CSAI - Tutorial 1 (Model Answers)

Discussion

1. What does it mean to be sincere in personal communication? What does it mean to be authentic in personal communication? Is there a difference between the two?

   A. Sincerity involves expressing one's genuine thoughts, emotions, and intentions without pretense or deceit—what you say is what you feel. Authenticity involves expressing oneself in a way that is true to one's values, character, and emotions, often implying an unmediated, individual voice—what you feel is what you say. The way I see it, sincerity is determined more by the intent behind a message, while authenticity is determined by the process used to create it.

2. Is it insincere and/or inauthentic to use AI to help navigate complex feelings or articulate emotions? In the two cases discussed, does it matter that AI was involved?

   A. Using AI to navigate complex emotions isn't inherently insincere or inauthentic, especially if the person using it genuinely wants to express themselves but struggles to find the right words. The problem arises when AI replaces human effort rather than assisting it. In the Google ad, the father's reliance on AI to write the letter seemed to bypass a meaningful opportunity for his daughter to develop her voice, raising concerns about authenticity. In Vanderbilt's case, the use of AI to address a tragedy felt detached and impersonal, compromising sincerity by creating distance between the administrators and the emotional gravity of the event. In both cases, the AI's involvement mattered because it disrupted expectations of human-to-human connection.

3. Why do we place such a high value on sincerity in personal communication? Would public perception of the ad/email have been different if the AI had only polished the original draft rather than generating the message?

   A. We value sincerity in personal communication because it signals emotional investment and vulnerability—it tells the recipient that the message matters enough for the sender to make a personal effort to compose it. Public perception might have been different if AI had only polished human-written drafts. For instance, if the daughter had written a letter herself and the father used AI to refine grammar or structure, the message would still have been sincerely hers. Similarly, if Vanderbilt administrators had drafted the email and used AI for stylistic improvements, the message might have felt more compassionate and thoughtful given the tragic circumstances. The backlash stems not just from the use of AI but from the perception that people outsourced emotional labor to technology, thereby diluting the sincerity of their communication.

Wrapping Up

What does it mean when an LLM says that it is sorry?

A. When an LLM says that it is sorry, it is merely reflecting patterns of human language designed to acknowledge fault or express sympathy. An LLM lacks consciousness, emotions, and moral awareness, so its apologies are performative rather than emotionally grounded. However, that doesn't mean such apologies are totally useless. They can still serve several communicative functions such as signaling acknowledgment of a mistake, validating human emotions, or diffusing tension. The issue arises when people ascribe human qualities to the AI's apology, potentially misinterpreting its mechanical responsiveness as emotional understanding.