a case study thus has implications for generating comparative understanding and facilitating its application across the Asian region.

Generally, this part of the article demonstrates that the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence is not only a theoretical suggestion; it also has the potential practical application in English language instruction, both in Thailand and globally. This framework helps advance research and teaching by focusing on balancing human communication with the use of AI as a support tool.

4.1 Future Directions

To practically extend this concept, future studies should examine empirical evidence in three main dimensions, including:

1) Comparing learning outcomes between a group using AI as an interlocutor and a control group not using AI, through quasi-experimental or mixed-methods designs to measure development in fluency, accuracy, and affective variables such as anxiety and willingness to communicate.,

2) The development of "hybrid competence assessment" instruments that integrate linguistic indicators (e.g., complexity, fluency, accuracy) with discursive and strategic indicators (repair frequency, topic control); and

3) Qualitative investigation into learners' strategies for repair or rephrasing when AI misinterprets, in order to understand the dimensions of strategic competence in authentic settings.

In addition, an ethic of AI use in the classroom should be considered, such as protection of learners' voice and text data, mitigating AI over-reliance, and developing AI literacy for learners to use technology responsibly.

5. CONCLUSION

This article indicates the necessity in reframing the Communicative Competence from the traditional concept that focuses human-to-human communication towards the new communication dynamic of AI-mediated communication. This is especially crucial for EFL in Thai context, which is a test-based and suffers from limitations in practicing authentic communication. The literature synthesis in Section 2 and the discussion in Section 3 and 4 explicitly demonstrated that while the Communicative Competence framework, initiated by Hymes (1972) and Canale & Swain (1980), made a significant historical contribution, it is now insufficient to describe learners' interaction with AI tools that are widely used at the moment.

The AI-Mediated Communicative Competence proposed in this article serves as an extension of the traditional framework to cover new dimensions, such as automated grammatical feedback (AI-assisted grammatical competence), AI literacy development (sociolinguistic competence), discourse management with in systematic turn-taking limitation, new communication strategies for repair and rephrasing when AI misinterprets, and affective resilience necessary for dealing with rapid and continuous feedback (Du & Daniel, 2024; Mingyan, Noordin, & Razali, 2025; Klímová, 2023; Yin et al., 2025; Godwin-Jones, 2023). However, this framework does not replace the Communicative Competence; instead, it functions to expand upon it in order to better explain the complexity of learning and using AI-mediated language.

This framework practically proposed new approach for instructors and policymakers in designing curriculum and English language instruction, focusing on balancing human-human interaction and human-AI interaction. From this framework, Thai learners gain benefits from using AI tools as supplementary interlocutor and linguistic sandbox that reduce social pressure. Meanwhile, instructors are still significant in scaffolding and contextualizing AI feedback so that learners can enhance accuracy, fluency, and cultural appropriateness in communication.

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Nevertheless, the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence proposed in this article remains a conceptual framework. Future studies should validate and refine this framework through empirical studies, such as quasi-experiment designs to compare learners using chatbots and a control group, qualitative and quantitative analysis of learners and AI interactions, the use of instruments to measure anxiety, willingness to communicate, and repair strategy competence, as well as the development of hybrid competence assessments to verify the framework's validity and practicality in real-world scenarios.

In conclusion, the AI-Mediated Communicative Competence has the theoretical and practical potential to promote English language instruction in Thailand and other EFL contexts. This framework can improve learners' communicative competence, aligning with the dynamics of the 21st century and enabling instructors, researchers, and policymakers to integrate AI critically and sustainably.

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