

# **How Managers Perceive AI-Assisted Conversational Training for Workplace Communication**

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**Society + Ai & Language**

## SAIL Research Areas

- Uncovering Language Patterns
- Understanding the Real-World Impact of Language
- Designing Human-Centered AI Language Technologies

**86% of leaders**

believe AI can help improve leadership<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Google & Harris Poll (2024)



## **AI already influences workplace communication**

Message augmentation (e.g., email autocomplete, smart replies in message applications, etc.)<sup>2,3</sup>



## **Leadership communication is more than polished text<sup>4</sup>**

Requires adaptation, confidence, and navigating difficult conversations

<sup>1</sup>Google & Harris Poll (2024)

<sup>2</sup>Pang et al. (2025)

<sup>3</sup>Jakesch et al. (2019)

<sup>4</sup>Charlier et al. (2016)

# Leaders develop communication skills through trial and error<sup>1,2</sup>

- Limited access to mentorship and personalized coaching<sup>3</sup>
- Expensive leadership training programs<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>McCall (2004)

<sup>2</sup>Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019)

<sup>3</sup>Scandura et al. (2004)

<sup>4</sup>Lacerenza et al. (2017)

<sup>5</sup>Rashkin et al. (2019)

# Leaders develop communication skills through trial and error<sup>1,2</sup>

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?

Can AI be a training tool, not just a writing assistant?

<sup>1</sup>McCall (2004)

<sup>2</sup>Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019)

<sup>3</sup>Scandura et al. (2004)

<sup>4</sup>Lacerenza et al. (2017)

<sup>5</sup>Rashkin et al. (2019)

## **Research questions**

**1**

What communication challenges do managers face in their workplace context and how do they currently address them?

**2**

How do managers conceptualize the role of AI in communication training, and what expectations or concerns do they have about AI-driven training tools?

Method

# Study Protocol

*Semi-structured interviews with 17 managers*



*Military*



*Academia*



*Industry*

1

**Management &  
Training  
Background**

2

**User Interaction  
with Functional  
Probe**

3

**Post-Interaction  
Reflection**

System

# CommCoach

Functional probe designed to help our preliminary understanding of AI-assisted leadership communication training systems



**Scenario-based AI role-play**

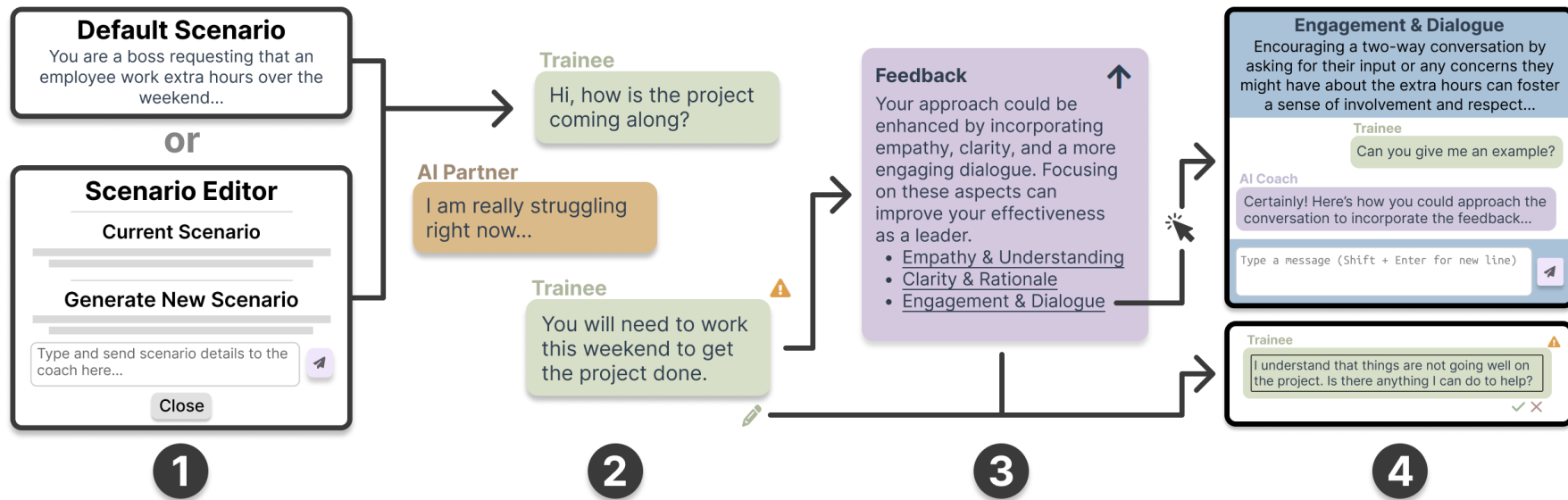


**Real-time feedback**



**Structured reflection & coaching**

## System Flow



**Feedback**  
and  
**Reflection**  
↓

## Scenario

You are a boss requesting that an employee, Taylor, work extra hours over the weekend to complete the XYZ project before a critical deadline. They are the only person that can do the job, and their progress has been substandard.



Type a message (Shift + Enter for new line)



## Findings

### User Input

#### Diverse Styles

*Humor, storytelling, questioning, etc.*

#### Communication Modality

*Face-to-face, email, messaging, etc.*

#### Communication Barriers

*Empathy vs. directness, discomfort with conflict, emotional reactions*



### System Output

#### Managing Conversation Length

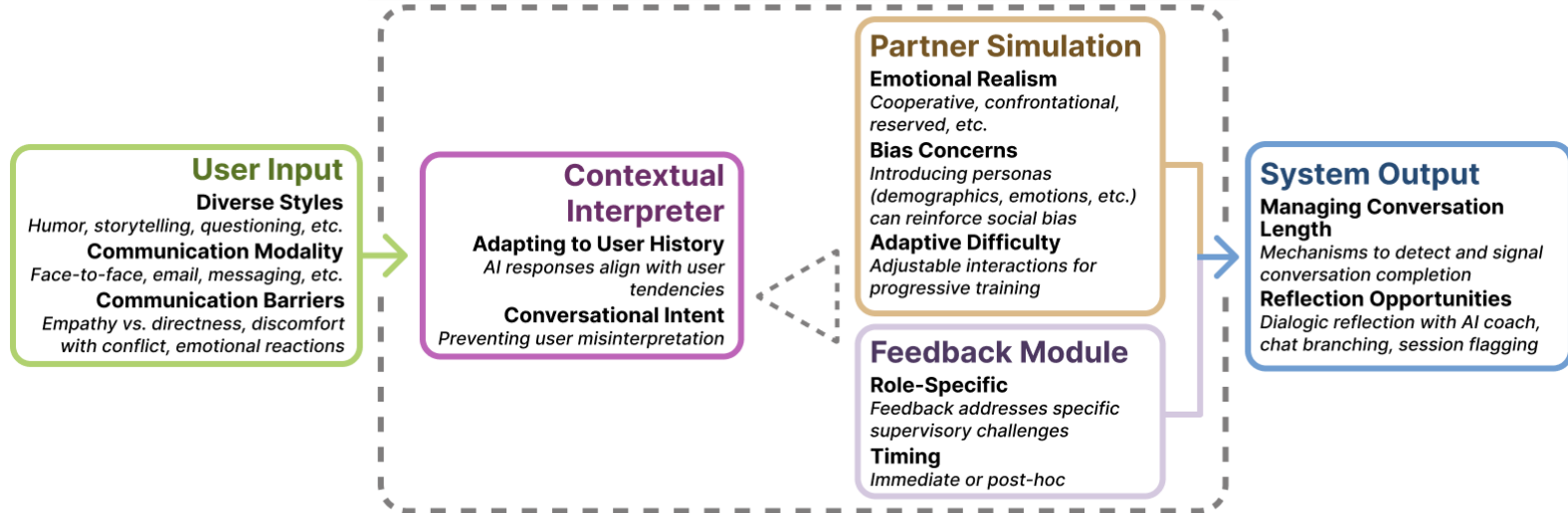
*Mechanisms to detect and signal conversation completion*

#### Reflection Opportunities

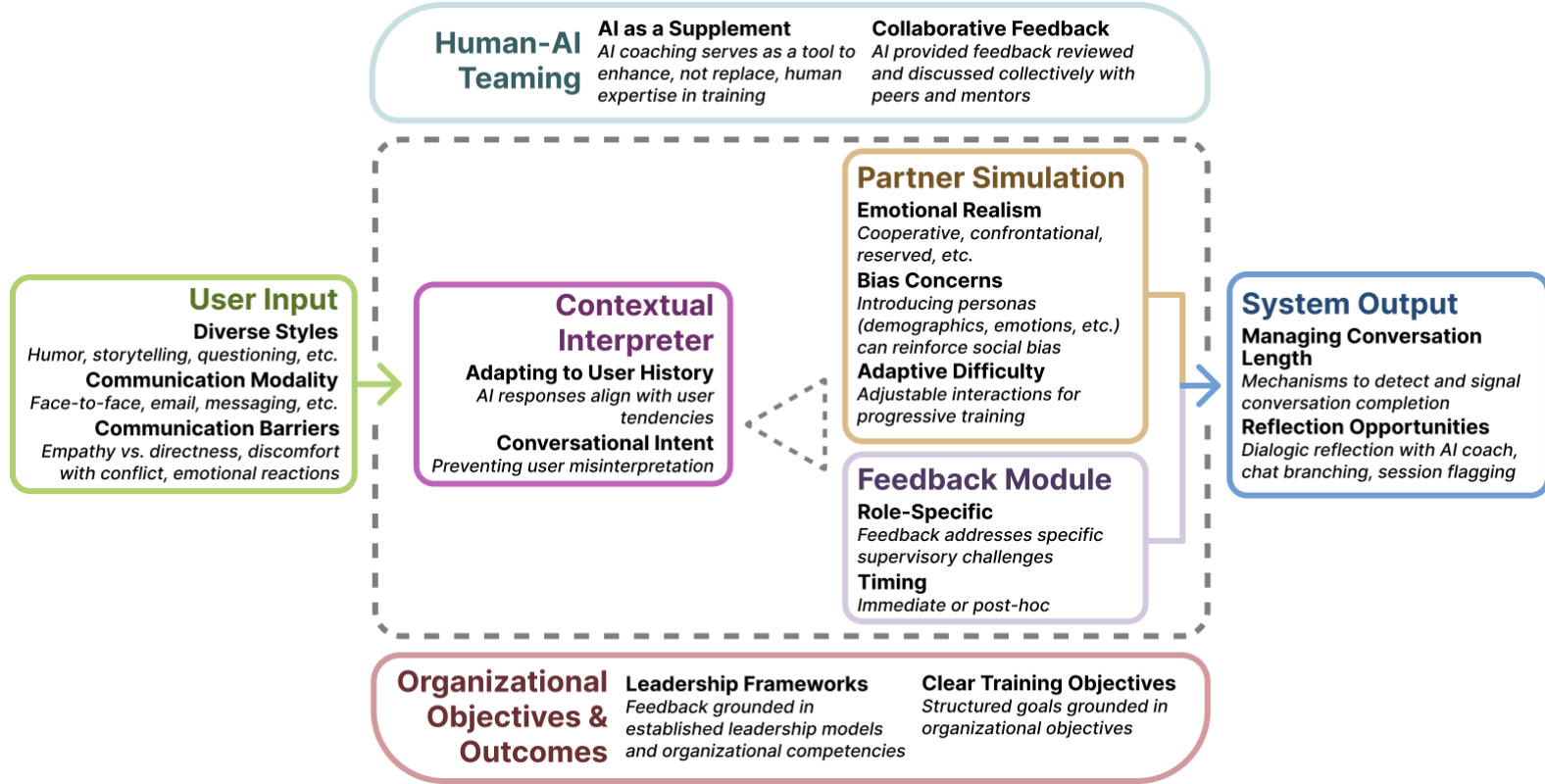
*Dialogic reflection with AI coach, chat branching, session flagging*



## Findings



## Findings



# **AI has the potential to democratize leadership training**

- Key considerations
  - Balancing **bias & fairness** when providing feedback
  - Ensuring that **AI adapts to diverse users**
  - Upholding **data privacy** & preventing **surveillance**
  - Balancing **automation** with **human oversight**

**Thank you!**