# Authorship Reimagined: Second Language Writers, AI, and the Shifting Boundaries of Voice and Ownership

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***Abstract*—In modern academic and professional contexts, the role of the author is undergoing a significant transformation. Authorship is no longer exclusively an individual act of creation but increasingly a technologically mediated process, shaped by the growing presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT. This paper examines how these developments are reshaping the practices and perceptions of second language (L2) writers, who often rely on such tools to navigate linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural demands. Drawing on reflective practice in L2 writing instruction, this study explores how L2 writers engage with AI as co-composers, revisers, and language brokers. The integration of generative AI complicates traditional notions of originality, authorship, and voice, raising questions about ownership, ethical use, and pedagogical responsibility. The findings suggest that L2 writers are increasingly relying on artificial intelligence tools to complete their work, often accepting AI-generated suggestions with minimal reflection or revision. Rather than engaging as critical thinkers or active collaborators in the writing process, many position themselves as passive negotiators of machine-generated language, prioritizing fluency and correctness over personal voice or rhetorical intent. This trend raises important pedagogical and ethical concerns regarding the erosion of authorial agency and the diminished role of critical engagement in L2 writing. In light of these developments, the paper calls for a reorientation of L2 writing instruction to emphasize critical digital literacy, reflective AI use, and renewed attention to the development of authorial voice in technologically mediated contexts.**

***Keywords*—second language writing, artificial intelligence, authorship, critical digital literacy**

## I. Introduction

As generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools become increasingly accessible, educators across disciplines are grappling with their impact on student writing. For second language (L2) writers in particular, these tools promise immediate linguistic support and polished output, often appearing to solve long-standing struggles with grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. However, this surface-level assistance raises important questions about authorship, voice, and the purposes of writing [1]. In my own experience teaching a Foundational Writing (FW) course for first-year university students, I have observed a growing pattern: students often rely on AI not as a resource for learning, but as a means to bypass the challenges of writing altogether.

This paper argues that for L2 students, the uncritical use of generative AI reflects not just technological dependency but deeper pedagogical failures around engagement, authorship, and process. The issue is not simply that students use AI, but that they do so in ways that reflect a disengagement from the cognitive and reflective dimensions of writing. Rather than developing ideas, revising drafts, or responding to feedback, many students submit AI-generated texts with minimal interaction. This behavior suggests a loss of agency [2], shaped by linguistic insecurity and institutional pressures that reward correctness over curiosity.

Grounded in reflective practice, this paper explores the conditions that lead to passive authorship and considers how a more responsive pedagogy might support students in reclaiming a sense of ownership over their writing. Through my own class observations alongside student behaviors, I advocate for deliberate interventions that promote critical engagement with AI, support risk-taking, and writing as a process of meaning-making rather than mere compliance.

## II. Reflective Practice and Context

It is imperative for this paper to be situated within a specific context, specifically within the boundaries of reflective practice. Reflective practice refers to the process by which educators and learners critically examine their experiences, actions, and assumptions in order to improve future practice [3]. In the context of L2 writing, reflective practice enables faculty to observe how students engage with emerging technologies such as AI and to consider the pedagogical implications of those interactions. By systematically reflecting on classroom dynamics, student behaviors, and instructional choices, educators can identify patterns of reliance on tools, like ChatGPT, and assess how these tools influence students' sense of authorship, voice, and agency. Reflective practice thus serves as both a methodological approach and a professional stance in this paper, fostering my own clarity for a more responsive and ethically grounded pedagogy.

My reflective practice comes from the context of a first-year university class focused on FW. Students that take this FW course have usually faced some sort of challenge that has led them to be enrolled. For most, their lack of proficiency in English has meant that they have been unable to convey their ideas effectively during an initial diagnostic assessment on academic writing in a separate First-Year Composition Course (FYC), and have been encouraged to enroll in FW to marginally improve their overall understanding of academic writing, in the hopes that they will use some of the skills from FW to help them as they proceed through the FYC course and ultimately through the rest of university. This context is an important one, as students are not generally thrilled to be in FW. Their lack of enthusiasm could be one reason among many why these students rely so heavily on generative AI, though through this paper, the goals are to identify how to

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shift students to reflective AI use through my own pedagogy, rather than to lament why students fob off my assignments *with AI generated submissions*.

## III. Reframing Authorship in an AI mediated Environment

Traditionally, *authorship* in academic writing has been understood as the expression of an individual's original thought, shaped through deliberate rhetorical and linguistic choices [4]. It carries connotations of ownership, responsibility, and intentionality, particularly within institutions that uphold academic integrity as a core value. *Originality*, closely tied to this notion of authorship, has typically been framed as the production of new ideas or language through the writer's own intellectual effort. For L2 writers, however, this expectation has long been complicated by challenges in linguistic proficiency, access to models of academic discourse, and varying cultural understandings of intertextuality. In tandem, *voice,* which is the recognizable presence of the writer in the text, has often been seen as a marker of both competence and authenticity in L2 writing [5].

The integration of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is rapidly destabilizing these concepts. With the ability to generate fluent, grammatically correct, and rhetorically sophisticated language, AI tools blur the line between composition and assistance. When a student inputs a prompt and receives a paragraph of coherent academic prose in return, questions arise: Who is the author of that text? What constitutes originality when much of the language has been produced by an algorithm trained on countless existing texts? And how can voice be cultivated or identified when the language reflects the stylistic averages of machine learning models rather than the writer's own linguistic fingerprint? From a pedagogical perspective, all of these questions can have multiple different interpretations across a range of disciplines with perspectives being offered by faculty, administrative professionals, and students.

For L2 writers, the appeal of such tools is understandable. AI can function as a linguistic equalizer, offering access to vocabulary, structure, and tone that might otherwise feel out of reach. However, this access also risks sidelining the complex, iterative processes through which authorship and voice are typically developed. Rather than engaging in these processes, students may defer to the authority of AI output, adopting it wholesale without reflection or revision. In doing so, authorship becomes less about crafting meaning and more about managing and submitting text ultimately raising concerns about the erosion of student agency and the diminishing value placed on the writing process itself.

In this AI-mediated environment, it becomes necessary to reframe authorship not as the sole production of text but as the capacity to make informed, ethical, and critical decisions about how writing is generated, revised, and presented, though with the rapidly changing environment and increasingly advanced outputs that generative AI produces, it seems only rational to teach students to use AI as a tool and not as a crutch. In my mind, originality must be reconceived not only as linguistic invention but also as intellectual positioning and rhetorical decision-making. Voice, too, may need to be redefined, not as a purely internal or expressive quality, but as something negotiated in dialogue *with* the tools, technologies, and discourses through which writing is now increasingly mediated.

Ultimately, reframing authorship in an AI-mediated environment requires not only pedagogical adaptation but also a fundamental re-examination of the epistemological and ethical underpinnings of writing itself. If authorship once signified the locus of human agency and accountability, it now becomes a shared, distributed act, and one that unfolds through interaction with algorithmic systems whose workings remain largely opaque. This shift demands that educators, institutions, and writers confront the tensions between efficiency and integrity, between augmentation and dependence. To preserve the intellectual and ethical core of writing, we must cultivate in students a critical literacy that goes beyond mastering AI tools to interrogating their implications: who benefits from their use, what forms of knowledge they privilege, and whose voices risk being silenced or homogenized in the process? Only by embracing this critical stance can authorship remain a site of agency, reflection, and responsibility in an age where the boundaries between human and machine creativity grow increasingly indistinct.

## IV. Student Engagement with AI

Reflective observation from my recent FW courses suggest that many students are not engaging with writing tasks as opportunities for development, but rather as obstacles to overcome as efficiently as possible. In my fully online format, this tendency is amplified by the immediacy and convenience of generative AI tools, which offer students the possibility of producing a 'passable' text ('passable' meaning one that will achieve a passing grade, rather than one that I believe that they have independently written) with minimal time or effort. The pattern that emerges is detachment, simply put as an unwillingness or inability to see writing as a reflective, recursive, and a personally meaningful activity.

A telling anecdote illustrates this shift. In one unit, students were assigned a task where they had to respond to an article. However, in reviewing submissions and accessing embedded document metadata, it became clear that several students had generated and submitted their "final" draft within minutes of opening the assignment, often without opening the attached article at all. Some essays included vocabulary or punctuation choices uncharacteristic of prior submissions, such as the use of the em-dash or idiomatic expressions rarely used by L2 writers at this stage. In at least one case, a student had left the placeholder text "insert response here" from an AI-generated template, suggesting a lack of even cursory proofreading.

These instances are not isolated. Across the course, the prevailing pattern was one of immediate generation, minimal editing, and submission with no evidence of revision, critical thought, or engagement with feedback. The behavior aligns with what might be termed "procedural completionism"; where the aim is not to write meaningfully but to fulfill the formal requirement of turning something in. Students may not view this as problematic; in fact, some likely see it as efficient, especially for a FW course they likely did not want to take in the first place. But this form of AI dependency undermines the core pedagogical aims of FW, which are to help students internalize rhetorical structure, develop an academic voice, and build confidence through process-based learning.

This pattern of surface engagement raises important questions about how students perceive the purpose of writing and their own role in it. When AI becomes the default solution, the act of writing risks being reduced to a transactional exchange, which is one in which neither authorship nor learning is central. The challenge, then, is not simply technological, but motivational and epistemological: how can instructors cultivate a classroom culture in which writing is seen not just as a product but as a means of thought, expression, and transformation? If surface-level engagement signals disengagement, then understanding its roots requires attention to the structural and emotional pressures L2 students face, and these are pressures that AI tools both mask and magnify.

## V. The Problem of Passive Authorship

The increasing dependence on AI tools among L2 writers cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the broader pressures they face particularly in relation to linguistic insecurity and the demand for academic conformity. For many students in my FW course, English is not just an additional language, but a site of anxiety, self-doubt, and perceived inadequacy. When the stakes of writing are high and confidence in one's own linguistic ability is low, the temptation to defer to AI-generated text becomes not merely a shortcut, but a survival strategy. In this context, what may appear as passivity is often an act of self-preservation.

Passive authorship, then, emerges not only from a lack of engagement, but from an internalized belief that one's own language is insufficient. Students who feel their writing will always fall short of 'academic' standards are less likely to revise, experiment, or assert a personal voice. Instead, they may turn to AI for quick solutions that promise fluency, correctness, and acceptability [6]. These tools, particularly generative models like ChatGPT, can mask hesitation and doubt beneath polished syntax and idiomatic phrases. While this may boost surface-level confidence, it simultaneously disincentivizes my students from taking ownership of their work or seeing themselves as capable, evolving writers.

This dynamic is further exacerbated by academic structures that reward product over process. Rubrics, deadlines, and performance-based assessment often leave little room for linguistic struggle, experimentation, or failure, processes critical for authentic learning. Within this system, efficiency and correctness become proxies for success, and AI tools begin to appear not just helpful, but necessary. Students internalize the idea that their value as writers lies in the end result, not in the thinking or revision that precedes it. Authorship, in this view, becomes less about making meaning and more about producing something that will pass.

The result is a troubling dissolution of agency. Students may complete assignments, but they do so as intermediaries between AI-generated output and institutional expectations. They stop seeing themselves as thinkers and start seeing themselves as facilitators, responsible only for submitting something polished enough to meet criteria. Critical engagement including the willingness to question, rework, or wrestle with ideas, becomes rare. And in its absence, so too does the possibility of growth.

Addressing passive authorship, then, requires more than regulating AI use. It demands that educators, like myself, confront the conditions that lead students to disengage in the first place. It requires a pedagogy that validates linguistic difference, supports risk-taking, and values the messy, recursive nature of writing. Only by attending to the emotional and structural dimensions of language learning can we begin to restore authorship as an act of agency rather than avoidance.

## VI. Toward a Pedagogy of Critical AI Use

If my current situation reveals a widespread tendency among L2 writers to rely on AI uncritically, then the pedagogical challenge is not simply to restrict the use of these tools, but to reframe how they are integrated into the writing process. A future-facing L2 writing pedagogy must prepare students not only to use AI effectively, but also to engage with it reflectively and ethically. This requires the creation of opportunities for students to fully understand the function and influence of AI in their own writing practices, rather than treating it as a neutral or invisible support.

One place to begin is with explicit classroom conversations about how generative AI works and what it can and cannot do. Many students hold vague or inflated assumptions about the authority of tools like ChatGPT, seeing them as objective sources of correctness rather than probabilistic models trained on existing language patterns. By demystifying the technology, it is possible to position students as informed users who are capable of questioning the output they receive rather than accepting it at face value. In practical terms, this might involve assignments that ask students to compare AI-generated drafts with their own initial writing, to identify points of divergence, and to reflect on whose voice is represented in each version, which is something commonly done in the FYC course for students.

Scaffolded writing tasks can also be designed to make revision visible and central. Instead of allowing students to submit polished AI-assisted texts as final products, students can be required to submit annotated drafts, process logs, or writer's memos that document how decisions were made and why certain suggestions were accepted or rejected. These forms of meta-writing help students shift from passive acceptance to active authorship, emphasizing writing as a process of negotiation rather than transcription.

In addition, writing instruction should include attention to the ethical dimensions of AI use. This involves more than concerns about plagiarism. It requires students to consider questions of voice, ownership, and the boundaries of collaboration. When students use AI to produce academic texts, what responsibilities do they hold in shaping, acknowledging, or contesting that output? How does reliance on AI affect the development of their own academic identity? These are not peripheral questions, but central to the task of writing in a digitally mediated environment.

However, promoting critical AI use must begin with a clear-eyed understanding of where students are. In the context of my FW course, most students are not yet demonstrating reflective or strategic engagement with writing technologies. Instead, they often go through the motions of completing assignments, relying on AI-generated content as a shortcut to meet perceived requirements. Writing becomes a procedural task rather than a site for intellectual or linguistic development. Attempts to introduce revision, reflection, or

rhetorical awareness in my FW course are frequently met with minimal effort, if they are taken up at all by students.

This disconnect suggests that fostering critical AI literacy cannot rest on the assumption that students are already inclined to think deeply about authorship, language, or ethics. Instead, faculty need to build structures and practices that deliberately interrupt surface-level engagement. This might mean incorporating low-stakes tasks that reward thoughtful revision, designing activities that expose the limitations of AI-generated language, or making space for conversations about why writing matters beyond a grade. While the goal is to develop students' critical awareness, the starting point must recognize the practical, affective, and institutional reasons why many are currently disengaged.

In this sense, a pedagogy of critical AI use is not a celebration of what students are already doing, but a challenge to what they are not. It calls for instructional approaches that meet students where they are, but do not allow them to remain there. Rather than romanticizing agency, the task is to reintroduce it deliberately, incrementally, and in dialogue with the real conditions shaping students' choices. Until faculty stop mistaking output for understanding, and correctness for learning, AI will continue to dominate not because it is powerful, but because our pedagogy makes it necessary.

## VII. Conclusion

The presence of generative AI in second language writing classrooms is not inherently problematic. What matters is how these tools are taken up by students and how their use reflects deeper pedagogical dynamics. In the context of a foundational writing course, the widespread and uncritical reliance on AI points to more than technological convenience. It signals a breakdown in how writing is framed and practiced, often reduced to a task to be completed rather than a process of thinking, experimentation, and voice development.

Through reflective practice, I have observed that students' disengagement is not simply a result of bad habits or laziness, but is often shaped by linguistic insecurity, institutional expectations, and the lack of meaningful opportunities to see themselves as authors. AI tools, in this environment, offer an efficient workaround. Yet without critical guidance, their use can further distance students from the very skills and dispositions the course is meant to foster.

Addressing this challenge requires more than regulating AI use or adding warnings to assignment sheets. It calls for a shift in pedagogy, which is one that meets students where they are, yet deliberately guides them toward more active, reflective, and ethical relationships with language. By designing tasks that foreground revision, demand metacognitive reflection, and open sustained inquiry into voice and authorship, educators, like myself, can begin to rebuild the conditions in which agency and authenticity in writing can thrive. This is not simply a matter of keeping pace with technology, but of reaffirming the human dimensions of writing: curiosity, struggle, and meaning-making. If AI is to remain part of the classroom (which we can almost certainly assume that it will), it must do so in ways that extend rather than erode these capacities. The future of writing pedagogy depends on our willingness to move beyond fear or fascination and to teach authorship as an act of critical engagement, which is a space where technology serves human thought, not the other way around.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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