

VOICES WITHIN THE MACHINE: NEGOTIATING THE MEANING OF ORIGINALITY AND SHIFTS IN STUDENTS HABITUS OF INTEGRITY IN THE POST-GENERATIVE AI ERA

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Proceedings of the Kalijaga International Conference on Education 2026

Abstract. This study aims to provide sociological insights into the shifting meanings of 'academic integrity' and 'authorship' in the era following the mass adoption of Generative AI (GenAI). This phenomenon is examined through Karl Mannheim's theoretical framework of the Sociology of Knowledge, which observes how reality and norms are constructed, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Habitus, in order to understand students' new dispositions in the process of knowledge production. A qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was employed in this study, focusing on students' subjective experiences whilst navigating GenAI platforms such as ChatGPT and Gemini. Data collection techniques included semi-structured in-depth interviews, literature review (covering relevant journals), and participatory digital observation with students. This study highlights three main findings. Firstly, there has been a shift from 'originality of ideas' to 'originality of prompts', which blurs the conventional boundaries of authorship. Secondly, students are developing a new habitus termed 'managed integrity'-a practice of performative compliance in the academic 'front space', whilst extensive human-AI collaboration takes place in the 'back space'. Thirdly, this disruption has created anxiety amongst students regarding the dilution of their authentic 'voice' in the writing process. These findings emphasise that GenAI is not merely a tool, but rather an arena and an agent that renegotiates the norms of writing and assessment in higher education.

Keywords: *Generative AI, Academic Integrity, Originality, Sociology of Knowledge, Habitus*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI) with large language models (LLMs) such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini has introduced new approaches to academic work in higher education [4], [7], [17]. Students' ability to master AI not only changes the way they search for information, but also has a profound impact on the processes of knowledge production and academic writing. On the one hand, GenAI offers practicality and increased productivity compared to traditional methods; on the other hand, this phenomenon raises ethical and sociological challenges regarding the boundaries of originality, authorship and academic integrity [15].

The most significant complication arising from this phenomenon is the blurring of the boundaries of authorship and originality, now that GenAI has come to dominate the way students produce knowledge today [14]. When students complete assignments-ranging from CVs to essays-with the aid of prompts, the concept of 'originality of ideas' becomes difficult to uphold in its purest form. Indeed, on some social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, it is common to find influencer accounts offering prompt templates for Chapters 1-5 of a dissertation. This shift raises a related pedagogical concern: routine cognitive offloading to AI may weaken sustained critical engagement unless learners retain agency, fact-checking practices, and reflective self-regulation [9], [10].

From a sociological perspective, this issue warrants urgent research as it involves the reconstruction of academic norms that have long been regarded as established. This problem cannot be viewed solely through a technical lens or through moralistic judgement alone. A sociological lens is required to examine how academic realities and norms are being reconstructed by students in response to the technological disruptions of the present day. In this regard, this study employs two main perspectives from classical and contemporary sociology. Firstly, Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge is used to examine how social

reality and academic norms concerning originality and integrity are constructed intersubjectively by students in the context of GenAI application (the existential connectedness of knowledge). Secondly, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Habitus will be applied to understand how students develop 'new dispositions' or patterns of behaviour in response to the presence of GenAI amidst their university activities in the production of knowledge. Habitus, in this context, extends beyond conscious actions to encompass strategies for shaping new models within the practice of academic integrity in authorship. This interpretation situates habitus within Bourdieu's broader account of distinction, practice, and socially structured dispositions [1]-[3].

Although research into AI in education is becoming increasingly prevalent, there remains a significant literature gap regarding students' subjective experiences and the negotiation of meaning that takes place 'behind the scenes' of the academic process [8], [14]. Recent work has begun to address student agency and authorial voice in AI-assisted writing, yet the subjective negotiation of academic voice remains an emerging line of inquiry [16]. Therefore, this study aims to provide comprehensive sociological insights into the shifting meanings of authorship and academic integrity in the era following the mass adoption of GenAI. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the field of the Sociology of Knowledge and a practical contribution to the development of future academic policy.

METHODS

This study employs the transcendental phenomenological design developed by Clark Moustakas [12], which utilises a qualitative approach. As the primary aim of this research is to uncover the 'essence' of experience, the phenomenological approach is deemed appropriate for analysing students' lived experiences when interacting with generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI). Through this approach, the researcher can explore in greater depth how students respond to issues relating to technology, particularly the negotiation of the meanings of originality and integrity that lie behind the technology. By considering the dimensions of noema (what is experienced) and noesis (how it is experienced), phenomenology can help us understand the shifts in habitus and new dispositions experienced by students, which certainly cannot be understood solely through statistical approaches or superficial behavioural analysis [5], [12].

This research was conducted within the higher education sector in Indonesia, specifically in the city of Medan, during the 2025/2026 academic year, in the transitional period following the widespread adoption of GenAI. The researcher states that, in this context, the study should have included between 10 and 15 students. The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique. The criteria used in selecting the subjects were as follows: (1) active students who enjoy and use GenAI platforms, such as ChatGPT, Gemini and similar tools, to complete their academic assignments; (2) students committed to academic writing, such as research papers or dissertations, and (3) students who demonstrate a high level of awareness or critical thinking regarding issues within the field of academic integrity. In phenomenological research, a sample size of 10 to 15 students is generally considered sufficient for the researcher to achieve data saturation.

Data collection was carried out in depth. The methods used were semi-structured interviews, participatory digital observation, and a documentary study. The interview technique aimed to capture the subjective narratives of students using AI regarding the 'prompt originality' process. Observations were made of student interactions with GenAI to provide feedback on managed integrity practices. Integrity management was also implemented and observed with GenAI. Documentary data collection was also carried out to facilitate data analysis. The documentary data provided consisted of drafts of students' writing edited with the aid of AI. The data obtained was then integrated through triangulation of sources and methods. The aim was to enrich the data and ensure the reliability of the analysis [6].

Moustakas [12] divides this data analysis process into six steps: (1) Epoche or bracketing, in which the researcher sets aside initial preconceptions; (2) Horizontalisation, identifying statements from the transcripts; (3) Clustering, grouping statements that already form units of meaning; (4) conducting a textural description to understand what the informants experienced; (5) a structural description to understand the context of the informants' experiences; and (6) synthesising the essence to understand and explain the deepest meaning of the phenomenon. At this stage, we also included a member checking step to ensure valid results. During member checking, we confirmed the data we had interpreted with the informants to obtain results that more accurately reflected their experiences. Each of the steps outlined above was designed to demonstrate validity.

As this research focuses on an examination of the academic 'backstage', where students practise 'managed integrity', ethical considerations are of paramount importance, particularly because generative AI complicates conventional expectations of authorship and academic integrity [13]. Consequently, this study

adheres to a commitment to informants' autonomy and informed consent. The researcher explained to each informant that this study aims to map practices and the negotiation of meaning, rather than to make moral judgements regarding the use of GenAI. The researcher ensured complete anonymity for the students and guaranteed there were no loopholes that could alter the meaning or edit the data, by employing a system of pseudonymisation and data encryption for the results of the interviews and digital observations.

In addition to safeguarding privacy, this research prioritises the principle of reflexivity through the procedure of *epoche* to suspend the researcher's preconceptions regarding the phenomenon of AI disruption. This step was taken to ensure that the resulting interpretations truly represent the 'authentic voices' of students—which are often hidden behind machines—without [intervention of the researcher's bias. Through an egalitarian and transparent approach, the data collection process was designed to create a safe space for students to recount their subjective experiences. Consequently, the integrity of the research is maintained, ensuring that the findings regarding this shift in *habitus* can serve as a credible scientific reference for the development of future academic policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stage 1: Epoche (Suspension of Judgement/Bracketing)

The researcher engaged in internal reflection to identify and 'bracket' all forms of preconceptions, theoretical assumptions and personal biases from the interview findings before engaging with the data. The interview findings are presented in Table I below:

Table 1. Stage 1: Interview Results

Participant	Interview Findings
Informant 1	<p>"We have to make absolutely sure; sometimes these student friends just want a quick fix, even though what GPT provides isn't always valid"</p> <p>"Nowadays, most people rely on AI; I use it too, but I check and refine the text to ensure it remains neat and accurate."</p> <p>"Actually, AI is helpful because searching for lots of journals takes quite a bit of time, doesn't it? So if you can just use AI prompts, that's actually quite handy."</p>
Informant 2	<p>"As for me, I create my own prompts... because when it comes to doing this assignment, we're the ones who know best."</p> <p>"...because I actually understand it, but I just need more time to formulate the sentences, so I use AI only to polish the sentences and I use it in specific situations—only when it's absolutely necessary."</p> <p>"Actually, I'm capable of doing the work on my own, but even after I've paraphrased it, I read it again, and if I still don't understand it, I'll look up the meaning again."</p>
Informant 3	<p>"...we use AI as a gateway; it's still us who go through it."</p> <p>"Some lecturers suggest using AI, but others forbid it."</p> <p>"AI can help us find information (for our dissertations), and we can't turn a blind eye to the fact that in this day and age we need AI."</p>
Informant 4	<p>"...I often use AI to help with assignments and studying"</p> <p>"Sometimes I write the prompt myself (when drafting proposals), and sometimes I just copy and paste it (when writing papers)."</p> <p>"When I use AI, I do filter the output again, because the difference between AI language and human language is quite noticeable."</p> <p>"To be honest, I'm not yet confident in my own work, so I need further validation from the AI."</p>
Informant 5	<p>"...well, that's filtered again; I don't just take it straight from the AI."</p> <p>"If I write the prompt myself, it's because influencers sometimes charge for it, so it's better to write the prompt myself."</p> <p>"AI helps us and encourages us to think critically too; we shouldn't just accept its answers at face value. If AI gives an answer, we should look it up on Google as well, so we don't rely too heavily on AI"</p>
Informant 6	<p>"Personally, I'm 50-50 on it, but I find it easier to look things up myself rather than using AI"</p>
Informant 7	<p>"For me, it's 50-50 – on the one hand it helps, but on the other hand it means we're becoming... a bit too reliant on AI. So we get lazy about thinking for ourselves, especially as AI is increasingly being misused these days. So it really depends on the context and how we use it. These days, people are always just like, 'Just ask AI, just ask GPT'."</p>
Informant 8	<p>"Usually I paraphrase it again, but it depends. If I'm in a rush, I just go straight to it"</p>
Informant 9	<p>"Yeah, that's usually how it goes – even though I already know the answer, I still need the AI's validation."</p> <p>"Yeah, I create the prompt myself."</p>
Informant 10	<p>"I do use prompts like that, and personally, I type them out according to my own ideas."</p> <p>"I think I'll continue to use this AI going forward; after all, we're in the digital age now. Plus, AI makes things easier for students."</p> <p>"I only use this AI for reference; for example, even after I've finished, I usually paraphrase it."</p>
Informant 11	<p>"I used AI in the first semester because I was taken aback by the sheer number of questions about phenomena, and I'm not really keen on reading books, so I preferred AI as it was quicker."</p> <p>"I tend to use my own prompts more often because they're better suited to what I want; other people's prompts aren't always quite right."</p> <p>"Actually, AI can be used and utilised by students... But for a deeper understanding, we just have to make the effort ourselves, really."</p>
Informant 12	<p>"I usually create my own prompts to suit my needs."</p> <p>"As for the future, for my dissertation, I'll definitely need it, but certainly not to copy and paste it, but to use as a reference."</p> <p>"It can serve as a basis, but I'll develop it myself."</p>
Informant 13	<p>"I don't use prompts with GPT – I just get straight to it; with Gemini, I might use a prompt."</p>

Informant 14	"I make my own prompts and never use ones from social media or anything like that." "In fact, it can make us more keen to learn, because that's where we can learn from the AI itself" "Usually, you have to tweak the answers a bit, because not all of them are 100 per cent correct"
Informant 15	"We never use prompts from social media; we stick to our own creations." "We force the AI to be less intelligent than us; once it displays what we want, we still force it to keep thinking. For example, once the result from our first prompt comes out, we tell it to make it better and more accurate, something like that." "Personally speaking, if I want to explore a concept or perspective, I tend to use ChatGPT, but if it's more about creating images or designs, I usually use Gemini, simply because it's better."
Informant 16	"Personally, I tend to use Gemini more often, simply because I prefer the interface." "I've done it before – I'd type the prompt first and then paste it into Gemini; I usually do that when writing papers."
Informant 17	"Yes, we ask GPT very often, mate." "As for AI itself, lecturers usually allow it, but it's just as a guide, really"
Informant 18	"We often use GPT, mate; we even ask it about things that aren't part of the curriculum, mate."
Informant 19	"99 per cent of the time, we ask GPT, mate."
Informant 20	"So far, I've been making the prompts myself, actually." "I've heard on Instagram that people say to use Gemini if you want to make a poster; apparently, you just have to ask it, so it's easy." "Yeah, I've definitely relied on AI before; even though I knew the answer, I needed validation, so it's easier to just ask the AI"
Informant 21	"Whether it becomes more critical or more superficial really depends on you, mate. If we seek to deepen our understanding, then it becomes critical. But if we just copy and paste, it becomes superficial, doesn't it?"
Informant 22	"So whether it's critical or dull really comes down to each individual, mate."
Informant 23	"Actually, GPT breeds laziness and dependency. We should be able to do better than GPT, shouldn't we? After all, GPT is based on the collective thinking of many people. So if we don't use our own reasoning, we won't gain any new knowledge." "When it comes to writing prompts myself, if I need something detailed, I'll go into detail, so the prompt ends up being quite long." "If the lecturer has a rule against using AI or GPT, then you have to paraphrase it yourself."
Informant 24	"Yes, I often feel unsure about my own answers, so I end up going back to GPT and AI again." "As for prompts, I usually just go for the simple ones – the quick, short ones." "In my opinion, if we use AI continuously, I'm afraid it might actually worsen our knowledge, especially for future generations."

Stage 2: Horizontalisation (Significant Statements)

At this stage, the researcher treats each statement from the interview transcript as having equal value. The researcher identifies significant statements that express the essence of the phenomenon experienced.

Table 2. Stage 2: Horizontalisation (Significant Statements)

No	Significant Statement	Participant
1.	"Nowadays, most people rely on AI, and I use it too, but I check and refine the text to ensure it remains neat and accurate" "Actually, AI is helpful because searching for lots of journals takes quite a bit of time, doesn't it? So if AI can just be prompted, that's actually quite handy"	Informant 1
2.	"As for me, I make my own (prompt)... because when it comes to doing this assignment, we're the ones who know best." "Actually, I'm capable of doing the assignment on my own, but even after I've paraphrased it, I'll read it again, and if I still don't understand, I'll look up the meaning again."	Informant 2
3.	"...we use AI as a gateway; it's still us who go through it." "AI can help us find information (for our dissertations), and we can't turn a blind eye to the fact that in this day and age we need AI"	Informant 3
4.	"Sometimes I write the prompt myself (when drafting proposals), and sometimes I just copy and paste it (when writing papers)." "When I use AI, I do filter the output again, because the difference between AI language and human language is quite noticeable." "To be honest, I'm not yet confident in my own work, so I need further validation from the AI."	Informant 4
5.	"...well, that's filtered again; I don't just take it straight from the AI." "I create my own prompts, because influencers sometimes want to be paid, so it's better to create my own prompts."	Informant 5
6.	"So it really depends on the context of how we use it (AI)"	Informant 7
7.	"Usually I'll rephrase it, but it depends. If I'm in a rush, I'll just go straight to it"	Informant 8
8.	"Yeah, I make up the prompt myself."	Informant 9
9.	"I do use prompts like that, and personally I type them out according to my own ideas" "I only use this as a reference; for example, even once it's finished, I usually paraphrase it."	Informant 10

10.	<i>"I tend to use my own prompts more often because they're more in line with what I want; other people's prompts aren't always suitable." "Actually, AI can be used and utilised by students... As for delving deeper into it, we'll just have to make our own efforts, I suppose"</i>	Informant 11
11.	<i>"I usually create my own prompts according to my needs" "AI can serve as a starting point, but I'm the one who develops it further"</i>	Informant 12
12.	<i>"I don't use prompts with GPT—I just get straight to it; with Gemini, I might use a prompt."</i>	Informant 13
13	<i>"I make my own prompts and never use ones from social media or anything like that." "I usually tweak the answers, because not all AI responses are 100 per cent correct."</i>	Informant 14
14.	<i>"I never use prompts from social media; I stick to my own creations." "We force the AI to be more 'dumb' than us; once it displays what we want, we still force it to keep thinking. For example, once the result from our first prompt comes out, we tell it to make it better and more accurate, that sort of thing."</i>	Informant 15
15.	<i>"I have done that before; I'd type the prompt first and then paste it into Gemini – I usually do that when writing papers."</i>	Informant 16
16.	<i>"So far, I've been creating the prompts myself."</i>	Informant 20
17.	<i>"When it comes to writing prompts myself, if I need something detailed, I'll go into detail, so the prompt ends up being quite long." "If the lecturer has a rule against using AI or GPT, then you have to paraphrase it yourself."</i>	Informant 23
18.	<i>"Yes, I often feel unsure about my own answers, so I end up going back to GPT and AI again."</i>	Informant 24

Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026

Significant statements were grouped into two main thematic clusters: "Critical vs Blunt" and "Originality of Ideas vs Originality of Prompts".

Table 3. Stage 3: Meaning Clusters and Themes

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Critical or Blunt	Originality of Idea or Originality of Prompt
Critical: "... I use AI too, but I check and refine the text to ensure it remains neat and accurate" (Informant 1)	Originality of Ideas: "As for me, I create my own (prompt)... because when it comes to doing this assignment, we're the ones who know best" (Informant 2)
Critical: "Actually, I'm capable of doing the assignment on my own, but even after I've paraphrased it, I read it through again, and if there's anything I don't understand, I'll look up the meaning again" (Informant 2)	Originality of Prompts: "Sometimes I write the prompt myself (when drafting proposals), and sometimes I just copy and paste it (when writing papers)" (Informant 4)
Critical: "When I use AI, I do filter the output again, because the difference between AI language and human language is quite noticeable" Indecisiveness: "Actually, I'm not yet confident in myself, so I need further validation from the AI" (Informant 4)	Originality of Ideas: "I write my own prompts, because influencers sometimes charge for their services, so it's better to write my own prompts" (Informant 5)
Critical: "...well, that's filtered again – it's not just taken straight from the AI." (Informant 5)	Originality of Ideas: "Personally, I'd say it's 50-50, but for me it's better to come up with things myself rather than use AI." (Informant 6)
Critical: "AI can serve as a basis, but I'm the one who develops it." (Informant 12)	Originality of Prompt: "Usually I paraphrase it again, but it depends. If I'm in a rush, I just use it as it is." (Informant 8)
Critical: "I usually modify the answers, because not all AI answers are 100 per cent correct" (Informant 14)	Originality of Ideas: "Yes, I create the prompts myself" (Informant 9)
Critical: "We force the AI to be less intelligent than us; once it produces what we want, we still force it to keep thinking. For example, once we get the result from our first prompt, we tell it to make it better and more accurate, and so on" (Informant 15)	Originality of Ideas: "When I use prompts like that, I personally type them out according to my own ideas" (Informant 10)

Blunt: "I've done that before; I'd type the prompt first and then paste it into Gemini. I usually do that when writing papers" (Informant 16)	Originality of the prompt: "If I've ever done it, I'd type the prompt first and then paste it into Gemini; I usually do that when writing papers" (Informant 16)
Critical: "If the lecturer has banned the use of AI or GPT, then you have to paraphrase it yourself again" (Informant 23)	Originality of Ideas: "When I create the prompt myself, if I need something detailed, I'll go into detail so the prompt ends up quite long" Originality of Ideas: "If the lecturer has a rule against using AI or GPT, then you have to paraphrase it yourself again" (Informant 23)
Tumpul: "Yes, I often feel unsure about my own answers, so I end up going back to GPT and then to AI again" (Informant 24)	Originality of the Prompt: "Yes, I often feel unsure about my own answers, so I end up going back to GPT and then to the AI again" (Informant 24)

Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026

Stages 4 & 5: Textural Description and Structural Description

1. Textural Description (What Students Experience)

Students are beginning to experience changes in education in this 'digital native' era, characterised by a shift and transformation in learning methodologies. The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) presents a unique paradox in today's university education, where the need for in-depth theoretical analysis must be met whilst utilising time as efficiently as possible.

Behind the promise of ease and practicality in carrying out various academic tasks, concerns about the dulling of the mind are also growing; this is a clear indication of the phenomenon of 'cognitive deskilling' (the erosion of critical thinking) resulting from the dominance of formal rationality, which is beginning to erode the values of substantive rationality within the academic world.

2. Structural Description (How Context Shapes Experience)

Empirically, in university lecture theatres, this phenomenon occurs because exposure to Gen-AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini for carrying out various academic tasks is often used as the primary reference without any critical analysis by the students themselves. Consequently, it has become a habitus within the university environment, ranging from the completion of assignments, essays, journal articles, and even dissertations, leading to the normalisation of an instant culture (copy-paste) that has become part of students' daily routines without any rigorous cognitive scrutiny.

Although this paradox of convenience is becoming increasingly prevalent, there are still some students who prioritise their own thinking as a means of filtering out AI and do not lose the distinctive human touch in their writing. They do this by positioning themselves above technological tools and engaging in critical scrutiny of data, paraphrasing, testing the validity of literature through cross-checking, and consistently maintaining their intellectual capacity to preserve their own distinctive style of original writing.

Stage 6: Synthesis of the Essence and Integration of Themes

1. The Transition of Originality: From Idea to Prompt (Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge)

• The Existential

Interconnectedness of Knowledge

(Seinsverbundenheit des Wissens): Mannheim [11] asserts that knowledge never arises from the neutrality of a vacuum, but is instead bound to the social structures and technological conditions of its time. In this context, the criteria for 'prompt originality' undergo a fundamental shift:

1) Previously: Originality was measured by the depth of reflection, the synthesis of scholarly literature, and independent analytical ability.

2) Now: Originality has been distorted into the skill of formulating instructions (prompting mastery).

• Epistemic Distortion

When students generate knowledge, it no longer stems from a direct intellectual engagement with a collection of papers, but rather from an algorithmic doxography structure. Students are beginning to move away from testing the truth through purely rational argumentation, and are instead relying on validation from Artificial Intelligence, as emphasised by informant 24 ('I don't feel confident about my own answers, so I end up going back to GPT again').

2. Managed Integrity and the Shift in Habitus (An Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu)

• The Transformation of Habitus (Prompting-Habitus)

Bourdieu [3] defines habitus as a system of internalised dispositions that shape the way individuals think and act within a field. The presence of GenAI is shaping new dispositions among students:

1) Students are beginning to develop a habitus known as 'managed integrity', which is a strategy of compromise between the demands of standard academic integrity norms and the drive for technological efficiency.

• Negotiating the Frontstage and Backstage

1) In the Frontstage: Students display a performative compliance, evident in neatly presented assignments that fulfil academic requirements, whilst concealing the distinctive features of AI through highly subtle paraphrasing techniques.

2) In the Backstage: Students engage in extensive collaboration with GenAI, ranging from creating outlines and searching for the most suitable arguments to crafting the final sentences.

3. The Diminishing "Authentic Voice" and Existential Anxiety

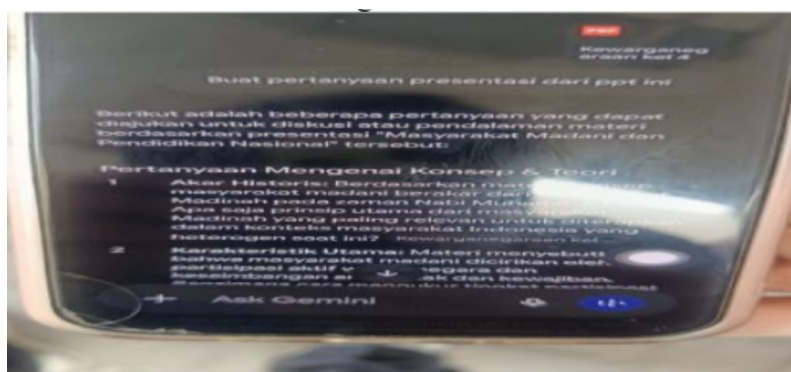
- The most significant manifestation of this phenomenon is the development of cognitive anxiety. Students are aware that reliance on GenAI will gradually erode the distinctive characteristics of their personal writing and their critical thinking skills.

- Text generated by GenAI is presented in a structured, homogeneous, standardised and impersonal form. When students simply hand over tasks to GenAI and rely entirely on the machine's sophistication, the 'authentic voice' of the human subject gradually fades and is swallowed up by the machine's algorithms.

Having successfully unravelled the essence of this phenomenon, the researchers view the phenomenon of 'voices within the machine' as an illustration of how human identity in academia is beginning to fade and be replaced by artificial intelligence. This phenomenon is evident in the use of ChatGPT and Gemini to produce papers, journal articles and final dissertations without any human input. This trend is also reflected in the individual informants' experiences regarding their academic work.

Although, on average, informants stated that GenAI makes people more critical, they eventually began to reflect on the fact that AI actually fosters acute mental laziness. The direct validation of data using AI, without attempting to access the sources of others' thoughts, books or experiences, is one of the factors behind this finding. In this regard, the originality of ideas has been overshadowed by the originality of prompts, blurring the distinction of human writing in various academic contexts. Even when it comes to simply formulating a question, students immediately rely on AI, as shown in the image below and also as a conclusion to the discussion on the phenomenon of 'voice' within the machine.

Figure 1



Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026

Figure 2



Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026

CONCLUSION

The widespread adoption of GenAI in higher education has triggered profound transformation in the originality of students' writing, authorship and academic integrity. Based on a phenomenological investigation, this technological disruption has not merely altered the way students complete assignments, but has also shifted the fundamental meaning of 'originality of ideas' to 'originality of prompts'. The skill of crafting instructions for GenAI systems has now emerged as a new culture, whilst the tradition of analytical thinking through intellectual reflection is increasingly marginalised due to the threat of cognitive deskilling.

This situation has given rise to a new habitus known as 'managed integrity'. In the academic sphere, students strategically navigate the 'backstage' and the 'frontstage'. Behind the scenes, they make extensive use of artificial intelligence to mine references, construct arguments and even produce drafts of their work. However, in the front room, they perform compliance with the moral expectations of the university and their lecturers. This shift creates an epistemic rift and existential anxiety, in which students' 'authentic voices' gradually fade behind the machines as a result of prioritising algorithmic validation.

Through the lens of Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge and Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Habitus, these findings underscore that Generative AI is not a neutral instrument, but rather an agent that transforms academic reality and social norms. Therefore, higher education institutions need to shift from a moralistic control approach towards a more educational reorientation of policy. Learning assessment must be redesigned to focus on the depth of reasoning, critical and reflective thinking, and to preserve the presence of authentic human voices and thought amidst the clamour of Artificial Intelligence.

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