Euro-Global Journal of Linguistics and Language Education
ISSN 3030-1394 /online/

Vol. 3 No. 1 (2026) Pavasaris

Human vs. Machine Communication: The Future Value of English for Employability and Mobility

[1] Nermin Rzayeva, [2] Ilaha Ashrafova

https://doi.org/10.69760/egjlle.2601006

Abstract. This paper examines whether English will remain the most important career skill in future jobs amid rapid advances in artificial intelligence, automation, and digitalization. While AI-powered translation and automated communication tools reduce barriers to basic cross-linguistic interaction, the findings suggest that English is unlikely to lose its strategic value. Instead, its role is transforming from an elite advantage to a layered competence in which basic operational proficiency may be supported by AI, whereas advanced professional English remains crucial for negotiation, leadership, persuasion, intercultural interaction, and high-stakes decision-making. A sector-based review indicates sustained demand for English in international business, technology, academia, diplomacy, and remote work, alongside growing importance of multilingual repertoires in regional markets. The paper argues for a pedagogy-first framework in language education that integrates digital tools responsibly, strengthens career-oriented communication, and develops AI literacy to ensure ethical and effective use of emerging technologies.

Keywords: English as a global skill; future jobs; AI-mediated communication; multilingualism

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and rapid digitalization are reshaping how people learn, work, and collaborate across borders. Remote and hybrid work models have expanded international teamwork, while AI tools now translate, summarize, and generate workplace communication in seconds. At the same time, long-run evidence suggests that technology both substitutes for some tasks and creates new ones, changing which skills are rewarded (Autor, 2015). In this context, English faces a central dilemma: if machine translation and AI communication

[1] RZAYEVA, N., Student, Faculty of Arts, Design Specialty, Nakhchivan State University, Azerbaijan. Email: rzayevanrmin43@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9513-5644

[2] ASHRAFOVA, I., Nakhchivan State University, Azerbaijan. Email: ilahaashrafova@ndu.edu.az. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2127-3487

assistants keep improving, will English still matter as a career skill—or will it become less valuable, like a "nice-to-have" rather than a requirement?

This article analyzes English as a future employability skill in relation to (a) AI-enabled communication, (b) shifting labor-market skill demands, and (c) the growing importance of human-centered competencies such as collaboration and persuasion (Deming, 2017). Rather than treating English as a single, static competence, the paper distinguishes between basic operational proficiency and advanced professional communication that involves nuance, intercultural awareness, and strategic decision-making (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Guiding questions:

- Will English remain a competitive advantage, or become a basic workplace minimum?
- Which job sectors will still require high-level English despite improving AI tools?
- How should language education adapt to prepare learners for future jobs?

2. English as a Global Skill: What "Dominance" Means Today

English remains the most widely used bridge language in international professional life. It functions as a lingua franca in global business communication, research publishing, aviation, technology documentation, and diplomacy (Nickerson, 2005; Jenkins, 2013). Yet "dominance" does not mean that all workers need the same kind of English. In practice, labor markets reward different proficiency levels. Many roles require basic operational English (reading emails, following procedures, participating in routine meetings), while internationally oriented positions demand advanced professional English (negotiation, presentations, client management, technical writing, and high-stakes decision communication).

This distinction matters because AI may reduce the cost of basic comprehension, but it does not automatically replace the value of trust-building and pragmatic competence. English as a lingua franca often involves accommodation strategies, managing misunderstandings, and culturally sensitive interaction—skills that depend on human judgment (Seidlhofer, 2011). Moreover, economic evidence suggests that foreign-language competence can carry measurable wage and mobility benefits, particularly at higher levels of proficiency (Liwiński, 2019). Evidence from different contexts also indicates that English can function as a form of human capital linked to employability and earnings, especially where globalized sectors expand (Chakraborty & Kapur Bakshi, 2016).

At the same time, the "English advantage" is changing. As global communication becomes more routine and digital, English may shift from an elite differentiator to a baseline expectation in many sectors (Graddol, 2006). Where this baseline exists, the competitive edge increasingly comes from advanced, domain-specific English (e.g., legal English, academic English, tech writing) and from

the ability to communicate strategically in multilingual environments (Jenkins, 2013). In short, English is not disappearing; its value is being redistributed across levels and contexts.

3. AI and the Future of Human Language Skills

3.1. Machine translation and automated communication

AI tools increasingly reduce language barriers through real-time translation, speech-to-text transcription, and automated writing support. In language education, studies on machine-translation-assisted writing show that learners can benefit from faster drafting and increased exposure to target-language structures, though outcomes depend on guidance and learner awareness (Lee, 2020; Deng & Yu, 2022). Research also suggests that when students use machine translation critically—checking meaning, style, and register—it can support learning, whereas uncritical dependence may limit development of independent proficiency (Klimova, 2025). In workplaces, translation and writing assistants can speed up routine tasks—emails, reports, meeting notes—and make multilingual collaboration more accessible.

However, limits remain. First, specialized domains (law, medicine, engineering, diplomacy) require terminological precision and responsibility for consequences, where small errors can be costly. Second, pragmatics and culture are difficult to automate: politeness, humor, face-saving, and power relations often require contextual reading. Third, ethical and security concerns persist because AI systems may store or learn from sensitive data, raising governance and privacy questions (Xu & Warschauer, 2020). Finally, persuasion and ambiguity management—common in negotiations and leadership communication—are not just "language output" problems; they involve intentions, relationships, and trust.

3.2. Human vs. machine communication

Even if AI reduces the need for basic translation, future jobs still reward human communication competence. Research on labor markets shows rising returns to social skills such as teamwork, coordination, and interpersonal interaction (Deming, 2017; Borghans et al., 2014). In international settings, English is frequently the medium through which these social skills are expressed—leading meetings, resolving conflict, negotiating compromises, and building credibility with global partners (Nickerson, 2005). AI may therefore shift demand away from simple linguistic accuracy toward higher-level communicative performance: strategic clarity, intercultural sensitivity, and the ability to align language with professional goals.

This shift is visible in current discussions of AI-mediated learning and work. Scholarship on emerging language-learning spaces highlights how chatbots, ambient AI, and "metaverse" contexts can expand interaction opportunities, but still require human agency, critical evaluation, and pedagogical framing (Godwin-Jones, 2023). In practical terms, the key question is not whether AI

can produce English, but whether professionals can use English (and AI tools) responsibly—choosing the right tone, managing risk, and communicating ethically in complex situations.

4. Future Jobs: Where English Will Still Matter Most

English is most likely to remain crucial in roles that combine cross-border collaboration with high-stakes decision-making. In international business and trade, English is central for contracts, negotiation, supply-chain coordination, and client relations—areas where nuance, risk, and persuasion matter (Nickerson, 2005). In tech and IT, English dominates documentation, developer communities, and global product coordination; even where code is universal, teams rely on English to define requirements, write specifications, and coordinate across time zones (World Economic Forum, 2025).

In academia and research, English continues to shape publishing, indexing, and conference participation, making it a gatekeeping skill for visibility and collaboration (Jenkins, 2013). In tourism, aviation, and logistics, operational English remains important for safety, service quality, and standardized procedures (Graddol, 2006). In diplomacy, NGOs, and international law, English is tied to formal writing, negotiation, and delicate intercultural interaction where automated outputs still require human accountability (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Additional growth areas reinforce this trend. Global customer support, marketing, and content roles depend on persuasive communication and brand tone, where machine translation may help but cannot fully replace human judgment. Similarly, in health, engineering, and finance, English is often the access language for standards, research updates, and international professional networks, even when local practice occurs in other languages. For many professionals, English functions as "career infrastructure": it enables participation in communities of practice, continuous learning, and cross-border opportunity.

At the same time, English demand is not uniform. Some locally bounded roles may rely more on national languages, and in certain regions other international languages can carry strong market value. Yet even in these contexts, English frequently remains the default bridge language for global platforms, multinational firms, and international certification pathways (Graddol, 2006). Evidence on language-related wage premiums also suggests that advanced proficiency—rather than minimal competence—is where the strongest labor-market rewards often appear (Liwiński, 2019).

Finally, remote work and freelancing amplify English demand because global platforms connect workers to international clients and distributed teams. Employers consistently emphasize communication and collaboration skills alongside digital skills, suggesting that language competence remains embedded within broader employability requirements (World Economic Forum, 2025). While some local jobs may reduce English requirements, ongoing globalization and digital labor markets keep many growth sectors English-intensive, especially for advancement into management and international roles (Deming, 2017).

5. English vs. Other Languages: Multilingualism and Regional Shifts

The future language landscape of work is increasingly multilingual rather than English-only. While English continues to function as the primary "bridge language" for cross-border communication, regional economic growth, migration patterns, and geopolitical shifts are strengthening the professional value of other global and regional languages. In international trade and supply chains, for example, Mandarin Chinese can be critical in East Asian business networks, Spanish in the Americas, Arabic in parts of the Middle East and North Africa, and French or German in specific European institutional and corporate contexts. These developments suggest that English is unlikely to disappear, but its dominance may become more situational and sector-dependent rather than universally decisive (Graddol, 2006).

A balanced perspective is therefore necessary. English retains structural advantages: it remains embedded in international publishing, digital platforms, and multinational corporate communication, and it often serves as the default lingua franca in mixed-language teams (Jenkins, 2013; Seidlhofer, 2011). At the same time, additional languages can create a competitive edge by enabling deeper market access, relationship-building, and culturally appropriate interaction in regional settings. In this sense, multilingual competence functions as a strategic supplement to English rather than a replacement.

From an employability standpoint, multilingualism can be viewed as a future-proof strategy. Workers who combine English with one or more regionally valuable languages may expand their mobility, client reach, and leadership potential in multinational environments. Evidence from labor-market research on language skills also supports the idea that foreign language competence can be associated with measurable economic benefits, especially when proficiency is functional and professionally relevant (Liwiński, 2019). Overall, the key trend is not a simple decline of English, but a gradual shift toward layered language repertoires: English as a global connector, alongside additional languages that provide regional specialization and stronger interpersonal trust in specific markets.

6. Programming Languages vs. Natural Languages

A popular claim in future-skills debates is that "coding is the new English." This idea reflects the growing importance of digital literacy in economies shaped by automation, AI, and data-driven decision-making. Programming languages support technical problem-solving, system design, and productivity in digital work environments, and they increasingly function as gateways to high-demand jobs. At the same time, research on automation and labor-market restructuring shows that technology changes task composition rather than eliminating the need for human judgment across the board (Autor, 2015; Frey & Osborne, 2017). As certain routine tasks become automated, the value of distinctly human skills often increases.

In this context, natural language competence—especially in English—remains central because work is not only technical execution. Professional success also depends on communication, teamwork, negotiation, leadership, and intercultural competence. Studies demonstrate that social skills have grown in importance in modern labor markets, particularly in occupations that require coordination and collaboration (Deming, 2017). English frequently becomes the medium through which these social skills are expressed in global teams, remote workplaces, and international institutions (Nickerson, 2005).

Rather than positioning coding and English as competing "most important skills," a more realistic approach is to treat them as complementary. Coding represents technical literacy and the ability to interact with machines and systems; language competence represents the ability to interact with people, manage relationships, and align communication with institutional goals. Future professionals will increasingly need both: digital skills to operate in AI-augmented workplaces and advanced communication skills to lead, persuade, and collaborate across cultures. This balance is consistent with broader future-of-jobs frameworks that emphasize the combined value of technological competence and human-centered capabilities (World Economic Forum, 2025).

7. Implications for Language Education and Curriculum Design

If English is transforming rather than disappearing, language education must also shift from traditional objectives toward future-oriented professional competence. A central implication is that curricula should move beyond textbook-centered grammar instruction and strengthen career-oriented communication skills. This includes practical competencies such as professional email writing, meeting participation, presentations, negotiation language, job interviews, and workplace discourse conventions. In a global labor market, learners need English that supports real tasks and authentic interaction, not only accuracy at the sentence level (Jenkins, 2013; Nickerson, 2005).

A second implication is responsible integration of digital tools. AI-based learning platforms, adaptive systems, and online collaboration spaces can extend exposure, increase practice frequency, and support individualized pathways. Research on AI-assisted and machine-translation-supported learning suggests that these tools can help learners draft, revise, and notice language patterns more efficiently, provided that learners and teachers use them critically and pedagogically (Lee, 2020; Deng & Yu, 2022; Godwin-Jones, 2023). However, if technology is adopted as a shortcut rather than as a learning support, it can encourage dependence and reduce independent language development (Klimova, 2025).

For this reason, a third implication is explicit AI literacy for language learners. Students should learn how to use translation and writing tools ethically, evaluate output quality, avoid plagiarism, and protect personal data. Ethical and governance concerns are especially relevant when AI systems store or process learner information and when algorithmic systems may reproduce bias or

obscure decision-making (Xu & Warschauer, 2020). This requires institutional guidelines as well as classroom-level training in critical use.

Finally, curriculum design should intentionally develop soft skills through English. Communication competence includes critical thinking, teamwork, intercultural awareness, and conflict-sensitive interaction—skills that remain difficult to automate and that are increasingly rewarded in the labor market (Deming, 2017). In practical terms, this supports a pedagogy-first model: technology enhances learning when it serves communicative goals, authentic tasks, and human development, rather than replacing instructional design (Chapelle, 2001).

8. Youth Employability and Long-Term Career Development

For young people entering a rapidly changing labor market, English still provides meaningful advantages, but those advantages increasingly relate to opportunity access and long-term mobility rather than only immediate job placement. English enables participation in international education, scholarships, research networks, and professional certification systems—pathways that expand career trajectories beyond local labor markets (Jenkins, 2013). It also supports remote work and freelancing, where global platforms connect young professionals to international clients and distributed teams (World Economic Forum, 2025).

In addition, English proficiency often supports confidence and leadership development in multicultural environments. As workplaces become more networked and collaborative, employers value employees who can communicate clearly, coordinate with others, and participate in cross-cultural teamwork. Evidence indicates that social skills have become increasingly important for labor-market success, and English can function as the medium through which these competencies are displayed in international contexts (Deming, 2017; Seidlhofer, 2011). From this perspective, English is not merely a technical language skill but part of a wider professional profile.

Economic research also suggests that language skills can correlate with wage and employability premiums in various contexts, especially when proficiency is strong and functionally relevant (Liwiński, 2019; Chakraborty & Kapur Bakshi, 2016). For youth, this implies that English may operate as a compounding resource: it increases access to better information, wider networks, and higher-quality learning opportunities over time. Importantly, these benefits do not exclude multilingualism; in many sectors, combining English with other languages strengthens employability further.

Therefore, youth-focused language policy and curriculum planning should treat English as a component of long-term career development—linked to communication competence, professional identity, and future mobility—rather than as a short-term exam subject. This is especially relevant in the AI era, where basic translation may be automated but advanced communication, relationship-building, and strategic interaction remain human-centered and professionally decisive (Autor, 2015).

9. Conclusion

This paper has argued that English will likely remain important in future jobs, but its role will transform. As AI-driven translation, transcription, and writing tools reduce barriers to basic communication, English may become less of an elite differentiator in some contexts and more of a baseline competence in many globalized sectors (Graddol, 2006; World Economic Forum, 2025). However, rather than eliminating the value of English, AI shifts demand toward higher-level professional communication: negotiation, leadership discourse, trust-building, intercultural interaction, and ethically responsible messaging—areas where human judgment remains central (Deming, 2017; Nickerson, 2005).

The main implication is that English is best understood as layered competence. Basic operational English may be increasingly supported by AI tools, but advanced professional English—and the ability to use English strategically in multilingual workplaces—continues to shape employability and career mobility (Seidlhofer, 2011; Liwiński, 2019). In this sense, future professionals need both digital skills and human communication competence.

Three practical recommendations follow. First, language education should adopt a pedagogy-first curriculum that prioritizes authentic workplace tasks and communicative outcomes (Chapelle, 2001). Second, institutions should promote blended models that combine digital flexibility with teacher mediation and human interaction. Third, curricula should include AI literacy and multilingual strategies so that learners can use tools ethically, protect data, and build regionally relevant language repertoires alongside English (Xu & Warschauer, 2020).

References

Acemoglu, D., & Restrepo, P. (2020). Robots and jobs: Evidence from US labor markets. *Journal of Political Economy, 128*(6), 2188–2244. doi:10.1086/705716.

Alisoy, H., & Sadiqzade, Z. (2024). Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL): Revolutionizing language education. *Luminis Applied Science and Engineering*, *1*(1), 60-72.

Borghans, L., ter Weel, B., & Weinberg, B. A. (2014). People skills and the labor-market outcomes of underrepresented groups. *ILR Review, 67*(2), 287–334. doi:10.1177/001979391406700202.

Chakraborty, T., & Kapur Bakshi, S. (2016). English language premium: Evidence from a policy experiment in India. *Economics of Education Review, 50*, 1–16. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.10.004.

Deming, D. J. (2017). The growing importance of social skills in the labor market. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 132*(4), 1593–1640. doi:10.1093/qje/qjx022.

Deng, X., & Yu, Z. (2022). A systematic review of machine-translation-assisted language learning for sustainable education. *Sustainability, 14*(13), 7598. doi:10.3390/su14137598.

Frey, C. B., & Osborne, M. A. (2017). The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation? *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 114*, 254–280. doi:10.1016/j.techfore.2016.08.019.

Gálvez-Soriano, O. (2025). Foreign language skills and labor market outcomes: The case of English in Mexico. *Economics of Education Review, 108*, 102702. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2025.102702.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2023). Emerging spaces for language learning: AI bots, ambient intelligence, and the metaverse. *Language Learning & Technology, 27*(2), 6–27. doi:10.64152/10125/73501.

Graddol, D. (2006). *English next: Why global English may mean the end of "English as a foreign language"*. British Council.

Jenkins, J. (2013). *English as a lingua franca in the international university: The politics of academic English language policy*. Routledge.

Klimova, B. (2025). Use of machine translation in foreign language education. *Cogent Arts & Humanities, 12*(1), 2491183. doi:10.1080/23311983.2025.2491183.

Lee, S.-M. (2020). The impact of using machine translation on EFL students' writing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 33*(3), 157–175. doi:10.1080/09588221.2018.1553186.

Liwiński, J. (2019). The wage premium from foreign language skills. *Empirica, 46*(4), 691–711. doi:10.1007/s10663-019-09459-0.

Nickerson, C. (2005). English as a lingua franca in international business contexts. *English for Specific Purposes, 24*(4), 367–380. doi:10.1016/j.esp.2005.02.001

Sadigzade, Z. (2025). AI-Powered Feedback in ESL Writing Classes: Pedagogical Opportunities and Ethical Concerns. *Journal of Azerbaijan Language and Education Studies*, *2*(4), 5-17. https://doi.org/10.69760/jales.2025004000

Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford University Press.

World Economic Forum. (2025). *The Future of Jobs Report 2025*. World Economic Forum.

Yang, Y., Wei, X., Li, P., & Zhai, X. (2023). Assessing the effectiveness of machine translation in the Chinese EFL writing context: A replication of Lee (2020). *ReCALL, 35*(2), 211–224. doi:10.1017/S0958344023000022.

Received: 01.15.2026
Revised: 01.25.2026
Accepted: 03.02.2026
Published: 03.05.2026