Should Machines Really Be Able to Speak for Us?

Nathan Wong – October 16th, 2033

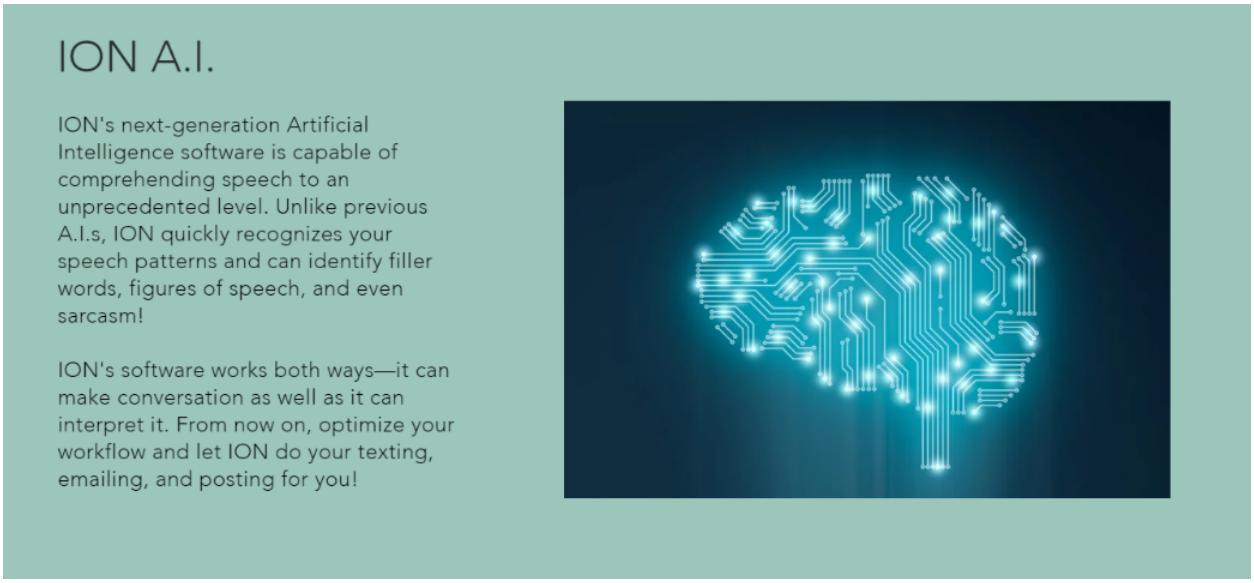
The forms of communication we have invented have slowly been allowing us to communicate more quickly. Paper mail took months, days, or weeks. Email took hours, maybe minutes, depending on the speed on internet connection and device availability. Texting takes seconds, even milliseconds, removing distance as a factor in ease of communication. And ever since Steve Jobs introduced the iPhone on January 9th, 2007, humanity has changed the way they communicate for good. For the most part, the world is all the better. Now, a new invention has recently entered the market that promises communication changes as grand as the ones Steve Jobs unwittingly introduced in 2007, but this time, the world may not reap the same benefits.

The ION wristwatch provides everything a mobile phone does in a smaller form factor. No longer does one need to lug around an outdated brick with a screen – now, you can use the watch's built in screen, or project your interface onto another surface such as a wrist or a table. A simple control structure allows users to easily use all of the features of the device, and the built-in virtual assistant provides an even smoother workflow in situations where you need hands-free

use. Not only do these features provide an enhanced user experience, but they also eliminate costly screens and metals, making this device more accessible to lower-income individuals than ever.

In almost every way, this technology improves on the technology that already exists and has the potential to be the frontrunner in a burgeoning wearables market. In *almost* every way. To ensure that this device is used in a way which facilitates communication and not manipulates it, we need lawmakers and businesses to be ready to take responsibility for researching the effects of this device and creating policies to safeguard against the negative ones.

Young children in school are often taught the importance of grammar with the classic example of "Let's eat grandma" vs "Let's eat, grandma". Miscommunications, even among the humans who created the language they speak, are commonplace in our world today. What happens when we let machines do the talking for us? Similar to an intermediary, the artificial intelligence built into the ION wristwatch has the potential to communicate for you – or, should I say, miscommunicate. Giving a machine talking points to formulate into speech may seem like a simple enough translation, but languages are never simple.



A SCREENSHOT OF THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE MARKETED AS AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SOLUTION, PERFECT FOR THE BUSY WORLD WE LIVE IN TODAY.

There is a reason universal translators are still in development today – translation is not as simple as looking up an equivalent word in a dictionary and spitting it out. Words can have hidden meanings, contain complex emotionality, and entail implications unknown to both machines and people. And to most of us, the algorithm that this device uses to produce its text is unknown. Current laws don't require devices like these to disclose which text was written by an AI, but even if they did, translational errors could lead to mass misunderstandings and unfortunate situations, and as of now, we do not have the legal infrastructure in place to determine how to solve disputes of this nature. By introducing a non-human intermediary into our world of communication without proper regulation, we open ourselves up to all kinds of linguistic mistakes – they may not be grammatical, but that makes it all the more dangerous.

The only way to fix this issue is to create more policies concerning the device and in which situations it can be used. Lawmakers need to anticipate future disputes that could arise because of these, such as cases of permission or consent, and businesses need to evaluate whether this program is something that could effectively be used without the potential for catastrophe. The CIA, for example, should not be relying on artificial intelligence-produced text to conduct its operations. A bakery, however, may benefit from a device which can streamline their relatively simple business communications. And finally, there needs to be accountability from the creators of the device. Recipients of messages should know when text they're reading has been generated with an AI, and users must be able to proofread and edit before sending to help minimize the chance of error in translation. The iPhone was a magnificent invention that brought great benefit to mankind – but also death. Distracted driving was not nearly as prevalent, and laws and policies needed to be updated to reflect the technological shifts our society was

going through. If we want to ensure the success of this device, lawmakers, businesses, the ION team, and all its users must once again adapt to ensure that this device does not cause unintended harm.