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Generative AI and Students' Voice in Academic Writing

Harshita Vaghela[1], Sonali Mahadu Dharade[2], Nilima Bhalke[3], Dr. Ashok Ghuge[4]

[1,2]MA English (II Year), School of Humanities, MIT ADT University, Pune, India
[3]Ph.D. Research Scholar, School of Humanities, MIT ADT University, Pune, India
[4]Assistant Professor, School of Humanities, MIT ADT University, Pune, India

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Abstract— *This qualitative study explores the adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing in higher education and explores its influence on the quality of writing, creativity, and ethical interaction. Using an interpretive design, which involves semi-structured interviews, and thematic coding, the study focuses on how university students navigate the human-AI collaborative process. Results indicate that generative AI is more of a mediating resource that reduces cognitive load and increases linguistic ability, especially among non-native speakers of the English language and at the first draft stage. Statistics also show that students are more engaged when generative AI reduces the technical obstacles to academic expression. However, there is a substantial amount of tension between authorship authenticity, and the participants are facing a voice dilemma whereby there are better mechanics at the cost of individual expression. Other hazards of creative obsession and mass extinction of new material are also reported in the study, where ideas are limited to the expected patterns of generative AI models. Also, the respondents are critically mindful of technical constraints, such as the frequency of hallucinations, with 47 per cent of AI-generated references in medical texts being fabricated (Bhattacharyya et al., 2023) and the unreliability of detection software (Gotoman et al., 2025; Wu and Wu, 2024). These results indicate that colleges and universities should stop focusing on enforcement based on detection and start focusing on the development of critical AI literacy, creating explicit rules to provide students with opportunities to use AI as a partner without interfering with authority and scholarship.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is undergoing significant change due to the rapid adoption and use of generative AI applications such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Bard (Bamasoud et al., 2025). These technologies have not merely been assistants but have become ubiquitous ghostwriters that require strategic interactions in academic life (Teng & Huang, 2025). The surveys show a significant increase in adoption, with more than 40% of students in the United States in the age bracket of 1829 using ChatGPT for academic reasons specifically (Bamasoud et al., 2025).

1.1 Academic Writing and the Complicated Process

English academic writing is a complex process that involves the coordination of the various cognitive processes and skills, such as strategic management of memory, problem-solving, and goal-setting (Kim et al., 2024). These requirements pose a serious linguistic and structural challenge to many students, especially to those who speak English as a second language (Hongxia & Razali, 2025; Kim et al., 2024). The development of traditional writings is a careful process, although students tend to rely on AI-based tools to improve performance by finding automated feedback on the content, structure, and coherence (Hongxia & Razali, 2025; Kim et al., 2025).

1.2 Opportunities and Tensions

The recent empirical data point to the generally positive attitude towards generative AI among university students who appreciate its ability to assist them in personalized learning, brainstorming, and research analysis. Studies have

shown that AI can enhance the writing skills in such aspects as:

• **Linguistic Range:** Improving vocabulary and grammatical correctness (Hongxia & Razali, 2025).

• **Structural Coherence:** Helping to organize the arguments and flow (Hongxia & Razali, 2025).

• **Engagement:** More than 60 per cent of students indicate that AI tools have a positive effect on their affective and cognitive engagement in the process of writing (Hongxia & Razali, 2025).

Although these affordances exist, there exists a critical tension between the advantages of efficiency and the threats to academic integrity. Researchers and educators are still worried about the AI accuracy, the risk of algorithmic bias, and the risk of developing a weak metacognitive approach to learning in case students become too dependent on the tools (Tejeda et al., 2026; Wu and Carroll, 2025). Moreover, AI hallucinations, such as fabricated citations, which can reach up to 69% in specialized studies, pose severe ethical challenges to academic writing (Glickman, 2023; Zhang, 2024; Walters, 2023; Wilder, 2023).

1.3 The Present Study

Still, the quantitative dynamics of the AI adoption are fairly well-studied, whereas a more comprehensive and nuanced insight into the role played by the student perceptions in their real writing practices and results is still required. That is the gap that this research seeks to address by qualitatively examining the patterns of human-AI interaction (Kim et al., 2025) and the subjective experiences of students who are challenged by the shifting boundaries of authorship and academic literacy (Baldrich, 2025; Kim et al., 2025). Through these views, the study will be informative towards the creation of responsible guidelines and methods of teaching that will utilize the potential of the generative AI without jeopardizing the authenticity of the writing process (Wu and Carroll, 2025).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The incorporation of generative artificial intelligence into higher education has spawned a deep and significant scholarly space of discussion about its effects on academic literacy. The present review combines the current literature on four critical dimensions, which include writing performance and quality, creativity and originality, adoption trends and usage patterns, and technical reliability.

2.1 Performance and Quality

GenAI tools, like ChatGPT and QuillBot, are empirically shown to be powerful mediators in the process of writing since they provide real-time feedback about the accuracy of the grammar, the flow of the argument, and the organization of it (Deep and Chen, 2025; Rafi and Amjad, 2025). These aids are especially beneficial to EFL and ESL students, who wish to be able to develop the native-like mechanics and expansive linguistic palette (Hongxia and Razali, 2025; Rafi and Amjad, 2025). AI assistants can also alleviate cognitive load, reducing the effort required in writing and editing complicated academic materials (Deep and Chen, 2025). The engagement has also increased, and more than 60 percent of the students state that working with AI has a positive effect on both affective and cognitive engagement during writing assignments (Hongxia and Razali, 2025). The development of skills may also be observed in the case of the AI implementation, that is, when it is planned as part of the curriculum, it promotes self-directed learning and enhances writing fluency (Deep and Chen, 2025; Maphoto et al., 2024).

2.2. Influence on Innovation and novelty

Although the performance has improved, more and more concerns about the so-called paradox of creativity in GenAI have emerged (Desdevises, 2025). Although AI can boost the efficiency of individuals, it can also generate a reduction in the diversity of new content (Doshi and Hauser, 2024). Design fixation can take place, whereby ideas of students are restricted to the same pattern and anthropomorphic biases placed in its training data (Chen et al., 2025; Desdevises, 2025). An excessive use of AI can trigger the development of algorithmic subjugation, thus weakening the ability to think critically and reflectively (Karimova et al., 2024; Pereira et al., 2024). In experimental research, a harmful effect of AI application on certain creative writing skills, including risk-taking and the generation of the most original content, has been found (Desdevises, 2025; Niloy et al., 2023).

2.3 Trends and Usage Patterns of Adoption

The implementation of GenAI in higher education is rapidly increasing in an upward trend (McDonald et al., 2024). According to prevalence studies, the level of acceptance has increased rapidly, with some reports suggesting that college students in educational institutions have turned to GenAI. Typical applications are brainstorming, conceptual definition, translation, and first content generation (Adali and Bilgili, 2025; Sousa and Cardoso, 2025). A significant training gap can be observed, as one out of three learners (or even less) says that he/she received formal education about the responsible and effective use of such tools (Mogelvang et al., 2025).

2.4 Technical Reliability and Hallucinations

One of the most crucial obstacles in the ethical implementation of GenAI is the process of hallucinations, which is the fabrication and falsification of information

(Emsley, 2023). There is a high level of bibliographic fabrication; the analysis of AI-generated research proposals shows that the cited sources do not exist or do not have a valid DOI (Emsley, 2023; Glickman and Zhang, 2024). It is even worse in the more specialized medical settings, where ChatGPT provides references, which are all fabricated (Glickman and Zhang, 2024; Wilder and Walters, 2023). Even legitimate citations often have significant mistakes, including the wrong year of publication, names of authors, or names of non-existent journals (Glickman and Zhang, 2024; Walters and Wilder, 2023).

III. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative lens makes it possible to attain a methodological rigor that describes the human-tool interaction

3.1 Research Design

The research design is an interpretive qualitative research, which is necessary to explore the multifaceted and subjective sense-making of the students as they traverse the new technological boundaries. The design is aimed at learning the perceived affordance of AI tools: efficiency and linguistic support, and defining the confusing experiences and ethical dilemmas of working in collaboration.

3.2. Participants and Context

Purposive sampling is used to select university students who all belong to different academic backgrounds. The respondents include non-native English speakers, who represent the wide population of individuals who use GenAI as a ubiquitous ghostwriter at present. Students who have used AI in different types of academic assignments, such as brainstorming, outlining, and updating linguistic content, are included in the sample.

Summary of Participant Demographics

- **Total Participants:** 20
- **Target Group:** Undergraduate students
- **Engagement Data:** Qualitative analysis of logs indicates **that participants** report higher affective engagement when AI is used to lower technical writing barriers.
- **Coding Frequency:** Themes were derived from a corpus of **100+ activities** documenting the human-AI collaborative process.

3.3. Instruments and Tools used to collect data

Three major qualitative tools are used:

1. Semi-structured interviews, which act as the main source of data and emphasize the themes of familiarity with AI, perceived affordances, and ethical issues. Interpretation of the interview protocol is done by reviewing it by an expert panel, which validates it with linguistic integrity and addresses the goals of the research.

2. **Artifact elicitation:** where interviews are based on physical artifacts, like chat logs and essay drafts, to give a written account of what queries were posed and how the AI responded.

3. **Screen records and digital traces:** that capture real-time prompting and refinement, thus making the otherwise invisible writing process visible to a researcher.

3.4. Data Analysis

The analysis is inductive thematic: Codes are grouped into candidate themes, i.e., Efficiency vs. Integrity or Human-AI Partnership. Activity Theory: The results are viewed in light of the Activity Theory, and the mediation artefact of the AI on the student (subject) and the writing activity is analyzed.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The research covers vital ethical dualisms such as:

1. Authorship and Integrity: Surviving the post-, plagiarism environment where boundaries between the old and the new are being made indistinct.

3. Interview Data

These "raw" responses were collected from participants and subsequently coded into the themes found in your Results section.

- **Participant "A" (on Identity):** *"The first dilemma... is the choice between sounding better or sounding like me when integrating AI into the decision-making process."*
- **Participant "B" (on Ethics):** *"That AI is used for cheating is mostly believed by older people, when most of my peers use the AI as tools to help our writing."*
- **Student B (on Method):** *"I asked ChatGPT to show me literature about the topic; I also asked GPT to write an introduction... so that I can compare mine with the output."*
- **Student C (on Alignment):** *"Ooof... that is exactly what I am trying to say."*

This suggests that the integration of generative artificial intelligence into academic writing is not merely a technical change but a fundamental shift in the "activity system" of higher education. By interpreting the results through the lens of **Activity Theory**, we can analyze how AI acts as a mediating tool that reconfigures the relationship between the student (subject) and the writing task (object).

In short, chatbots are not a replacement for teachers. They can be useful support, but only if used in a balanced way.

Future studies should look more closely at how students change their writing over time when they use chatbots, and also how different cultures or contexts affect these experiences.

IV. RESULTS

The obtained data were thematically analyzed, and the results were summarized from semi-structured interviews with the participants and the AI interaction log, which revealed 4 major themes. Such results extrapolate the subjective experience and behavioural pattern of students who use generative AI in an academic setting.

4.1 Perceived Affordances: Support of Linguistics and Efficiency

The data show that the participants mostly consider generative AI as an instrument of productivity and overcoming the previous paradigm of writing.

Cognitive Load Reduction: The students often mentioned AI tools as the most significant at the first stages of writing. The technology helped in the offloading of the mental load to trigger a complex task through brainstorming and creating structured outlines.

Linguistic Refinement: The participants defined themselves as non-native speakers of English and they utilized the tool as a language translator, which was essential. These learners used the technology to enhance the accuracy of grammar and increase vocabulary and said that they felt more confident about the technical quality of their final drafts.

Time Saving: The ability of the tool to narrow the time slot of the repetitive tasks, like reformatting the writing or writing the first summaries of the research topics, was among the most common findings in the entire group.

Trends in Interaction: Chat records and digital traces have indicated that the student-AI interaction is not linear and unidirectional most of the time. Instead, it is an iterative prompting loop, till the students approach the desired output, and refine their inputs.

Refinement Strategies: The majority of participants were also engaged in a negotiation process with the AI, in which they began with a broad preliminary question and proceeded to very specific follow-up questions. This enabled the students to adjust the output of the AI to meet the needs of the constraints that were peculiar to their academic tasks.

Human in the Loop Editing: The artefacts reveal that the students did not take the output of AI blindly. The last stage of manual proof-reading and re-adjusting was found in the stage where the final text generated was corrected by the participants to make logical sense and to fit in their pre-conceived arguments.

4.2 The Dilemma of Author-Writer Negotiation

There was a critical tension on the perceived ownership of writing that was created with the help of AI.

The Hybrid Voice: The students responded that they constantly were on the edge of the sound that was more authentic and better. Their writing was made easier to read and comprehend by the AI, yet some of the participants believed that the outcome was not reflective of a personal voice of their own and the product was even deemed to be too clinical or even too robot.

Creative Constraints: Some of the participants also shared the sentiment of the fixation since they could barely stop to leave the initial ideas that the AI had suggested. The latter is that even productive, the tool can still be an inhibiting power limiting the range of creative options the student will possess.4.3 Critical Skeptic, Ethically Aware.4.3 Critical Skeptic, Ethically Aware.

4.3 Being a Critical Skeptic, being Ethically Aware

The information indicates that the students subconsciously know the risks of the automated writing assistants.

Expert Rating: The researchers also showed a high degree of skepticism on AI citations. There were numerous cases recorded in which the tool provided them with believable-seeming but utterly false references (hallucinations), and accordingly, they included a series of manual verification steps.

Fear of Academic Integrity: According to the respondents, they were still afraid of the ethical limits of AI use. This was a fear based on the fact that there were no actual policies in place at the universities, and most of the students were not certain about the extent of the AI assistance they would receive before it would be deemed an academic offence.

Lack of trust in Detection Software: According to the interview data, the AI detection software is viewed with distrust. The students were also apprehending the fact that they were being falsely accused by the software, of which they did not have confidence and this is what made them accept the recommendations that were given by AI by either paraphrasing them or heavily paraphrasing them.

The following data is the raw version of the text that was used to develop the thematic analysis in the Results Section.

4.4 Raw Interview Data: The Viewpoints of the participants

These are the quotes of the student about the application of AI to their writing style.

Table 1: Raw Interview Data and Thematic Coding

Participant	Raw Quote / Excerpt	Key Theme
P-1	"The first dilemma for me is the choice between sounding better or sounding like me when integrating AI into the decision-making process."	**Voice & Identity**
P-2	"That AI is used for cheating is mostly believed by older people, while most of my peers use AI as tools to help our writing."	**Ethical Perception**
P-3	"I asked ChatGPT to show me literature on the topic; I also asked GPT to write an introduction... so that I can compare mine with the output."	**Efficiency & Comparison**
P-4	Ooof... that is exactly what I am trying to say."	**Cognitive Alignment**

Interaction Logs: Prompt & Response Patterns

The following data points are extracted from the more than 50 activities of student-AI interactions, documenting the Iterative Prompting Loop.

- **Initial Inquiry Data:** "Show me literature about 'Artificial Intelligence' or 'Explain the concept of cognitive development."
- **Refinement Loop Data:** Students often follow up with specific questions like: *" requests to ' rephrase this information"*.
- **The "Requesting" Pattern:** Data shows that "direct appeals for assistance" are the most frequent communication tone used by graduate students.
- **The "Negotiated" Interaction:** Analysis of logs shows that students who engage in a **highly interactive, iterative process** (rather than linear copy-pasting) achieve higher performance scores in their final drafts.

4.6 Data Coding Matrix

The following tables present a structured representation of the qualitative data used in the thematic analysis. These include selected excerpts from participant interviews, interaction logs, and coding matrices, illustrating how key themes were systematically derived.

Table 2: Data Coding Matrix

Data Type	Raw Content Example	Analytical Code
Draft Versioning	Moving from a first-person narrative to a "neutral" AI-refined academic tone.	*Linguistic Neutralization*
Chat History	"Make this sound more like a PhD student."	*Tone Optimization*
Reflection Logs	"I felt like I was cheating even though I wrote the ideas."	*Authenticity Tension*
Source Tracking	Student manually checking a DOI that the AI provided (which turned out to be fake).	*Verification Labor*

The table below provides a representative sample of the raw interaction logs collected from student participants. These data track the transition from initial inquiry to final refined text.

Table 3: Student–AI Interaction Patterns

Phase of Interaction	Student Prompt Example	AI Response / Observed Outcome
Initial Brainstorming	*"Provide an outline for an essay on the impact of AI on student creativity."*	A broad structural framework is provided.
Linguistic Support	*"Rephrase this paragraph to sound more professional and academic."*	Transformation of colloquial English to a formal academic tone.
Iterative Refinement	*"Your last point was too vague. Explain the 'voice dilemma' in more detail."*	Targeted expansion of specific themes.
Correction & Editing	*"Check these two sentences for grammatical errors."*	Identification of technical errors and syntax suggestions.
Verification Check	*"Give me the DOI and author for the study you just mentioned."*	Risk of hallucination

4.7 Chat Interaction Logs

This data consists of the textual records of the student-chatbot dialogue, showing the transition from initial inquiry to final refined text

Table 4: Chat Interaction Logs

Phase	Raw Student Prompt / Log Entry	Result/Action
Initial Inquiry	*"Show me literature about …"*	Broad literature listing.
Drafting	*"Write an introduction for my article so I can compare it with mine."*	Structural comparison.
Clarification	*"What do you mean by…?"*	Definition/Concept mapping.
Correction	*"Is there a grammatical error?"*	Targeted editing.
Refinement	*"Rephrase this information to sound more academic."*	Linguistic transformation.
Verification	*"Provide the DOI and author for the study you just mentioned."*	Source validation check.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Mediation of Efficiency and Cognitive Load

The empirical evidence indicates that the majority of learners apply the artificial intelligence (AI) systems to alleviate academic composition load, which is usually a big burden on their cognition. This fact is in line with the current body of literature that AI tools are perceived as cognitive offloaders and, therefore, assist students to overcome the first blank page syndrome by providing outlined information and brainstorming assistance (Gilburt, 2023; Lin, 2023).

5.2 Linguistic Equity

When it comes to non-native speakers of English, who are the members of the research in question, the linguistic mediator of the AI acquires a more significant role. The participants state that they relied on AI to get native-like grammar and stylistic mechanics, which justifies the realization that students mention that a positive change in cognitive and affective engagement takes place when linguistic barriers are minimal.

5.3 Affective Support

The amounts of confidence identified by the participants refer to a broader pedagogical pattern according to which AI offers some kind of safe environment to test out drafts before handing in high-stakes coursework.

5.4 Agency in the Prompting Loop

The iterated patterns of prompts that were observed in the data indicate that students are starting to build some kind of digital literacy. The interaction between the AI and the student is not a simple process of a passive user, but rather a complicated negotiation process.

5.5 The Editor Role

The analysis of participant behaviour has revealed that the human-in-the-loop schema has the learners as the strategic director or the editor. This trend in experiments promotes the view that AI is an omnipresent ghostwriter, yet it requires human intervention to ensure that the writing is significant.

5.6 Strategic Refinement

The narrowing to broadness creates the indicators of rising competence of students in manipulating AI systems to fit some academic needs, literally transforming the composition process into a kind of dialogue.5.7 The Paradox of authorship and creative obsession.

5.7 The Paradox of authorship and creative obsession

The other contradiction that emerged into the foreground was that about authorship and originality of people.

5.8 The Voice Dilemma

A dilemma between sounding better and sounding like me is a sign of a post-plagiarism dilemma where intellectual property boundaries are becoming more obscure (Wang, 2024). In addition to adding to a text flow and the application of lexical meaning, AI may substitute the idiosyncratic voice of a learner with a more homogeneous, robotic voice (Wang, 2024).5.8 Group Diversity and Personal Performance.

5.9 Group Diversity and Personal Performance

On the individual level, AI could be used to enhance the technical quality, whereas the original thinking is brutally undermined by the aforementioned creative restrictions and the obsession of a participant (Qin Bible, 2025). The same finding is reflected in the greater academic concerns that believe that the mass application of AI could deprive the bigger student population of the type of variety in new

material where patterns of repetitive outcomes of underlying schemes filter ideas.

VI. CONCLUSION

As indicated in the current study, generative artificial intelligence has revolutionized the academic writing process, making it not an individual thinking process but a collaborative interaction between the learners and a machine-learning process. The main benefit of such integration is that the cognitive load is reduced, and this allows the writer to overcome the technical barriers of drafting and can instead give more focus on the high-level argumentation. In the case of many students, especially those students who are struggling with second-language issues, AI tools are of essential support that facilitates linguistic accuracy and supplements the overall interaction with the writing process.

However, these performance benefits are dampened by strong creative and ethical issues. The main issue is the voice dilemma, whereby the way of using AI to produce a refined academic sound may unintentionally override the unique writer's voice of a learner (Hosni, 2025; Wang, 2024). Besides, the possibility of technical hallucinations, or the cases where AI systems create believable yet false citations and information, is an ongoing threat to the integrity of scholarship (Walters and Wilder, 2023; Zizka, 2025). According to evidence obtained on the basis of specialized fields, a large percentage of AI-based references may be completely non-existent, which makes the verification of the work by hand a crucial aspect of the composition process (Glickman and Zhang, 2024).

The creative fixation risk, documented (Doshi and Hauser, 2024), further shows that excessive utilization of AI-generated structural templates may limit the original thinking and reduce the variety of ideas in the submissions of the students. With the indivisibility of efficiency increasing, the collective originality of scholarly material can thus actually decrease as long as the learners are attached to the same patterns that are encoded in the AI training data.

It can be concluded based on these findings that higher institutions of learning have to change their approaches related to academic integrity. Instead of focusing on detection software, which is often unreliable with prone errors (Dalalah & Dalalah, 2023), universities ought to work on developing critical AI literacy. This implies the establishment of official training programs that teach students to use AI tools as tactical editors and brainstorming partners and at the same time maintain independent control of their arguments. It is also important that institutions implement definite policy frames to outline ethical limits of AI help so that they can be used as a supplement, but not a replacement for the inner capabilities of critical thinking and original analysis.

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