

Writing with the Machine: Negotiating Authorial Identity in AI-Assisted Academic Writing Practices among Post-Graduate Students

Ganesh Prasad Adhikari*, Central Department of Education, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Narayan Prasad Adhikari, Central Department of Education, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Arjun Prasad Pokharel, Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Nepal

Keywords	Abstract
Academic Writing, Authorial Identity, Generative AI, Higher Education, Human AI Collaboration, Multilingual Writers, Nepal.	<i>Generative AI (GenAI) has revolutionized academic writing, shifting the nature of human-AI interactions in text production. While previous studies focus on academic honesty and general writing outcomes, little research addresses how multilingual university students negotiate authorial identities during AI integration. This qualitative study explores the negotiation of authorial identity among 15 postgraduate students at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, using semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis. Guided by Ivanič's Writer Identity Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Norton's Identity and Investment Theory, and Bourdieu's Linguistic Capital Theory, the study investigates students' perceptions of authorship, creativity, and linguistic voice. Empirically, the findings reveal five key outcomes: (1) students utilize GenAI primarily as a linguistic scaffolding tool to bridge conceptual ideas and formal academic English; (2) authorship is experienced as a negotiated sociotechnical space where intellectual ownership of ideas remains human while linguistic expression is co-constructed; (3) GenAI acts as a cognitive and creative partner that stimulates alternative argumentation rather than replacing human ingenuity; (4) participants experience an internal tension between achieving polished Western-centric academic English and preserving their authentic multilingual voices; and (5) sustainable writing relies on robust human agency, critical evaluation, and editorial oversight. These findings demonstrate that AI is not a mere substitution tool but an intervening mediator that reshapes scholarly writing. The study offers critical insights from a South Asian multilingual higher education context, advocating for AI-literate classrooms that foster intellectual ownership while enabling responsible technological utilization.</i>

INTRODUCTION

A major shift in academic writing practices has been brought about by the advent of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and the emergence of large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, which allow machines to engage in language production, revision and knowledge construction (Lin, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024). In contrast to previous digital writing assistants, which typically focused on grammar correction and proofreading, modern AI tools can help brainstorm ideas, structure arguments, compose text, and offer contextual feedback along the way (Lo, 2023). This shift has transformed academic writing from a

purely human endeavour to one that may be co-created by the writer and intelligent systems. The use of AI for writing is becoming more common in universities, raising questions about authorship, originality, creativity, and academic integrity (Perkins & Roe, 2024).

The adoption of GenAI into academic writing has brought both opportunities and uncertainties to university students. Recent studies have shown that AI-based tools can assist students in enhancing language proficiency, generating ideas, and managing the complexities of academic writing, especially for second language writers (Tlili et al., 2023; Su & Yang, 2023). However, concerns have also been raised about the overuse of AI, decrease student autonomy, the reliability of generated information, and the risk that AI-generated text may diminish students' active involvement in the writing process (Farrokhnia et al., 2024). The issue is now no longer whether AI should be used in education, but rather how students can navigate this dialogue and remain active, authentic writers.

A major concern arising from AI writing tools is the evolving nature of authorship. The distinction between human and machine authorship becomes increasingly intricate when students employ AI to generate sentences, reorganize arguments, or enhance language (Amirjalili et al., 2024). Recent research questions traditional notions of originality, as text might be a mix of human intent and machine-generated language (Watson et al., 2025). From these perspectives, writing with AI isn't just a set of skills; it's a negotiation process that involves students asserting their sense of ownership, creativity and authorial identity.

Especially, for multilingual university students using English as their academic language, many learners associate academic writing in English with success in education, employment and membership in international communities of knowledge. Linguistic support from AI tools can be helpful, as it assists students who struggle with vocabulary, grammatical issues, and uncertainty regarding academic language (Barrot, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023). However, the use of AI-generated text also raises the question of whether it encourages students' confidence as English writers or dependence on externally created language forms. As multilingual writers interact with AI systems trained predominantly on global English data, they may also encounter tensions between improving their linguistic performance and maintaining their own voices and identities.

Language and technology are particularly meaningful in areas where English is a second language. Research on the learning to writing in English has shown that writing is not only a text-creation process but also an identity-construction and expression activity (Ivanič, 1998; Norton, 2013). AI-assisted writing has made this process of identity construction more complicated, as students must determine which elements of a text are theirs – reflected through their knowledge, creativity, and language. While existing research has focused on students' attitudes towards ChatGPT, academic integrity concerns, and AI adoption in higher education (Chan & Hu, 2023; Chiu, 2024), limited attention has been given to the experience of multilingual student writers as participants in their own writing process.

Higher education in Nepalese provides an important setting to explore these issues. Nepal is linguistically diverse. English functions as a valuable career language there, even though it is not students' primary language. University students frequently struggle with academic vocabulary, grammar, and writing confidence in English (Giri, 2015). Meanwhile, digital technologies and AI tools are becoming more accessible to Nepalese learners. Recent research in Nepal has focused primarily on students' perception, awareness, and acceptance of ChatGPT. Few studies have examined how AI affects writing experience, creativity, and

authorship (Sherma, 2024). Therefore, when examining AI-assisted writing from a Nepalese perspective, exploring the identity-related experiences of student writers is crucial.

There are three key areas in which there is a need for further research on generative AI in education. The first is that many current studies are focus on the effectiveness of AI, student attitudes, or academic honesty, rather than on the transformation of a writer's identity in AI-assisted writing. Second, research investigating the role of AI in academic writing has tended to focus on Western educational settings, leaving multilingual Asian settings somewhat underrepresented. Third, there has been limited focus on how students negotiations authorship given AI's linguistic involvement in producing academic texts. To address these gaps, the present study focuses on how PGTs at Tribhuvan University construct their authorial identity during AI-assisted academic writing practices.

This research focuses on students' experience, perception, and interpretation of using generative AI in writing. Specifically, it explores the impact of AI on the concept of authorship, creativity, ownership, and personal writing voice. conducted with post-graduate students at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, a constituent campus of Tribhuvan University – this research contributes to the ongoing debate on AI mediated academic literacy from a Nepalese multilingual perspective.

Despite the burgeoning scholarship on generative AI in higher education, three critical gaps persist. First, existing empirical work predominantly investigates Western, English-dominant institutional settings, leaving the sociolinguistic realities of South Asian multilingual learners underexamined. Second, while studies extensively evaluate academic integrity and task efficiency, they largely overlook how real-time algorithmic text mediation transforms the deep-seated authorial selfhood of postgraduate writers. Third, there is a lack of qualitative, interview-based evidence capturing how students in resource-constrained public universities navigate the friction between acquiring high-status global academic English and retaining their local linguistic identities. Addressing these gaps is vital to understanding how emerging scholars construct legitimate scholarly voices in hybrid writing ecosystems.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Tribhuvan University postgraduate students perceive the role of generative AI in their academic writing practices?

RQ2: How do students negotiate their authorial identity when using AI-assisted writing tools?

RQ3: How does AI-assisted writing influence students' perceptions of creativity, ownership, and personal voice?

LITRTATURE REVIEW

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has revolutionized the conception of literacy in the 21st Century, moving it from a cognitive process to a technologically supported one. The traditional academic writing process was long understood as one in which writers were the centre of the activity, which consisted of planning, drafting, revising, and reflecting. Large language models (LLMs) have, however, ushered in new types of interactions that involve writers working with computational systems that can create, restructure, and assess

linguistic expressions. AI writing tools are not simply additional digital tool but a reshaping of how knowledge, language, and textual production are negotiated (Moorhouse & Wang, 2025). GenAI should therefore be considered a new digital literacy practice, and not just an educational technology. For the AI era, digital literacy involves discerning machine-produced language, understanding the constraints of algorithms, and exercising human agency in language mediated by technology (Ng et al., 2021).

GenAI is a new generation of computer-assisted writing systems that engage with the meaning-making and text production process rather than just correcting grammar or proofreading. This has led to the creation of what has been called a type of distributed writing agency, one in which meaning is created when there is interaction between human writers and technological systems (Guzmán & Lewis, 2020). However, distributed agency is not substitution for human authorship. Rather, AI helps to reimagine the writing ecology, as students are constantly writing, editing, and making decisions. This turn in applied linguistics is especially significant since writing is not just a technical skill, but a social practice through which people engage in academic communities. Students' negotiations with language, knowledge, and authorship also occur when they use AI to reformulate sentences, generate arguments, or refine academic expression.

Recent empirical investigations corroborate this shift; for instance, Watson et al. (2025) demonstrate that generative AI establishes an autopoietic sociotechnical environment wherein the boundaries between human creator and machine generator become increasingly porous. Similarly, Moorhouse and Wang (2025) emphasize that navigating this paradigm requires educators to re-conceptualize language pedagogy beyond traditional rule-following and move into active, ethically grounded human-machine orchestration.

A central concern in AI-assisted writing is the changing nature of authorship. Traditionally, academic authorship has been linked with originality, personal expression, and intellectual ownership. While AI systems can produce grammatically correct and structurally coherent pieces of text, they have been found to lack personal experiences, specific intellectual stances, and contextual depth (Amirjalili et al., 2024). So, it is unclear whether linguistic accuracy alone is the basis of an author's composition, as other features of academic writing—like personal involvement, disciplinary positioning, and intellectual responsibility—are also essential to authorship. More broadly, academic voice is closely related to the question of authorship. Voice refers to the position or perspective of the writer in relation to knowledge, and disciplinary expectations and to audiences. Students might not be sure if their voice is represented in an AI-generated composition. Writer agency is an important topic in assessing human engagement with AI in writing. Writer agency is capacity to make intentional choices regarding language, content, and rhetorical decisions. While AI can offer some aspects of writing agency via suggestions and generated content, students still have maintain agency by evaluating, editing, accepting or rejecting AI output based on their communicative intentions (Abraham, 2026). The key questions are not whether AI is involved in writing, but how writers engage with AI's contributions.

Multilingual English writers are especially concerned with these issues. Students in an English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) context may possess content knowledge but struggle to communicate complex thoughts in academic English. AI writing tools can act as linguistic scaffolding, providing suggestions for vocabulary, grammatical corrections, and alternative wordings. Indeed, study has shown that multilingual learners find GenAI beneficial, as it helps alleviate the anxiety associated with writing in English and boosts their

confidence in academic communication (Kohnke et al., 2023). However, frequent reliance on formulations could hinder students from developing their own language skills.

Existing studies on ChatGPT in Nepal have largely explored awareness, acceptance, and perceptions surrounding the tool, rather than deeply investigating topics of authorship, creativity, and writer identity. This limitation is not unique to Nepal; it is common in educational research contexts where the focus remains on the implementation and effectiveness of AI tools, with little consideration for their sociolinguistic implications. Moreover, the impact of interacting with AI on postgraduate students' writing products is likely to be even greater than the impact on their self-perceptions as academic writers. Presently, very little is known about how Nepalese students perceive the relationship between creativity of human beings and the assistance of machines in writing academic works.

Existing evidence shows the impact of GenAI on academic writing practices. AI is a topic that has been studied in relation to adoption, benefits for education, academic honesty, and writing support, but some areas still require further study. First, study has concentration on the efficacy and perceptions of these technologies while neglecting the identity aspects of AI-supported writing. The authorial negotiation process when students interact with AI is under-researched. Second, most of the current literature comes from the Western higher education context. Few empirical studies focus on multilingual students in South Asian higher education environment, where English writing is a complicated negotiation between local identity and global academic expectations. Thirdly, there is inadequate representation of Nepal in the field of higher education and academic writing research on creativity, ownership, and personal voice in writing.

To fill these gaps, the present study explores the way by which the postgraduate students of Tribhuvan University negotiate authorial identity in the process of academic writing in the presence of the AI support. The study highlights the lived experiences of students within the multilingual context of Nepal, bringing to light new debates surrounding AI-mediated literacy, academic writing, and emerging forms of authorship.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To comprehensively examine the multifaceted phenomenon of AI-assisted academic writing, this study deploys an integrated, four-pillar theoretical framework. Rather than operating in silos, these theories form a cohesive sociolinguistic and cognitive continuum: Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory provides the foundational lens for understanding AI as a cultural mediational tool for cognitive development; Ivanič's (1998) Writer Identity Theory zooms inward to analyse how text acts as a site of self-representation and authorial positioning; Norton's (2013) Identity and Investment Theory accounts for how multilingual learners emotionally and socially invest in high-status academic discourse; and Bourdieu's (1991) Linguistic Capital Theory frames academic English as a form of symbolic power within a broader linguistic economy. Together, these frameworks capture both the internal psychological negotiations of voice and the external socio-structural pressures of academic publishing.

The main theoretical basis is provided by the theory of Writer Identity developed by Ivanič (1998), which considers writing as an identity-building process rather than only the production of a linguistic text. For Ivanič, a text is a representation of the writer's social

position, their beliefs, values, and attitudes towards discourse communities. She argues that “writing is not just about conveying ‘content’ but also about the representation of self” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 10). This is especially true for AI assisted writing; as generative AI has created an ambiguity of voice in written text. Because academic writing is a way for students to create and interact with their academic identity, relying on AI to brainstorm ideas, edit words and phrases, or enhance linguistic precision, requires them to consider how the written work aligns with their own intellectual and linguistic identity. AI-assisted writing thus becomes a space of negotiation of identity, a space in which students struggle to negotiate between the performance of the text and their own voice, creativity, and authorship.

The second framework is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which described learning and cognitive development as socially and culturally mediated processes. In contrast to individualistic learning theory, the sociocultural theory highlights the importance of tools, signs and interactions in structuring human thinking. According to Vygotsky (1978), “The internalization of culturally produced sign systems produces changes in behavior” (p. 7). Understanding AI-assisted writing requires a concept of mediation, as generative AI acts as a new technological and cultural object that shapes students' planning, composition, and revision of academic texts. Much like teachers, textbooks, and peer feedback, AI can expand students' linguistic toolkits and offer scaffolding for learning how to write.

In addition, the framework is bolstered by Norton's (2013) Identity and Investment Theory, which explores how multilingual students interact with academic discourse in English. Norton views identity as pluralistic, fluid and constructed through social relations, structures and vision of the future. Her theory focuses on the investment in the social and symbolic advantages of language use, rather than framing language learning strictly in terms of motivation or proficiency.

Bourdieu's (1991) Linguistic Capital Theory offers a foundational perspective on the relationship between language practices and social value, power, and inequality. Bourdieu argues that “linguistic exchanges are also relations of symbolic power” (1991, p. 37). In many higher education contexts, such as those in Nepal, mastery of prestigious academic varieties of English serves as an educational and professional benefit, allowing academic English to function as symbolic capital. AI writing tools could potentially impact this linguistic economy by providing students with greater access to common academic expressions and enhancing their capacity to engage in academic discourse.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative interpretive research design to examine how postgraduate students negotiate their authorial identity within academic writing practices involving AI.

Research Context and Participants

The study was carried out at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, a constituent campus of Tribhuvan University, Nepal. This University is the biggest public university of Nepal and has many constituent and affiliated colleges throughout the country. The research site was chosen as Mahendra Multiple Campus because of its public higher education setting,

which hosts students with varying linguistic and educational backgrounds learning to use English academic writing practices. The number of participants in the study was 15 postgraduate students. The postgraduate students were chosen since they are expected to participate more in academic writing activities, such as assignments, research reports, seminar papers, and thesis related writing. These learning experiences thus offer relevant insights into the impact of generative AI on high-end writing processes and perceptions of authorship. The participants were from various post graduate courses on the campus. The main focus, however, was not disciplinary comparison, but their individual experiences with using or coming across generative AI tools as they engaged with academic writing tasks. To capture a diverse spectrum of student experiences, the 15 postgraduate participants were purposefully selected across multiple departmental streams at Mahendra Multiple Campus, including English Education, Nepali Literature, and Political Science. This cohort exhibited notable internal variation: their self-reported baseline English writing proficiencies ranged from developing intermediate skills to advanced academic fluency, and their frequency of generative AI utilization spanned from daily use for structural outlining to intermittent use strictly for lexical proofreading.

Sampling Procedure

The study utilized a criterion-based purposive sampling strategy combined with random selection from within the eligible pool. Initial selection criteria required participants to be enrolled postgraduate students at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, with documented experience utilizing generative AI tools for English academic writing assignments. To ensure adequate variation within the participant group, the final cohort of 15 students was drawn across from diverse academic specializations (including English Education, Nepali Literature, and Political Science), capturing a range of baseline English proficiencies and varying frequencies of AI use, from casual grammar-checking to advanced structural brainstorming.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were developed in line with the study goals and the theoretical framework. All interviews were held one-on-one in a relaxed setting. With the participant's permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The participants were informed that their answers would be used exclusively for academic research and that their identities would remain confidential.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis approach. The analysis followed an interpretive rather than a frequency-based orientation, allowing patterns of meaning related to authorship, voice, and agency to be identified within participants' accounts. The analysis involved six phases: familiarization oneself with interview transcripts through repeated reading; generating initial codes related to AI use, ownership, language, creativity, and identity; development preliminary themes; reviewing and refining themes; defining and naming final themes; and producing the analytical narrative.

The coding process combined inductive and deductive approaches. Initial codes were generated from participants' experiences, while theoretical concepts from Writer Identity Theory and Sociocultural Theory guided interpretation during later stages. To enhance analytical credibility, themes were repeatedly reviewed against the transcripts to ensure they represented participants' accounts rather than researcher assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were adhered to during the research process. Participants were given information on the purpose of the study, their rights to participate, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews. Participants' names were anonymized in the transcription and reporting process. All data collected were used for academic purposes, and personal information was not released.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

AI as Linguistic Scaffolding: Supporting Academic Expression

The first theme illustrates that participants mainly saw generative AI technologies not as a replacement for their intellectual work, but as a form of linguistic scaffolding that facilitated their academic English writing. They found that AI was especially helpful in bridging the gap between generating ideas and communicating them in academic English. In a multilingual context, where English is essential but is not the first language for most students, AI gave postgraduate learners immediate linguistic support, thus boosting their confidence and engagement in academic writing practices.

The most commonly reported difficulty was that of idea generation, whereas the second most frequently reported difficulty involved turning ideas into language appropriate for the academic context. Student 1 explained:

Sometimes, I know what I want to say but I do not know how to put it into formal academic writing. With ChatGPT, I can turn my concepts into more precise sentences. Though, I do not feel like the text is entirely mine, since the language used is not always how I normally speak or write. I think AI helps me express myself better, but I should still make sure that it reflects what I actually mean.

Interpreted through Vygotsky's Sociocultural framework, this qualitative excerpt illustrates that the student does not experience AI as an autonomous cognitive replacement. Instead, they view it as an external semiotic mediator that absorbs low-level linguistic friction. By outsourcing mechanical vocabulary and syntax adjustments to the tool, the writer redistributes their cognitive load, freeing up mental bandwidth to focus on higher-order rhetorical organization. This interpretive nuance proves that technical assistance does not automatically strip away authorship. Instead, it creates a new zone of proximal development where the student must critically evaluate whether the generated output preserves their intended communicative purpose. Student 2 explained:

To me, AI is an English tutor that is always ready for me. When I can't find an academic word or my sentence is informal, I ask AI for suggestions. I'm a postgraduate student, and sometimes academic English is difficult to write. I

feel good about my use of AI, but I know that I can't learn to write well by copying AI.

The statement emphasizes linguistic uncertainty's diminishing role in academic composition with the help of AI. Academic vocabulary and sentence structure can cause anxiety for multilingual writers, which can hinder participation. With AI tools, these challenges can be mitigated by offering alternatives and modelling academic expressions. However, the participant also understands that writing development should not be dependent on AI, but rather active.

This result can be understood through Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which views learning as an activity mediated by cultural tools. In this research, generative AI acts as a technological tool that helps students improve their language skills. From a sociocultural approach, however, learning outcomes are not defined simply by using AI. Development happens when students interpret, evaluate, and transform the resources they have. Hence, AI becomes truly valuable in education when students think critically about its suggestions instead of coping machine-generated text.

The results also support Ivanič's (1998) Writer Identity Theory, especially the claim that writing represents the self. Participants' worries reveal that AI-generated writing is not just about grammatical correctness, suggesting that academic writing is not assessed only in terms of grammar. Rather, students see writing as a manifestation of their intellectual identities. While AI has enhanced students' linguistic ability, the question remains whether this improvement maintains their own voice and personality. Student 3 further explained:

Prior to using AI tools, I spent lots of time fixing grammar and sentence structures. I can use AI for language issues and concentrate more on creating my arguments. However, I sometimes feel that AI makes my writing too perfect and strips some personal expressions that are part of my style.

This answer illustrates the intricate relationship between empowerment and caring. On the other hand, AI eliminates the mental load of ensuring language accuracy, enabling students to concentrate on advanced academic skills like building arguments and critical thinking. However, too much refinement can result in a gap between the students' actual writing style and the one they have produced.

“The Ideas are Mine, but the Language is Shared”: Negotiating Authorial Identity

The second theme examines how students negotiated authorship when using AI-generated suggestions in academic writing. While participants agreed that AI can be a helpful writing tool, they were unsure about the distinction between human input and AI-generated language. The results showed that AI has not removed students' sense of authorship, but rather shifted the nature of authorship to a negotiated process where students' ideas, technology, and reflection all play a role.

Ownership of ideas and ownership of language were often separate issues among participants. Overall, they viewed the conceptual understanding, arguments and perspectives of their research as personal, and AI-generated expressions as linguistic aids. Student 4 explained:

I always come up with ideas, because AI has no knowledge of my personal experiences or my research interests. But when I'm having my sentences rewritten by AI and they get more academic, sometimes I wonder if they're still mine. I think that the content belongs to me, and the expression is a mixture of my thinking and the machine's ability to use language.

This reflection makes clear that students did not believe that authorship was a one-to-one correspondence between humans and machines. Rather, they built up a multi-level schema in which the idea, language, and form of text presentation could have varying levels of humans and machines involvement. The participant takes responsibility for knowledge production while acknowledging that linguistic expression was partly mediated by AI.

This finding relates directly to Ivanič's (1998) Writer Identity Theory, in which writing is considered a process of self-construction and self-representation. Academic writing is not just about creating accurate texts, but also about building links between the writer and the knowledge being communicated. Students should therefore identify if AI has altered their text and continue to reflect their unique academic identities. Student 5 further explained:

AI can't be the author because it lacks personal understanding and emotions; it only foretells language with information. When I write with a few of AI's suggestions, however, I feel that I am not writing entirely on my own. It is a team effort between my ideas and AI support.

The answer lies in an emerging concept; writing is collaborative, but responsibility is not equally shared. Students viewed AI as a supporting actor that requires human decision-making and direction. Our collaboration with AI does not replace our role as writers; rather, it represents a different way of doing our work.

This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory and his theory of mediation. Tools can shape human behavior, but they can't be the sole cause of results. AI-assisted writing is a process where the student and the AI's suggestions interact to produce the final text. Students remain responsible for adding to, editing, and customising the AI-generated work. Student 6 stated this evolving knowledge:

I used to believe that a good writer ought to be someone who creates each sentence in isolation. However, with the help of AI, my knowledge has evolved. I now believe that writing is a process of decision making, choosing idea, and argument enhancement. If AI generates sentences for me, it's remains my responsibility to determine what to include in my academic project.

This response shows a shift from a sentence production approach to a view of writing as intellectual decision making. AI doesn't diminish authorship; it reframes authorship around managing, reviewing, and editing text.

from the perspective of Norton's (2013) Identity and Investment Theory, these experiences reflects students' negotiation of their identities as legitimate English academic writers. Students invest in AI because it grants them access to valuable academic English practices, while they simultaneously strive to become independent writers who can contribute to the high-quality scholarly discourse. In the same way, Bourdieu (1991) Linguistic Capital Theory

can be applied to AI adoption, while AI offers access to high-value academic language forms, it also raise critical questions regarding authentic self-expression.

From Writing Tool to Creative Partner: Redefining Creativity

The third theme is the evolving understanding of creativity in the context of writing with AI support. Most participants did not agree that AI eliminates creativity, with some contending that it actually enhances it. On the contrary, they viewed AI as a tool that enhanced their capacity to generate concepts, structure arguments and think creatively about their academic work. They stressed, however, that creativity still relied on a human assessment, interpretation and critical engagement. Student 7 explained:

I do not use AI only to correct grammar. Sometimes I use it when I am unable to develop an argument. It provides different perspectives and makes me reconsider my topic from a new angle. Though the final call is always mine, AI sometimes helps me find ideas that I wouldn't have discovered otherwise.

The statement emphasizes the difference between possibilities and knowledge. AI can offer alternatives but the responsibility for evaluating and contextualising the alternatives lies with the students. Creativity, therefore, comes not only from the act of creation, but also from interaction. Student 8 further explained:

Initially, I was worried that AI would diminish my creativity since a machine was drafting my work. Over time, however, I noticed that how I approached using AI shaped my creativity. Simply, copying its answer took my creativity. In contrast, when I challenge, adjust, and enhance its response, AI becomes a powerful creative assistant.

This reflection indicates a deeper understanding of creativity on the part of the participants. They no longer viewed creativity as being totally self-sufficient, but as being able to use the resources they had and engage with them in a critical way. Human agency, rather than a lack of technological help, was key to creativity.

Through Ivanič's (1998) Writer Identity Theory, this theme demonstrates that creativity is intrinsically connected to students' perceptions of themselves as writers. The identity of the writer is also evolving with the integration of AI creativity, as students transition from merely constructing sentences to actively assessing and making strategic decisions about them. Likewise, Norton's (2013) Theory of Identity and Investment suggests that students invest their time and effort into AI because of its capacity to support their participation in academic practices. Though, suitable creativity requires a parallel investment in developing a personal intellectual voice. Finally, viewed through the lens of Bourdieu (1991), AI democratises access to highly valued academic linguistic forms; but a critical awareness remains essential to prevent the uncritical reproduction of dominant linguistic patterns.

Polished English vs. Personal Voice: Negotiating Linguistic Identity

The fourth theme underscores the conflict between linguistic development and maintenance of personal voice. Participants felt that AI can enhance their grammar skills, expand their vocabulary, and refine their academic style, but noted that a heavy reliance on

AI-generated text can lead to a loss of connection with their own language. Student 10 explained:

One problem with AI is that it always produces very polished English. As a Nepali student, my English may not always be perfect, but it represents my learning journey. Sometimes, I feel like my writing changed after being edited by AI, and it feels like the writing isn't my own anymore but like a native academic paper.

In this reflection, it is demonstrated that Language is not simply a matter of "rightness." Instead, for multilingual writers, language is a reflection of an individual's experience, education and growth as an English language. Thus, the improvement of AI poses a conundrum: the more accurate the language becomes, the more an individual's unique identity might be lost.

From Bourdieu's (1991) point of view, academic English is seen as linguistic capital because some certain types of language are more highly institutionalized. While AI makes These highly valuable, institutionalized linguistic forms easily accessible, students still worry about losing their personal style. Student 11 stated:

I'm more confident in my ability to use AI, as mistakes in grammar don't embarrass me anymore. However, I also fear that relying on AI too much can hinder my ability to learn academic English. I do not want to use AI to replace my ability to write.

This response illustrates that students want a balance when using AI. They need help but are not receptive to language substitution. This creates a process of negotiation between participation in the English academic world and maintaining an independent writer identity, as described by Norton's (2013) Identity and Investment Theory. In sum, AI-powered writing is a source of both empowerment and uncertainty. While it enable linguistic confidence, it also raise question about dependence and identity.

Maintaining Human Agency: Responsible Collaboration with AI

The last theme focuses on the students' ability to work independently with the support of AI. While participants acknowledged the value of AI in enhancing language skills, structuring concepts, and facilitating the writing process, they also understood the need for human judgment and accountability. Student 13 explained:

I view AI as a tool to assist with my studies rather than replace them. Relying completely on AI may result in better-looking paper without actually improving my knowledge. Academic writing is meant for learning, and students should remain active participants.

Students' answer shows that they perceived academic writing as a process of intellectual development, not a mere creation of a final product. Whilst AI can enhance organisation and expression, meaningful learning is dependent on active engagement. This finding aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which states that tools support human activities without supplanting human thinking. Therefore, AI can serve as a tool for thinking, but it

cannot replace human thought itself. Student 14 highlighted the importance of critical judgement:

The most challenging part is determining where to draw the line with AI. Sometimes it's helpful, and sometimes it alters my original idea. Students must evaluate whether the output of AI is suitable for their purpose, which requires critical thinking skills to make that decision.

This statement indicates that students recognise AI limitations, noting that rhetorical judgment, interpretive skills, and the knowledge of the discipline are not factors when using AI solely based on the technical aspects of creating the work. Student 15 continued to describe this relationship:

It's been a game-changer for my writing. In the past, writing was a solitary endeavour, and I found myself struggling with every sentence. Now, I have a digital "partner" that suggests ideas. However, I still believe that human judgment, experience and responsibility are essential to ensure the AI understands my academic goals.

The phrase 'digital partner' is a sign of changing academic writing. Writing is now viewed as a process in which human intention is coupled with technological support. Students do not lose sight of the distinction that AI can help create their writing, but can't replace their own experience, purpose and responsibility.

Overall, it is apparent that students can develop their writing capabilities by using AI to assist them in the writing process rather than replace them. AI is intelligent and helpful in improving efficiency and language expression, but humans play a crucial role. The future of academic writing in the era of AI will emphasize developing the capacity of students to interact critically with AI tools while maintaining their intellectual ownership and authorship.

While Western-centric studies often frame student AI adoption through the binary lens of academic integrity infractions or uncritical technological dependency (e.g., Perkins & Roe, 2024), our South Asian empirical data reveals a more nuanced, hybrid reality. As articulated by Student 1 and Student 2, participants actively resist total technological displacement by asserting what Vygotsky defines as mediated agency—treating AI not as an autonomous author, but as a scaffolder cognitive partner. This challenges deterministic assumptions in existing literature, proving that multilingual postgraduate students possess a sophisticated metacognitive awareness capable of balancing linguistic enhancement with intellectual accountability.

CONCLUSION

Generative AI has ushered in a new era of writing in the academic realm, transforming how students produce, analyze, and understand written content. This research investigates the process of authorial negotiation in the age of Artificial Intelligence with the field of academic writing among post-graduate students at Tribhuvan University. The findings suggest that students do not considering AI a substitute for human writers. Instead, they view it as linguistic scaffolding, a creative companion, and a mediational tool that helps them develop ideas, refine their language, and express their academic work. However, the embrace of AI also introduces critical tensions regarding ownership, personal voice,

originality and reliance. Students' experiences show that authorship in the age of AI is becoming a negotiated process, where human ideas, technological support and critical judgment are deeply intertwined. The study contributes to the growing debate on AI mediated literacy by demonstrating that the key question is not whether machines can write, but how human writers can maintain agency, identity, and responsibility when writing alongside machines.

This research also adds a multilingual voice from Nepal to the growing body of research on generative AI and academic writing. In areas where English is a key academic and professional tool, AI offers significant benefits to students, enabling them to engage more confidently in academic discussions without language hindrances. However, the results suggest that critical AI literacy needs to be developed. This literacy will allow students to effectively use technological tools to learn and create with AI, as well as to judge, adapt, and responsibly engage in language production, all while maintaining their individual intellectual and linguistic identities. The study recommends that higher education institutions shift from narrow perspectives of AI to foster responsible writing practices that empower students as independent academic writers. Future research could expand on this study by exploring AI-assisted writing across various disciplines, institutions, and multilingual contexts, thereby deepening the understanding of the evolving nature of academic language practices and writer identities as AI continues to influence academic writing.

Acknowledgements: This work is based on the original data collected by the authors.

Authors Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the theoretical development, analysis, interpretation and writing of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interests: The authors declare that no competing interests exist.

Funding Information: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors

Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Research Ethics Statement: Ethical approval for data collection was obtained from Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj. Additionally, written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study.

Generative AI statement: The author(s) declared that generative AI was not used in the creation of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, K. (2026). Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Creative Authorship. *International Journal of Arts and Liberal Studies (IJALS)*, 2(2), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.63090/ijals/3108.1673.0012>
- Amirjalili, F., Neysani, M., & Nikbakht, A. (2024, March). Exploring the Boundaries of Authorship: A Comparative Analysis of AI-Generated Text and Human Academic Writing in English Literature. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 9, p. 1347421). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1347421>
- Barrot, J. S. (2023). Using ChatGPT for Second Language Writing: Pitfalls and Potentials. *Assessing Writing*, 57, 100745. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100745>

- Bourdieu, P., Thompson, J. B., & Raymond, G. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power* (Vol. 138). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. https://www.miguelangelmartinez.net/img/pdf/1991_bourdieu_language_ch1.pdf
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Chan, C. K. Y., & Hu, W. (2023). Students' Voices on Generative AI: Perceptions, Benefits, and Challenges in Higher Education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 20(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00411-8>
- Chiu, T. K. F. (2024). The Impact of Generative AI (GenAI) on Practices, Policies and Research Direction in Education: A Case of ChatGPT and Midjourney. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 32(10), 6187–6203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2023.2253861>
- Farrokhnia, M., Banihashem, S. K., Noroozi, O., & Wals, A. (2024). A SWOT Analysis of ChatGPT: Implications for Educational Practice and Research. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61(3), 460–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2195846>
- Giri, R. A. (2015). The Many Faces of English in Nepal. *Asian Englishes*, 17(2), 94–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2015.1003452>
- Guzmán, A. L., & Lewis, S. C. (2020). Artificial Intelligence and Communication: A Human–Machine Communication Research Agenda. *New Media & Society*, 22(1), 70–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819858691>
- Ivanič, R. (1998). *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Kohnke, L., Moorhouse, B. L., & Zou, D. (2023). ChatGPT for Language Teaching and Learning. *RELC Journal*, 54(2), 537–550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882231162868>
- Lin, Z. (2025). Techniques for Supercharging Academic Writing with Generative AI. *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, 9(4), 426–431. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41551-024-01185-8>
- Lo, C. K. (2023). What is the Impact of ChatGPT on Education? A Rapid Review of the Literature. *Education Sciences*, 13(4), 410. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13040410>
- Moorhouse, B. L., & Wong, K. M. (2025). *Generative Artificial Intelligence and Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009618823>
- Ng, D. T. K., Leung, J. K. L., Chu, S. K. W., & Qiao, M. S. (2021). Conceptualizing AI Literacy: An Exploratory Review. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 2, 100041. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100041>
- Nguyen, A., Hong, Y., Dang, B., & Huang, X. (2024). Human–AI Collaboration Patterns in AI-Assisted Academic Writing. *Studies in Higher Education*, 49(5), 847–864. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2323593>
- Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and Language Learning: Extending the Conversation* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090563>
- Perkins, M., & Roe, J. (2024). Decoding Academic Integrity Policies: A Corpus Linguistics Investigation of AI and Other Technological Threats. *Higher Education Policy*, 37(3), 633–653. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-023-00323-2>

- Sherma, A. B. (2024). ChatGPT's Impact on Students' Writing: Lessons Learned from Nepali Undergraduate Students. *Journal of NELTA*, 29(1), 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v29i1.72636>
- Su, J., & Yang, W. (2023). Unlocking the Power of ChatGPT: A Framework for Applying Generative AI in Education. *ECNU Review of Education*, 6(3), 355–366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311231168423>
- Tlili, A., Shehata, B., Adarkwah, M. A., Bozkurt, A., Hickey, D. T., Huang, R., & Agyemang, B. (2023). What if the Devil is my Guardian Angel: ChatGPT as a Case Study of Using ChatBots in Education. *Smart Learning Environments*, 10(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00237-x>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>
- Watson, S., Brezovec, E., & Romic, J. (2025). The Role of Generative AI in Academic and Scientific Authorship: An Autopoietic Perspective. *AI & Society*, 40, 3225–3235. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02174-w>