

“MY OWN WRITING STYLE”

GAI AND STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT OF VOICE AND WRITING IDENTITY



KEY FOCUS

How does GenAI shape students' development of authorial voice and writing identity in academic contexts - and what potential implications does this have for our understanding of academic literacy?



THE CONCEPT OF VOICE IN A DIALOGICAL TRADITION

- The seed of meaning-making and learning lies in the tension(s) arising between different voices in a dialogue - A voice is not a physical voice but is seen as an expression of different discourses, knowledge forms and/or linguistic/emotional expressions (Bakhtin, 1981)
- Student writers need to interact with different voices in their writing process in order to be able to take authority of their own voice (the concept of multivoicedness, Dysthe, 2012).



THE MULTIPLE SELVES OF THE WRITER

“In the context of writing, a person is understood as comprised of at least three versions of a self: the individual's sense of self before writing, the self constructed in the process of writing and the readers’ perceptions of the writer (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). These three selves can be viewed as discursive spaces that offer different resources for identity construction. Identity as a writer is formed through negotiations within and between these discursive spaces, as well as through dialogue with others and the wider sociocultural context”

(Jensen & Nordentoft, 2022)



GENAI OFFERS NEW DISCURSIVE SPACES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT VOICES

- Chatbot interactions form a new discursive space for constructing the self in the process of writing (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010)
- Institutional requirements for students to describe their use of chatbots (“GenAI declarations”) in a piece of work form a new discursive space for readers' perceptions of the writer (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010)



STUDY: STUDENT VOICE AND GENAI

Context:

- Graduate course in counseling in the fall of 2024 at Aarhus University, Denmark
- Written final exam in the form of an essay
- Students using GenAI are required to submit a "Declaration for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Project" with their final paper

Data & Method:

- Transcriptions of 8 student groups' recorded audio reflections, 24 student GenAI declarations submitted with their final papers, and two focus groups
- Data analysis informed by an inductive thematic and analytical approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012), inspired by a sociocultural perspective drawing on Bakhtin's dialogical understanding of meaning-making and learning (1981)



SCAFFOLDED REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE WITH CHATBOTS IN PEER FEEDBACK GROUPS

- Students gave each other peer feedback on a 1 – 2 page draft for their paper in study groups
- One study group member was selected to engage in a dialogue with a chatbot based on their draft for the paper
- The other group members observed the chatbot interaction and provided suggestions along the way
- In addition to the student's own text, a document about requirements and tips for the written assignment was also uploaded to the chatbot



THEMES IN RECORDED GROUP REFLECTIONS AFTER ACTIVITY

- Attention to "own words" and "own voice" but also a lack of language to discuss writing process in a nuanced way
- Preoccupied with rules and fear of cheating/plagiarism accusations
- Group work with chatbots "slows the pace" and allows more time for critical reflection – but it can also be difficult to have several people sitting with one computer
- Inspiring to observe how others interact with chatbots and respond to output



MY OWN WORDS – IN MY OWN VOICE

” But I always write my **own** exam papers myself. Also with my **own words**”

”With my **own text**, I've tried to make it more flowing, with ChatGPT, so it still becomes **my voice**”

”“I definitely spend an insane amount of time making it **my own**”

”And then I thought, okay, there's something to that, but the **language isn't me**”

”Then I can rewrite it to make it **my own**, or phrase it the way I would do it **myself**”



MY OWN WORDS – IN MY OWN VOICE

A student explains that he has "set it to remember him and his stuff":

"And then I write to it that this needs to be more academically slick... the sentences shouldn't be too long. Remember it's me who is writing. You know me. And then it actually comes out with **my language**, because we've had so many conversations."

(Distributed identity and voice?)



A LACK OF LANGUAGE: WHEN TWO 'BLACK BOXES' MEET

“**Black box** view of writing; reading comes in and writing comes out.”

(Russell, 2002)

“[AI] provides a judgement about an optimal course of action and this judgement cannot be traced. Therefore, by definition, AI must always act as a ‘**black box**’. Rather than seeking to explain ‘black boxes’, we argue that a pedagogy for an AI-mediated world involves learning to work with opaque, partial and ambiguous situations, which reflect the entangled relationships between people and technologies. Such a pedagogy asks learners locate AI as socially bounded, where AI is always understood within the contexts of its use.”

(Bearman & Ajjawi, 2023)



THE GENAI DECLARATION AT AARHUS UNIVERSITY

—

“I/we used GAI tools in the following way *(See accompanying list of possible uses for inspiration)*”

EXAMPLES OF LEGITIMATE USE CASES FOR GAI
For inspiration in formulating a thesis statement
For inspiration in relation to choice of theory and method
For feedback on own text
For alternative ways of formulating text
To get started on my/our writing
To understand a topic better
To aid me in my reading process
I/we write about the topic of GAI in the project
To find gaps in our knowledge
To get started on my/our search for information
For programming tasks
For data analysis
To create diagrams
Other use case(s) (specify):



A STUDENT QUOTE FROM A GENAI DECLARATION

“I have used GAI to get feedback on the academic content of my texts and have also asked it to suggest alternative phrasings and synonyms. Based on the feedback, I have rephrased **my own text**. Additionally, I have used it to generate examples of how individual paragraphs could begin, and from that, I have formulated **my own** paragraphs”.



GENAI DECLARATIONS: SELF-MONITORING AND SELF-DOUBT

“There’s a sense of uncertainty... which can make you doubt yourself. The uncertainty about where the line is—plus the rumors that circulate—creates confusion about what’s considered cheating. Even when you read the official guidelines, they can be vague or misleading because they are not very detailed. So you end up in a kind of internal conflict—at least I do”



NEW DISCURSIVE SPACES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT VOICES – BUT:

- **Institutional level:** Inherent tensions between "documenting" and "reflecting" on GenAI use result in self-monitoring and self-doubt in student writers (parallels to research on anti-plagiarism software and student writing)
- **Pedagogical level:** Lack of scaffolded opportunities for joint student dialogue, where students can negotiate and reflect on their interactions with chatbots and their emotional responses to these (Nordentoft & Jensen, 2025)
- **Conceptual level:** GenAI tools challenge existing frameworks for teaching academic writing and literacy, as they are fundamentally "unknowable" and do not allow for transparency in the traditional sense



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