Artificial intelligence (AI) can beat humans at complex tasks like chess and video games, but it still cannot reproduce behaviors that come naturally to people, like making small talk about the weather.

In his 1994 book “The Language Instinct,” linguist and cognitive scientist Steven Pinker concluded that: “The main lesson of thirty-five years of AI research is that the hard problems are easy, and the easy problems are hard.”

This paradox has led researchers to divide AI into two different types: artificial general intelligence or strong AI, and weak (or narrow) AI.

Strong AI means the ability to learn any task that people can perform. In contrast, weak AI is not intended to have cognitive abilities; it is a program designed to solve a single problem, like computers that play chess.

There are already several ways to program AI, like machine learning, deep learning or artificial neural networks. Programming, however, does not equal intelligence – it is only part of the input necessary to generate intelligence.

Despite the growing sophistication of programming, strong AI is slow to develop. The bar for intelligence can be set at different levels: sentience, conscience, acting as if understanding or merely interacting. The lowest benchmark is coping with a task involving unforeseen parameters, like driving a car. And even by this measure, artificial general intelligence still has a long way to go.