

multimodal literacy and bilingual education, equipping teachers to mediate children's engagement with these texts. Schools, in turn, need to recognise picturebooks as essential resources for literacy and language acquisition. With institutional support, improved access to books and intentional pedagogy, bilingual picturebooks can transform early classrooms into spaces where children think, imagine, question, interpret and grow.

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Tracing Teacher Perceptions of Human-AI Entanglements in Teaching Writing

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Abstract

Situated in a posthuman perspective, this qualitative study probes how tertiary-level teachers perceive the role of AI writing tools in academic writing instruction and the strategies they employ to assist students to ethically and meaningfully engage with AI tools. Following an initial informal discussion, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten tertiary-level educators. The reflexive thematic analysis of the data reveals that teachers largely conceive AI writing tools as conditional pedagogical aids for brainstorming, scaffolding, and efficiency rather than as substitutes for human judgment or authorship. Critical-thinking oriented task design, alternative assessment practices, explicit teaching of ethical AI use, and authenticity and originality of students' voices emerged as the strategies that teachers often use. The study foregrounds teachers' role as ethical mediators who continuously configure and negotiate human-AI relations in academic writing pedagogy, contributing to posthuman debates on education, agency, and responsibility.

Keywords: Writing, posthumanism, artificial intelligence, entanglement, assemblages

Introduction

Discourses around authorship, originality, academic integrity, and the development of critical thinking permeate academia as it witnesses the rapid proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the educational context. When it comes to the teaching of academic writing, it becomes all the more challenging for educators to position AI tools which

surpass, at least in some ways, the pace of human writing, reading, and cognition. In that sense, abilities or skills which were once perceived as solely human attributes, such as ideation, drafting, paraphrasing, summarising, synthesising, and evaluating are no longer human properties but are increasingly mediated by AI tools. The mediation or the entanglement here involves the students, teachers, technology or algorithmic commands in an interaction loop.

We can no longer assert the human centrality in meaning making and cognitive tasks without acknowledging the entanglement and mediation that humans are perennially subjected to. This indicates or rather asserts the posthuman turn in education, which challenges the anthropocentric ideals and assumptions. The posthuman framework underlines the importance of relationality, shared agency, and the role of technology as a co-creator in knowledge production and dissemination. Thus, from the posthuman point of view, writing cannot be conceived as an exclusively human cognitive activity as AI tools operate as pedagogical assemblages that influence how writing is taught, learnt, done, and evaluated. The “paradox of teaching writing while AI generates content in microseconds” (as stated by one of the teachers who participated in this study) needs to be examined by focusing on how teachers negotiate ethical concerns, pedagogical practices and goals, and student learning within the entangled locale of an AI-ridden teaching-learning context.

Teachers’ lived experiences of their entanglement with AI use in teaching academic writing need to be explored as there is a “posthuman pedagogy of control” (Karthika, 2026) that functions in the classroom. Adopting a qualitative, posthuman approach, the study foregrounds teachers not as passive adopters of technology but as ethical mediators who continuously modify and negotiate human-AI relations in education.

Literature Review

Humanist notions of autonomous cognition are problematised as knowledge is created through interactions between human and non-human actors (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013). Learning is perceived as a sociomaterial process where technology actively shapes pedagogical practices (Fenwick, 2015). Thus, technological tools are constitutive components of educational assemblages that impact the enactment of agency, responsibility, and meaning rather than being passive tools (Karthika, 2024). The analytical focus, while using a posthuman

framework, is shifted from concerns about the impact of technology to investigations of how algorithmic and human actors co-produce learning practices (Mariyam & Karthika, 2025). This shift is important as in writing pedagogy, authorship, voice, and evaluation are increasingly negotiated across human-AI relations rather than being located solely within the individual student.

The benefits and difficulties of incorporating AI tools into teaching and learning are documented (Mahapatra, 2024; Aljuaid, 2024; Son et al., 2023), and the steady increase in the use of AI-driven tools in assessment, feedback, and personalised learning is underscored. Ethical problems, bias, and transparency concerns were discussed in literature (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2019) besides the role of AI in reconfiguring pedagogical and decision-making authority (Williamson et al., 2023). Technological innovations warrant the imperative need to consider AI as an actor in educational practices. Ethical use of AI in education necessitates consideration of the division of duties between human and non-human actors, especially with regard to judgment, accountability, and authenticity (Stahl & Eynon, 2021). Therefore, to examine AI writing tools, which actively engage in meaning-making processes typically associated with human cognition and academic expertise, these insights are useful.

Studies have proved that AI writing tools assist learners in brainstorming, language development, and in understanding feedback particularly in the second or foreign language learning contexts (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023). However, most of such literature is still policy-oriented or student-focused, and they consider AI as a variable that affects learning outcomes. It is also important to scrutinise how educators actively mediate the use of AI through ethical instruction, assessment procedures, and pedagogical design. Therefore, tracing teacher perceptions and strategies regarding AI use in writing instruction is important to acknowledge teachers as agents who facilitate human-AI assemblages in the classroom. This study is focused on the following research questions:

1. How do tertiary-level teachers perceive the role of AI writing tools in academic writing instruction?
2. What strategies do teachers employ to prevent students' over-reliance on AI writing tools?

Methodology

Research Design

The integration of AI into academic writing is inherently complex and emergent, premised on ethical judgments, contextual constraints, and individual teaching philosophies. It is not possible to fully capture such processes using quantitative instruments alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this small-scale research adopts a qualitative design which allows for an in-depth exploration of how teachers make sense of AI within their instructional practices and how they position themselves within human-AI pedagogical relations.

Participants

Ten English language teachers (coded in the analysis as P1, P2, and so on) from premier Indian higher education institutions (selected through convenience sampling) participated in this study. Rather than aiming for representativeness or generalisability, this relatively small sample size was deliberately chosen to enable depth of engagement and analytical richness, which are central to qualitative research (Patton, 2015). Participants were chosen using convenience sampling, and it was ensured that they all had at least two years of experience in teaching academic writing at tertiary level. Their exposure to AI tools formed another criterion for shortlisting the participants. Aged between 28 to 40 years, the participants comprised five males and five females, though the implications of their gender were not traced in this study. The willingness to critically evaluate the role of AI was integral in ensuring that the research used discursive, rather than formal responses.

Data Collection Tools

After reading relevant literature, an informal one-on-one discussion was carried out with each of the participants using Google Meet. This discussion provided some insights into the teachers' entanglement with AI in the classroom which were useful in framing the interview questions below:

1. How do you understand the role of AI writing tools in students' academic writing processes?
2. How do you decide what kinds academic writing task AI should and should not do in your classroom?

3. How do you distinguish between AI providing structural support and AI shaping meaning or argument in student writing?
4. What concerns, if any, do you have about students' thinking processes when they rely on AI writing tools?
5. How do you conceptualise academic writing in higher education, especially in the context of AI use?
6. Have you noticed any changes in the depth or quality of student writing since AI tools became more common?
7. How have you approached assignments or assessments in connection with the presence of AI writing tools?
8. What aspects do you keep in mind while evaluating students' writing?
9. In what ways do you think AI use affects authorship when it comes to writing?
10. Do you encourage students to evaluate or negotiate AI-generated suggestions? How?

Semi-structured interview was opted as the tool for data elicitation because such interviews are appropriate for exploratory studies as they provide both consistency across participants and flexibility to pursue unexpected insights (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). In these video-recorded semi-structured interviews (conducted over MS Teams platform) participants articulated their experiences, concerns, and strategies in their own terms as the researcher continuously probed emerging themes. The interview questions focused on teachers' perceptions of AI writing tools, classroom practices, ethical considerations, and strategies to manage over-reliance. Treating the interview interaction as a site of meaning-making represents the study's posthuman stance, recognising knowledge as co-constructed through dialogue rather than extracted as objective data.

Data Analysis Process

Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2021) framework of reflexive thematic analysis was employed for analysing the transcribed interview data. (The transcription was evaluated and approved by another senior researcher who was not involved in this study). Thematic analysis was opted because it helps to identify patterns of meaning across qualitative data while allowing flexibility in theoretical positioning. Unlike content analysis or grounded theory, thematic analysis does not require adherence to rigid procedural rules or theory generation, making it appropriate for

an exploratory study grounded in posthuman sensibilities. The figure given below illustrates the steps in thematic analysis.

Figure: *Steps in Thematic Analysis Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2021)*



The analysis was carried out in six phases. It began with repeated close-reading of interview transcripts to familiarise with the data. Then, the initial codes were generated inductively to trace major traits linked to perceptions of AI, pedagogical strategies, ethical concerns, and notions of agency. Emphasising the researcher’s role in meaning-making, reflexive coding was used instead of deductive one. Thirdly, similar codes were grouped into themes, like pedagogical boundary-setting. Themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and differentiation. Next, themes were labelled. Finally, they were integrated into a structured analytic narrative addressing the research questions. A mapping of the focus of the interview questions, indicative codes, and their thematic orientation is presented below in the table.

Table: *A Mapping of Interview Focus, Indicative Codes, and Thematic Orientation*

<i>Interview Focus</i>	<i>Indicative Codes</i>	<i>Theme (T)</i>
Role of AI in writing	AI as collaborator; conditional use	T1: Pedagogically Bounded Co-Writer
Pedagogical boundaries	Boundary-setting; AI agency limits	
Structure vs meaning	Structural support; epistemic authority	
Thinking and AI reliance	Cognitive offloading; reduced thinking	T2: Ethical-Epistemic Writing
Nature of academic writing	Writing as thinking; epistemic labour	
Depth and understanding	Fluency vs understanding	
Assignment redesign	Task reconfiguration; contextualisation	T3: Pedagogical Reconfiguration
Alternative assessments	Oral/in-class work; visible thinking	

Student voice	Homogenisation; authorial loss	T4: Student Voice and Agency
Critical AI engagement	Reflection; negotiation with AI	

The researcher’s reflexive engagement with the data ensures analytical transparency and this approach matches posthuman qualitative inquiry that emphasises relational meaning-making.

Data Analysis

Theme 1: AI as a Pedagogically Bounded Co-Writer

Teachers constantly conceptualised AI writing tools as co-constituents in the writing process, but they insisted on defining certain boundaries in the AI use. Rather than viewing AI as a neutral tool or an autonomous author, participants conceived it as a conditional collaborator whose role will be configured by them. AI was widely perceived as useful in the early stages of writing, particularly for brainstorming ideas, generating outlines, and offering structural support. However, they were strongly against the idea of AI assuming control over interpretive, analytical, or authorial dimensions of academic writing. P2 explains that AI could be permitted to initiate the writing process but not to determine meaning:

I allow AI for brainstorming or structuring ideas, but the argument has to come from the student. AI cannot decide meaning. (P2)

This differentiation between structural assistance and epistemic authority was repeatedly mentioned. Participants recognised AI’s efficacy in generating comprehensible frameworks. However, they questioned the accuracy of interpretations, if the students fail to provide accurate prompts. One participant noted:

AI gives yout a framework, but it doesn’t understand context the way students need to. That part has to remain human. (P6)

Others conceived AI as a “short-term collaborator” (P9) but emphasised that the output needs to be critically evaluated. For example, AI is considered as a drafting aid:

I see it as a first draft assistant at best, not a writer. The moment students submit AI-generated text as their own, the purpose of writing is lost. (P9)

Writing is thus seen as a co-produced practice evolving through human–AI relations, while concurrently foregrounding the teacher’s role in monitoring how agency is distributed within this assemblage. While teachers allowed AI usage in the writing processes, they actively constrained its epistemic reach to preserve academic integrity, student authorship, and meaning-making thereby placing pedagogy as the site where AI’s agency is negotiated, rather than allowed to operate unchecked.

Theme 2: Writing as an Ethical–Epistemic Practice Rather Than a Technical Skill

Teachers viewed academic writing as an ethical and epistemic practice rather than as a technical skill concerned with grammatical accuracy or surface-level correctness. Their concerns about AI writing tools were therefore not limited to issues of plagiarism or academic misconduct. Instead, teachers focused on the implications of AI use for learning, thinking, and knowledge construction in higher education. Writing was described as a process through which students develop analytical capacity, intellectual responsibility, and ownership of ideas. P4 articulated this concern by focusing on the cognitive engagement with AI:

The issue is not plagiarism alone. The students simply stop thinking. They switch off their thinking faculty as AI obeys all their commands. Very few students are aware that I, as a teacher of English, can identify the AI-generated chunks. Moreover, many of them just think that everyone else uses it, so it is all right to use AI. Their perceptions have changed a lot since 2022, I must say. They are not critical of the AI-generated output. They trust it and find it boring, or maybe taxing, to cross-check with other sources. They see it as a convenient tool, not as a constructive tool. (P4)

P4 further explained that with AI writing tools being freely accessible to the public from 2022, there was a general trend among the students “to question the necessity of academic writing course itself as all required tasks except the spontaneous speaking ones can be performed using AI” (P4). Writing in this perspective is seen as labour, where meaning is actively constructed rather than reproduced. Teachers expressed discontent as AI-generated fluency could create an illusion of competence “while masking shallow understanding” (P2). As P1 observed:

AI produces very polished language, but it lacks depth. Students confuse fluency with understanding. (P1)

This reflects the anxiety about epistemic dilution as critical and analytical thinking diminish as “ready-made writing pieces are submitted by students” (P3). Participants also emphasised the role of writing in forming students’ intellectual identities. Writing was described not merely as a means of assessment, but as a formative practice through which students learn to acquire knowledge of several subskills. P7 noted:

Writing is how students learn to think and take ownership of ideas. If AI replaces that process, something essential is lost. (P7)

There must be ethical responsibility within distributed agency when writing is co-produced by human and AI agents. It means, responsibility and academic integrity cannot be attributed to technological assemblages but the human actor/writer must retain it. While AI participates in the production of academic texts, teachers state that they are forced to guard the purposes of writing as a practice of thinking, interpretation, and accountability. Their concerns reflect a commitment to ensuring that human judgment and intellectual growth remain central within human-AI writing assemblages, rather than being obscured by technically proficient but intellectually dull outputs.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Reconfiguration to Resist Cognitive Offloading

Rather than prohibiting AI writing tools, teachers reported the active reconfiguration of pedagogical tasks and assessment practices to counter cognitive erosion and sustain meaningful student engagement. Cognitive deterioration, in this context, refers to the transfer of thinking, interpretation, and decision-making from students to AI systems. Teachers expressed concern that uncritical reliance on AI could reduce writing to a procedural activity, which weakens students’ analytical and interpretive capabilities. To address this, they sought to redesign learning environments in ways that made over-reliance on AI pedagogically unfeasible.

A major strategy involved was developing assignments that necessitated contextualisation, reflection, and personal engagement, which teachers believed AI could not meaningfully replicate. A participant explained:

I design assignments that require students to link theory to classroom discussions or personal experiences. AI cannot do that meaningfully. (P3)

Participants reported that they monitor and manage the AI use by students through modifying tasks in such a way that students need to depend on shared discussions, lived experiences, or locally situated knowledge. Another widely reported strategy involved diversifying assessment formats to include oral components. One participant noted:

Oral presentations and viva-style questioning make it very clear who understands the contents and who doesn't. (P10)

Such practices helped teachers to assess not only writing conventions but also students' ability to articulate, defend, and explain their ideas, thereby giving more importance to comprehension rather than textual perfection. Teachers described how the incorporation of in-class writing activities to map students' immediate thinking processes become useful in raising their awareness of the problems and possibilities of AI use in academic writing. One participant observed:

Short in-class reflections at the end of a session help me see real thinking, not AI-generated responses. (P1)

These practices illustrate how teachers facilitate conducive classroom conditions to ensure that learners are able to interpret, reason, and articulate with clarity. Over-dependence on AI is thus addressed structurally rather than punitively, "emphasising a pedagogical ethic that resists delegating cognitive labour entirely to AI systems" (P8) while admitting their presence in the classrooms.

Theme 4: Preserving Student Voice and Agency in Human—AI Writing Assemblages

A recurring concern of the teachers was about the attrition of student voice, confidence, and authorial presence in AI-mediated writing. Teachers described AI-generated text as "linguistically fluent and structurally competent, yet affectively and intellectually flattening" (P5). While such writing often adheres to many of the academic conventions, distinctiveness, risk-taking, and interpretive engagement are usually absent. This homogenisation points towards writing becoming an impersonal process driven by algorithmic norms rather than stimulated by individual thought processes.

P8 articulated this loss of authorial presence:

When students rely heavily on AI, their writing starts sounding the same. You lose the sense of who the students is. (P8)

Participants also expressed concern about the affective and epistemic consequences of sustained AI reliance. Several participants noted that students began to concede to AI-generated suggestions rather than trusting their own reasoning. As one teacher observed:

Students start trusting AI more than their own thinking. That shift is worrying. (P5)

This shift is indeed problematic in academic writing. Academic writing sessions are anticipated to be enabling and enhancing ones which increase intellectual confidence and ownership of ideas among students. Reflective writing tasks based on the students' interaction with AI are reported as useful by the participants in activating decision-making abilities within human-AI writing assemblages. One participant explained:

I ask students to explain why they accepted or rejected AI suggestions. That reflection brings agency back to the student. (P7)

Thus, instead of viewing AI as an authentic source, the participants conceived it as a negotiable resource whose outputs required evaluation, justification, and selective use. By demanding students to think about and voice their choices and opinions regarding AI use, teachers encouraged metacognitive awareness and reinforced the idea that writing involves critical judgement and responsibility. Thus, writing becomes a site of identity formation within distributed agency, where human decision-making (mediated by several assemblages) remains central. Teachers thus sought to ensure that AI participates in writing processes without displacing student voice, agency, or authorship.

Findings

The findings are presented below synthesising insights from the reflexive thematic analysis.

How do tertiary-level teachers perceive the role of AI writing tools in academic writing instruction?

The analysis revealed that teachers view AI writing tools conditionally useful as participants in education, and not on their own as authors or tools. AI tools have the potential for being useful in the initial stages of writing, that is, in brainstorming, outlining, and structuring writing. However, they strongly discouraged using AI for interpretation, analysis,

and meaning-construction. They believe that such unrestricted AI use takes away the ethical and epistemic aspects of academic writing, which enable critical thinking, intellectual authoring, and understanding of disciplines by students.

Teachers asserted that AI-generated fluency might result in shallow engagement and lead students to believe that polished language equals comprehension. Because of this, the view of AI was epistemically limited and needed pedagogic regulation. Writing was framed not simply as a technical skill but as integral to learning, identity, and intellectual development. Thus, AI's role is intentionally bounded to ensure that human judgement, contextual reasoning, and authorship remain integral to the teaching of academic writing.

What strategies do teachers employ to prevent students' over-reliance on AI writing tools?

To avoid overdependence, the teachers reported the use of various teaching strategies that reframe the conditions of learning instead of just punitive constraints. These approaches include the development of tasks that require contextualisation, reflection, and involvement, hence restraining AI generated responses. Several assessment approaches were employed by the teachers such as oral presentations, viva voce, as well as in-class writing exercises. Interestingly, teachers openly discussed the benefits of AI use through reflective and ethics-related discussions in class. The explicit awareness raising with tasks that demanded students to analyse AI suggestions critically was one strategy that was common to most of the teachers. Thus, it was found that teachers do not ignore the presence of AI but through modified instructional practices enabled students to think critically about the cognitive, affective, and moral consequences of AI-supported writing practices.

Discussion

This study emphasises the role of teacher as an ethical mediator in human/AI assemblages of writing. Technology and humans operate alongside and then "the cognitive decisions of each affect the others, with interactions occurring across the full range of human cognition" (Hayles, 2017, p. 118). AI tools assist in personalised learning, by being "decision makers" or "cognizers" (Hayles, 2017, p. 117) within "cognitive assemblages" (ibid). While acknowledging the potential

of AI in cognitive tasks, the educators who participated in the study illustrated how the human and non-human assemblages function in writing instruction.

The idea of AI as a pedagogically bounded co-writer correlates with previous studies (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023) underlining the role of AI in scaffolding. It also reveals the epistemic dilution and disengagement that AI could generate. The results of this study emphasise the active role of teachers in mediating the involvement of AI in writing practices. This confirms a view advocated by Stahl and Eynon (2021) that ethical engagement in AI and education relies on the distribution of judgment and responsibility among various agents who are part of the larger teaching-learning assemblage.

Strategies used by teachers to resist the effects of cognitive displacement through task redesign, alternative assessment, and reflection echo the cautionary remarks voiced in literature concerning over-reliance and the risk of bias (Williamson et al., 2023). From a posthumanist stance, these resistances can be synthesised as attempts at rebalancing human relations with AI so as to maintain AI as a negotiable aspect, rather than a source of epistemic authority. The emphasis on maintaining student voice reflects a particular resonance with the sociomaterialist construct of identity, affect, and signification as produced within educational assemblages (Fenwick et al., 2015). The findings, therefore, imply that a productive integration of AI within academic writing cannot be based on prohibition or unconstrained adaptation, but on a pedagogical transformation that maintains ethical accountability, critical thinking, as well as student authorship within human-AI assemblages.

Conclusion

Within a posthuman framework, this study shows that teachers do not position AI either as a threat that must be eliminated or as a tool to be uncritically embraced. They engage, instead, in deliberate pedagogical mediation through which they configure the participation of AI in the practices of writing through boundary-setting, task design, the reconfiguration of assessment, and reflective dialogue. Academic writing here is understood as an ethical-epistemic practice that relies on the centrality of thinking, authorship, and responsibility as agency is distributed across human-AI assemblages. It is interesting to note that the teachers do not dismiss the overreliance on AI as a mere ethical