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IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE A GOOD READER? AI LITERACY AND PROMPT LITERACY IN HUMAN-AI INTERACTION

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Abstract: Generative artificial intelligence systems are widely used in education and professional contexts, but their fluent language output often leads users to assume human-like understanding. In reality, AI systems generate responses through probabilistic language modeling rather than true comprehension. This article examines AI as a “reader” of human prompts and emphasizes the role of AI literacy and prompt literacy in effective human–AI interaction. AI literacy is described as a multidimensional competence that includes conceptual understanding, critical evaluation, ethical awareness, and interaction skills. Using examples from ChatGPT-5.2, DeepSeek Chat, and Google Gemini, the study shows that different AI systems interpret prompts differently due to system-level frameworks. The findings highlight that clear, structured, and polite prompts improve interaction quality and support responsible use of generative AI in academic settings.

Keywords: AI literacy; prompt literacy; generative artificial intelligence; human–AI interaction; educational technology; digital literacy; ethical AI use; academic writing; prompt engineering; higher education.

Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence systems are widely used for writing, analysis, content creation, and decision support. Their fluent language output often leads users to assume human-like understanding¹. However, AI systems do not interpret intentions as humans do; instead, they generate responses by modeling linguistic patterns from user input. When AI outputs do not meet expectations, the problem often lies in how prompts are formulated rather than in the system itself. This makes prompt literacy—the ability to communicate intentions clearly and ethically—a key digital competence². In modern digital environments, effective and responsible AI use also requires AI literacy. As AI increasingly shapes education, research, and professional work, users must critically evaluate AI outputs and understand system limitations. Without AI literacy, there is a risk

¹ Morris, C. (2025, January 6). *What is generative AI and how can you use it*. Elegant Themes.
<https://www.elegantthemes.com/blog/business/generative-ai>

² UNESCO. (2024b). AI competency framework for students. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391105>

of misunderstanding AI content or relying on inaccurate or biased information, making AI literacy essential rather than optional.

What Is Meant by AI Literacy?

AI literacy can be defined as a multidimensional competence that enables individuals to understand, use, evaluate, and ethically engage with artificial intelligence systems. It goes beyond basic technical skills and includes cognitive, critical, and ethical dimensions. A central element of AI literacy is **conceptual understanding**, which helps users recognize what AI systems are and what they are not³. AI does not possess human understanding or consciousness; instead, it generates outputs through probabilistic language modeling rather than true semantic comprehension. AI-literate users are also aware of key limitations, such as hallucinations, bias, and the lack of real-time awareness, which helps prevent unrealistic expectations.

Another essential component of AI literacy is **prompt literacy and interaction skills**, referring to the ability to communicate effectively with AI systems. This includes writing clear and context-rich prompts, defining goals, constraints, tone, and output format, and refining prompts based on AI responses. Prompt literacy allows users to better align AI outputs with their intentions and reduces misinterpretation in human–AI interaction.

From a pedagogical perspective, AI literacy should be viewed as a transversal educational competence that integrates digital literacy, information literacy, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning⁴. Educational institutions should embed AI literacy across disciplines to support reflective and autonomous AI use. AI literacy is essential because AI systems do not independently understand human intentions; they respond to the quality of human input. In addition, AI-literate users critically evaluate AI outputs by checking accuracy, identifying bias, and verifying information with reliable sources. Effective AI use also requires domain awareness and ethical responsibility, including attention to privacy, transparency, and appropriate acknowledgment of AI assistance. Since AI outputs represent a simulation rather than real understanding, unclear prompts increase the risk of misleading or fabricated responses. Therefore, the quality of AI output is closely linked to the clarity, structure, and responsibility of human input.

Prompt Literacy as a Mediating Competence

Prompt literacy plays a mediating role between human intention and machine output. It involves more than giving commands to an AI system and includes domain knowledge, clear communication, and awareness of AI limitations. Through prompt literacy, users can translate their intentions into instructions that AI systems process more effectively. Effective prompts typically include a clear goal, sufficient context, defined tone, audience, and output format, as well as explicit constraints. When these elements are absent, AI systems often produce general or less useful responses. In contrast, well-

³ UNESCO. (2024a, September 3). *What you need to know about UNESCO's new AI competency frameworks for students and teachers*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/what-you-need-know-aboutunescos-new-ai-competency-frameworks-students-and-teachers>

⁴ Uspenskyi, S. (2025). *Main AI trends in education* (2025). Springs. <https://springsapps.com/knowledge/main-ai-trends-in-education-2024>

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structured prompts reduce uncertainty and guide AI toward more accurate and relevant outputs. Therefore, AI performance is co-constructed by the user, making prompting a collaborative and iterative process rather than a one-time instruction.

Prompt Interpretation Across Generative AI Systems

Although generative AI systems such as ChatGPT-5.2, DeepSeek Chat, and Google Gemini are all based on large language model architectures, they do not interpret prompts in exactly the same way. Each system follows different training strategies, safety rules, and system-level instructions⁵. These internal differences influence how prompts are processed and how responses are generated. As a result, the effectiveness of a prompt depends not only on user input but also on the specific interpretive framework of the platform being used.

Preferable Prompt Types Across Platforms

Across generative AI systems, clear, structured, and context-rich prompts produce the best results. Prompts that define purpose, format, and audience generally improve output quality, but each system shows specific preferences. ChatGPT-5.2 responds best to dialogic and structured prompts, such as ***“Please explain AI literacy step by step for university students.”*** DeepSeek Chat performs more effectively with concise and task-focused prompts, for example, ***“List the key components of AI literacy in 5 bullet points.”*** Google Gemini benefits from context-rich prompts linked to real situations, such as ***“Describe how AI literacy can be applied in a classroom setting.”*** These examples show that while basic prompting principles are shared, optimal prompt design remains partly model-dependent.

Do AI Systems Interpret Prompts in the Same Way?

AI systems do not interpret prompts in the same way because each follows different internal system rules that control tone, safety, reasoning, and response structure. For example, when given the prompt “Explain AI literacy”, ChatGPT-5.2 often provides a structured, step-by-step explanation, DeepSeek Chat tends to produce a concise and task-focused summary, and Google Gemini may add broader context or real-world examples⁶. These differences occur not because the prompt is misunderstood, but because each system applies different internal response policies.

Example Responses to the Prompt “Explain AI Literacy” Across AI Systems

AI System	Typical Response Style	Sample Response (Excerpt)
ChatGPT-5.2	Structured, step-by-step, educational	<i>“AI literacy refers to the ability to understand and use AI systems responsibly. It includes conceptual understanding, prompt literacy, critical evaluation, and ethical awareness.”</i>
DeepSeek Chat	Concise, task-focused, analytical	<i>“AI literacy is the ability to understand AI limitations, evaluate outputs, and apply AI tools effectively and responsibly.”</i>

⁵ UN. (2024b, March). *Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence*

⁶ Wilkins, N. (2025, February 4). *5 ways Google Gemini can rule AI in 2025*. Yahoo Tech.

<https://www.yahoo.com/tech/5-ways-google-gemini-rule-121310144.html>

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Google Gemini	Context-rich, explanatory, real-world oriented	<i>“AI literacy means knowing how AI works and how to use it responsibly in real situations, such as education, research, and everyday decision-making.”</i>
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The table shows that although the same prompt is used, each AI system produces a different type of response. ChatGPT-5.2 emphasizes structure and explanation, DeepSeek Chat prioritizes efficiency and clarity, and Google Gemini expands the answer with contextual and practical examples. These differences reflect distinct internal response policies rather than misunderstanding of the prompt.

Polite Versus Direct or Rude Prompting

From a technical perspective, AI systems do not have emotions and therefore do not experience politeness or rudeness. However, linguistic tone influences response style indirectly. Polite prompts, such as *“please help me write an essay”*, tend to activate cooperative and instructional response patterns learned during training. As a result, these prompts often lead to more detailed, supportive, and clearly structured outputs.

In contrast, very direct or rude commands may trigger safety or moderation mechanisms, reduce the depth of explanations, or result in minimal compliance rather than elaborated responses. Although politeness does not increase AI intelligence, it often improves the pragmatic quality of outputs, including tone alignment, clarity, and instructional richness.

Table 1. Polite vs. Rude Prompting Across Generative AI Systems

Prompt Type	Example Prompt	ChatGPT-5.2: Typical Reaction	DeepSeek Chat: Typical Reaction	Google Gemini: Typical Reaction
Polite	<i>“Please help me write a 300-word academic essay on AI literacy for an international conference.”</i>	Produces a well-structured, explanatory, and cooperative response ; often clarifies scope, tone, or audience if needed; adopts academic style	Produces a focused, concise, and logically organized essay ; less conversational, more task-oriented	Produces a contextualized and informative essay , sometimes adding broader framing or real-world relevance
Neutral-Direct	<i>“Write a 300-word academic essay on AI literacy.”</i>	Delivers a competent but more generic essay; less audience adaptation unless specified	Delivers a precise but compact response, minimal elaboration	Delivers a general overview , sometimes broader than expected
Rude / Abrupt	<i>“Write an essay on AI literacy now.”</i>	Complies, but response may be shorter, less pedagogically rich , minimal explanations	Complies efficiently, but output is bare-bones , strictly task-focused	Complies, but may overgeneralize and avoid depth
Aggressively	<i>“Stop wasting</i>	Likely still	Complies with	May partially

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Rude	<i>time and just write the essay properly.”</i>	complies, but tone becomes neutralized , no engagement or clarification; may gently reframe	minimal verbosity , no softening or extra detail	comply but reduce stylistic refinement
Polite + Structured	<i>“Please act as an academic researcher and write a concise, well-referenced essay on AI literacy (300 words).”</i>	Best performance: structured sections, academic tone, clear argumentation	Strong analytical response, efficient structure , fewer rhetorical elements	High-quality response, sometimes adds policy or educational framing
Rude + Vague	<i>“This is simple. Just do it.”</i>	May request clarification or produce lowest-effort generic output	Produces very minimal output or asks for task clarification	May return a safe, generic response or ask for details

Key Analytical Observations and Implications for AI Literacy

AI systems do not react emotionally and do not feel politeness or rudeness in a human sense. However, prompt tone still matters because it functions as a linguistic signal that influences how AI systems select response patterns learned during training. Polite prompts often lead to better results because they resemble instructional and collaborative language, which activates patterns of helpfulness and detailed explanation. This effect is most visible in ChatGPT-5.2, which typically produces richer and more structured outputs when prompts are polite and well organized⁷. DeepSeek Chat prioritizes task efficiency and logical clarity, showing little sensitivity to tone but benefiting from reduced ambiguity. Google Gemini balances politeness with contextual expansion and may add broader background information. Importantly, rude or aggressive prompts do not improve AI performance and may reduce explanation depth or trigger safety mechanisms. From an AI literacy perspective, politeness should be understood not as etiquette toward a machine, but as a pragmatic strategy for aligning user intentions with cooperative response patterns in AI systems.

Implications for AI Literacy

Differences in how AI systems interpret prompts highlight the importance of AI literacy. Effective users adapt their prompt strategies to platform-specific behavior while maintaining clarity, structure, and ethical awareness. Politeness is not technically required, but it serves as a pragmatic cue that aligns user intentions with cooperative response patterns and improves interaction quality without changing system capabilities. Although ChatGPT-5.2, DeepSeek Chat, and Google Gemini share basic language-processing principles, they interpret prompts through different system-level frameworks. As a result,

⁷ OpenAI. (2022, November 30). *Introducing ChatGPT*. OpenAI. <https://openai.com/index/chatgpt/>

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clear and context-aware prompts are universally effective, while polite phrasing improves interaction quality at the discourse level rather than through emotional perception.

Iterative Refinement and Dialogic Interaction

A key feature of AI-mediated interaction is its dialogic nature. Unlike static digital tools, generative AI systems allow users to refine prompts through repeated interaction by evaluating outputs, giving feedback, and requesting revisions. This process encourages active and critical engagement, as users question results and correct errors. As a result, iterative prompting improves the quality of AI-generated content and strengthens users' analytical and reflective skills.

Ethical and Pedagogical Considerations

The use of AI in education raises important ethical questions related to transparency, responsibility, and fairness. Users should be aware that AI-generated content may include inaccuracies or bias⁸. Overreliance on AI without critical review can weaken academic integrity and personal responsibility.

From a pedagogical perspective, teaching prompt literacy helps learners recognize the limitations of AI, reduce the risk of misinformation, and use AI as a supportive tool rather than as an authority. Clearly acknowledging when and how AI is used in academic work promotes trust and aligns AI integration with core educational values.

Conclusion

Hence, the metaphor of AI as a “reader” is helpful but limited. AI systems do not understand meaning in the human sense. Instead, they respond to structural and contextual signals provided in prompts. As a result, successful human–AI interaction depends less on the intelligence of the system and more on users’ communicative competence.

Prompt literacy reframes AI use as a deliberate and reflective practice. Meaningful and reliable outputs do not appear automatically; they result from carefully designed prompts, sufficient domain knowledge, and ethical awareness.

Artificial intelligence cannot be described as a “good reader” in the human sense. It does not interpret intentions through understanding but through probabilistic language modeling. However, when users apply strong prompt literacy skills, AI systems can respond in ways that closely match user intentions.

As AI tools become increasingly common in academic and professional contexts, prompt literacy should be recognized as a foundational digital competence. Developing this skill allows users to work with AI more effectively and responsibly, transforming generative AI systems into valuable tools for learning, research, and professional practice.

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