

RECONCEPTUALIZING L2 ACADEMIC WRITING IN THE ERA OF GENERATIVE AI: THE AIP-MEDIATED ACADEMIC LITERACY MODEL

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes the Artificial Intelligence Partner (AIP)-Mediated Academic Literacy Model to conceptualize how generative AI restructures second language (L2) academic writing. Moving beyond outdated, solitary authorship paradigms, the framework employs Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to position generative AI as an active, digital dialogic partner within a distributed cognitive ecosystem. The model delineates four core dimensions: conceptual and prompting literacy, evaluative and critical literacy, L2 linguistic agency, and ethical literacy. By examining the shifting roles of learners as executive editors and instructors as facilitators, the paper addresses key pedagogical implications, including process-based assessment designs, the risk of L2 skill atrophy, and digital equity. This theoretical framework provides a human-in-the-loop infrastructure to guide balanced, self-regulated digital pedagogy in higher education.

Keyword: *Academic literacy, artificial intelligence, digital pedagogy, EFL writing instruction, human-AI collaboration*

1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of higher education is undergoing a profound paradigm shift precipitated by the exponential proliferation of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) architectures, most notably large language models such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini. Within the domain of second language (L2) acquisition and academic literacy development, these computational innovations have fundamentally disrupted long-standing pedagogical conventions. Historically, L2 learners operating within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) paradigms have encountered systemic, multi-layered impediments to academic writing achievement. These barriers encompass structural and lexical deficiencies, heightened levels of debilitating writing anxiety, and the severe cognitive load necessitated by simultaneously managing low-level linguistic mechanics alongside high-level rhetorical formulation and critical argumentation (Luu & Nguyen, in press; Luu & Bui, in press). To mitigate these challenges, learners have traditionally relied upon static digital applications; however, the contemporary technological shift marks a definitive transition from these basic, prescriptive automated essay scoring and error-correction tools (e.g.,

Grammarly, Wordtune) toward dynamic, agentic generative platforms capable of complex textual synthesis and co-creation (Al Mahmud, 2023; Selim, 2024). This transition from a tool-centric model of editing to an ecosystem of human-AI collaborative composition challenges the historical baseline of individual authorship and demands a foundational re-evaluation of what it means to be literate in academic spaces.

Existing conceptualizations of L2 academic writing and academic literacy are progressively rendered insufficient by the collaborative capabilities of GenAI. Foundational models within applied linguistics, such as the socio-cognitive components outlined by Celce-Murcia or the genre-analytic frameworks popularized by Hyland, operate on an ontological assumption that positions the human writer as the isolated, solitary locus of text generation. These traditional frameworks fail to account for the dialogic and distributed nature of cognitive processing when an author interacts with an active AI prompt partner (Lea & Street, 2006). Consequently, higher education institutions are experiencing an institutional crisis surrounding academic integrity and authorship, as the boundaries between authentic student production, scaffolded text generation, and outright plagiarism become

increasingly opaque (Werdiningsih et al., 2024). While empirical studies have begun documenting university students' overwhelmingly positive perceptions of GenAI regarding productivity gains and immediate lexical feedback, they also highlight a precarious paradox: over-reliance on these tools risks severe cognitive offloading, content hallucination, the erosion of cultural nuance, and the potential atrophy of foundational L2 writing skills (Al-Raimi et al., 2024; Cung et al., 2025; Nhan et al., 2025). There remains an acute theoretical void in the literature. Applied linguistics currently lacks a unified, multi-dimensional conceptual framework that systematically explicates how GenAI mediates, restructures, and redefines the internal architecture of academic literacy for L2 learners. Without such a model, pedagogical interventions remain fragmented, reactionary, and ill-equipped to guide responsible, self-regulated digital pedagogy (Harunasari, 2023; Le et al., 2025).

RQ1: In what specific ways does the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) reconfigure the core linguistic, cognitive, and rhetorical dimensions of L2 academic literacy?

RQ2: What are the constituent structural components and systemic interactions that define the proposed AIP-Mediated Academic Literacy Model?

RQ3: What pedagogical opportunities, assessment challenges, and ethical imperatives emerge when applying the AIP-Mediated Academic Literacy Model to higher education L2 writing instruction?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Traditional L2 academic writing models

To establish a theoretical baseline for the integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in language education, it is necessary to re-examine the historical evolution of second language (L2) writing pedagogies. For decades, the field of applied linguistics has been dominated by two major paradigms: the process approach and the genre approach (Zhou, 2015). The process approach conceptualizes writing not merely as a final product to be evaluated, but as a recursive, highly non-linear cognitive journey encompassing brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Within this framework, writing is viewed as an internal mental struggle where the learner continuously negotiates meaning and structures

thoughts. Conversely, the genre approach shifts the focus from the individual's internal cognitive mechanisms to the external social environment. Drawing heavily on systemic functional linguistics, this paradigm asserts that academic texts are situated social actions embedded within specific discourse communities. Consequently, the genre approach emphasizes explicit instruction of conventionalized rhetorical structures, communicative purposes, and linguistic features that govern particular academic text types (Linn, 2020; Sullivan & Porter, 1993).

These pedagogical frameworks heavily inform the traditional construct of "academic literacy." In the pre-GenAI era, academic literacy has been universally operationalized as an individual, cognitive-linguistic attribute comprising three autonomous dimensions: cognitive skills, genre knowledge, and independent linguistic competence (Bailey, 2010; Lea & Street, 2006). Cognitive skills denote the autonomous ability of an individual author to engage in critical thinking, synthesize complex ideas, and organize arguments logically without external collaborative assistance. Genre knowledge entails an internalized mastery of disciplinary conventions, citation standards, and structural expectations specific to an academic community. Independent linguistic competence requires the individual to possess sufficient lexical sophistication, syntactic control, and grammatical accuracy to produce error-free academic prose (Defazio et al., 2010). Under this conventional definition, the student writer serves as the sole, unassisted locus of text generation, and any technological intervention has been limited to corrective, non-agentic software.

2.2. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and mediated action

This investigation grounds its reconceptualization of L2 writing in Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT), which posits that human cognitive development is fundamentally mediated by psychological and physical tools. According to Vygotsky, individuals do not interact with the external world in an unmediated fashion; rather, their mental operations are transformed through cultural artifacts that act as instruments of thinking. In traditional educational settings, these tools have manifested as physical dictionaries, grammar reference books, or static word processors. These conventional artifacts remain entirely passive, requiring the human actor to

initiate, execute, and control every facet of the cognitive-linguistic operation.

With the advent of GenAI platforms, the nature of technological mediation undergoes a profound ontological mutation. GenAI can no longer be conceptualized as a static, passive tool; rather, it functions as an agentic, dynamic "Digital Dialogic Partner." When an L2 learner engages with an AI prompt partner, the interaction mirrors a bidirectional, collaborative dialogue within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The generative model actively collaborates with the user, offering instantaneous rhetorical scaffoldings, co-constructing meaning, and proposing multi-layered alternatives for structural or conceptual refinement (Teng, 2024). Consequently, the cognitive burden of writing is distributed across a hybridized human-machine ecosystem. GenAI redefines Vygotskian mediated action by transitioning technology from an instrument used *by* the writer to an autonomous partner writing *with* the learner, fundamentally altering how L2 authors externalize their inner speech into academic text.

2.3. AI-partnered writing (AIP) in L2 contexts

A rapidly expanding body of empirical research has begun documenting the multifaceted ways in which university students leverage GenAI to facilitate their academic writing endeavors. Recent longitudinal and cross-sectional investigations indicate that L2 learners actively integrate AI platforms across all stages of the writing process (Nguyen et al., 2025). During pre-writing phases, students frequently employ tools like ChatGPT for conceptual brainstorming, topic narrowing, and generating complex structural outlines. In the while-writing and post-writing phases, these platforms are widely utilized for real-time translation of idiomatic expressions, sentence-level paraphrasing, vocabulary diversification, and sophisticated grammatical proofreading (Al-Raimi et al., 2024; Luu, 2025). Experimental evidence demonstrates that such AI-assisted instruction yields statistically significant improvements in students' task achievement, rhetorical coherence, and overall writing motivation particularly by enhancing writing self-efficacy and mitigating the debilitating anxiety frequently associated with L2 academic composition (Nguyen, 2025).

However, this transition introduces pronounced discrepancies and pedagogical tensions within higher education. Quantitative analyses reveal that GenAI evaluation mechanisms frequently assign significantly higher scores across criteria like content and organization compared to human university rater counterparts, showcasing a distinct variation in how machine intelligence perceives text quality (Ho et al., in press). Furthermore, the extensive adoption of these platforms raises urgent concerns regarding information accuracy, content hallucination, the erosion of distinct student voice, and institutional plagiarism (Werdingisih et al., 2024). Learners themselves express a profound need for persistent teacher guidance to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs and navigate the delicate boundaries of academic honesty (Pham et al., in press).

This empirical reality necessitates the introduction of "AI Prompting" as a completely novel linguistic and academic literacy skill. Prompting can no longer be viewed as a technical, non-linguistic task; rather, it represents a highly sophisticated, iterative literacy practice that demands advanced rhetorical control, pragmatic awareness, and metalinguistic competence (Teng, 2024). To extract academically rigorous, culturally sensitive, and accurate responses from a digital partner, L2 learners must possess the ability to articulate clear context, specify precise persona constraints, and critically deconstruct the linguistic outputs generated by the AI system. AI Prompting thus emerges as a core constituent of contemporary communicative competence, bridging the gap between independent human intention and automated text generation.

3. THE PROPOSED MODEL

To systematically address the ontological transformation of second language (L2) writing in the contemporary higher education milieu, this paper articulates a new conceptual framework: the Artificial Intelligence Partner (AIP)-Mediated Academic Literacy Model. This framework explicitly moves away from viewing academic writing as an isolated, purely human cognitive process, instead repositioning it as a dynamic, triadic negotiation distributed across a technologically advanced linguistic ecosystem. Within this paradigm, AIP-Mediated Academic Literacy is formally defined as the specialized capacity of an L2 learner to intentionally

collaborate with, strategically direct, and critically evaluate generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) systems to co-construct rigorous, high-quality academic discourse while concurrently preserving the author's idiosyncratic voice, personal agency, and adherence to institutional standards of scholarly excellence.

Rather than viewing technology as a superficial editing overlay, the model conceptualizes a fluid, multidirectional network of interaction where the L2 writer, the generative intelligence architecture, and the evolving academic text continuously shape and reshape one another. The L2 writer initiates conceptual directionality through cognitive intent; the AI platform operationalizes this intent by synthesizing linguistic and structural variations within its parametric memory; and the resultant text functions as an objective artifact that both the human author and the machine alter through ongoing, iterative evaluation. This triadic relationship establishes a shared cognitive space wherein the target language text is generated not through solitary composition, but through an advanced form of human-machine collaborative orchestration.

To visually represent this complex network of interaction and the structural intersections of the competencies involved, the following Napkin code can be utilized to render the structural framework of the model.

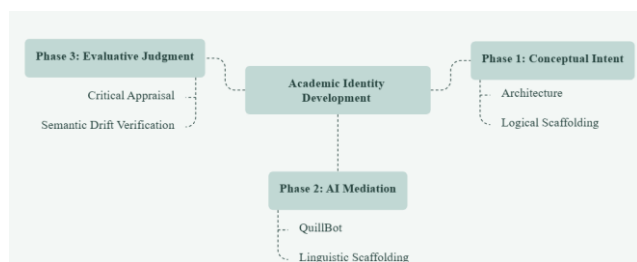


Figure 1. AIP-MEDIATED ACADEMIC LITERACY MODEL

3.2. Core Components of the Model

The primary layer of the proposed model resides in Conceptual and Prompting Literacy, which represents the cognitive gateway through which the L2 writer establishes authoritative control over the generative system. In this model, prompt engineering is redefined from a technical programming skill into a sophisticated rhetorical faculty (Teng, 2024). This competency requires the learner to abstract complex, internal research

objectives and systematically translate them into explicit, logical, and structurally optimized command strings that the generative model can interpret accurately. L2 writers must actively draw upon their abstract genre awareness to provide the AI with contextual parameters, target audience expectations, systemic constraints, and precise stylistic directives (Luu, 2025). Furthermore, this component necessitates a high degree of critical thinking to maintain thematic stability throughout an extended interactive session. Without this baseline conceptual literacy, the learner's interaction with the AI becomes superficial and erratic, yielding generic, unstructured text that fails to meet the rigorous demands of specialized disciplinary discourse.

Once the generative architecture produces a linguistic output, the model activates the second core dimension: Evaluative and Critical Literacy. This component functions as an intellectual filter, directly countering the well-documented phenomena of machine-generated errors, systematic fabrications, and superficial prose styles (Cung et al., 2025). L2 learners possessing this literacy do not accept AI-generated text passively; instead, they interrogate the output using advanced analytical criteria. This involves a rigorous cross-examination of facts to identify instances of content hallucination or the introduction of fabricated bibliographic citations, which present significant risks to academic integrity (Werdiningsih et al., 2024). Additionally, this literacy entails a sophisticated rhetorical sensitivity, enabling the writer to critically assess the generated text's voice and register. The student must determine whether the AI's output conforms to the precise stylistic requirements of the target genre or if it projects an artificial, overly homogenized tone that obscures the author's authentic identity and nuanced perspective.

The third dimension, L2 Linguistic Agency, establishes the clear boundaries of human autonomy and self-regulated learning within the collaborative writing process. Within this framework, the L2 learner is repositioned from a submissive recipient of automated suggestions to an authoritative Executive Editor (Nguyen, 2025). This shift emphasizes that while the AI partner generates a wide array of lexical configurations, syntactic structures, and structural options, the ultimate power of decision-making rests entirely with the human author. The student must exercise

conscious linguistic control, choosing to endorse, modify, or completely discard the AI's suggestions based on their own rhetorical goals and developing language proficiency. By taking on this managerial role, the L2 writer actively maintains ownership over the text, ensuring that the final academic paper remains a genuine reflection of their personal intellectual labor rather than an unmediated product of automated processing (Werdiningsih et al., 2024).

The final component of the model is Ethical Literacy, which serves as the foundational regulatory infrastructure for the entire writing ecosystem. This dimension addresses the complex moral dilemmas presented by the widespread availability of text-generation technologies in universities (Harunasari, 2023). Ethical literacy requires full transparency from the writer regarding the use of AI tools, which is operationalized through precise documentation and formal disclosure of the specific ways these platforms scaffolded the composition process. Furthermore, this competence requires a clear conceptual understanding of the boundaries between legitimate, supportive collaboration and unauthorized textual appropriation or plagiarism (Pham et al., in press). Economically and academically, ethically literate students recognize that using an AI to refine their own ideas differs fundamentally from allowing a system to generate entire papers without personal intellectual engagement, thereby protecting the core values of academic integrity (Nhan et al., 2025).

4. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The adoption of the AIP-Mediated Academic Literacy Model requires a fundamental transformation of the traditional L2 writing curriculum within higher education (Nguyen et al., 2025). Writing courses can no longer focus solely on the isolated mechanics of sentence-level grammar and paragraph organization; instead, they must explicitly integrate methodologies for human-AI collaborative composition. The curriculum must treat the interaction between the student and generative technology as a core communicative skill, formalizing instruction in academic prompt engineering within the syllabus (Teng, 2024). This approach includes teaching students how to construct contextual framing parameters, establish appropriate rhetorical personas, and manage multi-turn dialogic iterations to refine complex text structures. By

embedding these digital literacies directly into the curriculum, language programs can guide students away from treating AI as a shortcut for task completion, helping them view it instead as a sophisticated cognitive scaffold for language acquisition.

Concurrently, traditional assessment structures must undergo a paradigm shift to maintain validity in an environment where text generation is highly automated (Ho et al., in press). Traditional product-based assessment metrics, which evaluate only the final written essay, are no longer sufficient because they cannot differentiate between unassisted human composition, scaffolded collaboration, and uncritical automated output. Consequently, institutions must transition toward rigorous, process-based evaluation models (Harunasari, 2023). Instructors should assess the entire longitudinal journey of composition by examining student prompt logs, analyzing sequential draft revisions, and evaluating reflective essays where students explain the rhetorical choices they made when modifying AI suggestions. Furthermore, assessment design should incorporate complex, "AI-immune" tasks that require students to connect their writing to specific local contexts, draw on personal experiences, or engage in oral defense presentations, ensuring that authentic student competence is evaluated reliably (Pham et al., in press).

This systemic restructuring requires a fundamental redefinition of the professional identity and responsibilities of the L2 writing instructor (Nguyen et al., 2025). The educator must step away from the traditional role of a solitary error-corrector focused primarily on identifying mechanical mistakes and grading final submissions. Instead, the teacher must become an AI-Integration Facilitator who guides students through the complexities of human-machine collaboration (Selim, 2024). In this revised role, instructors focus on designing strategic interactive tasks, modeling critical evaluation of AI outputs, and helping students navigate the ethical boundaries of digital writing. Rather than enforcing unrealistic bans on technological tools, the modern facilitator establishes a balanced pedagogical space that leverages the efficiency of generative systems while safeguarding human critical thinking and learner autonomy (Nhan et al., 2025).

5. CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the clear instructional affordances of the AIP-Mediated model, its implementation faces several significant challenges, chief among which is the potential atrophy of foundational L2 linguistic skills (Teng, 2024). If learners rely excessively on generative platforms to manage basic text production, they risk engaging in severe cognitive offloading, where the critical mental effort required for language acquisition is entirely transferred to the machine interface (Cung et al., 2025). Over time, this dependence can prevent students from developing the autonomous ability to generate basic syntactic structures, formulate cohesive academic arguments, or acquire specialized vocabulary independently (Luu & Le, in press). When the interface handles all lexical retrieval and grammatical organization, the underlying cognitive pathways required for natural second language development can weaken, creating a counterproductive cycle where students become increasingly dependent on automated assistance.

Furthermore, the widespread integration of GenAI in academic writing introduces significant challenges related to the digital divide and educational equity (Selim, 2024). While basic generative models are often freely accessible, advanced systems which offer superior linguistic precision, deeper context windows, and more reliable analytical outputs are increasingly locked behind subscription paywalls. This economic barrier introduces a pronounced form of inequity within higher education classrooms, splitting the student cohort along socio-economic lines. Students with the financial resources to purchase premium AI access benefit from highly sophisticated rhetorical tools and real-time feedback systems, whereas less privileged students are restricted to more basic, error-prone models. This disparity threatens the principle of equity in language instruction, potentially worsening existing educational advantages and disadvantages based on socioeconomic status.

Finally, there is a sharp institutional disconnect between official university regulations and the real-world practices of contemporary students (Le et al., 2025). Many higher education institutions, reacting out of a fear of widespread academic dishonesty, have implemented rigid, punitive policies that completely ban or heavily restrict the

use of generative technologies in writing courses. However, empirical data shows that students frequently use these platforms anyway, creating an environment of anxiety, hidden tool usage, and systemic evasion (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). This conflict is further complicated by the unreliability of commercial AI-detection software, which regularly generates false positives and inaccurate assessments, unfairly penalizing innocent students particularly non-native English speakers whose natural writing styles can sometimes mimic the structural predictability of machine outputs (Pham et al., in press). This policy mismatch highlights the urgent need for universities to move away from impractical bans and toward clear, balanced frameworks that align with the realities of modern digital writing.

6. CONCLUSION & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In summary, the rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence necessitates a foundational reconceptualization of L2 academic writing paradigms in higher education. As argued throughout this paper, academic literacy can no longer be evaluated as an isolated, unassisted cognitive skill; instead, it must be understood as a collaborative, distributed competency managed within a human-machine ecosystem (Lea & Street, 2006). The proposed AIP-Mediated Academic Literacy Model offers a comprehensive, multi-dimensional framework that addresses this shift, linking conceptual, evaluative, linguistic, and ethical literacies into a cohesive structure. By positioning the L2 learner as an active, self-regulated Executive Editor within the writing process, this framework preserves human agency and protects the core values of critical thinking, keeping the student firmly at the center of technological integration.

Acknowledgeably, the proposed framework possesses inherent conceptual limitations at this stage of development. The model presented in this paper remains predominantly theoretical, constructed through a synthesis of sociocultural theory, digital literacy frameworks, and initial empirical research on generative text tools (Teng, 2024). Consequently, its structural components, interaction pathways, and pedagogical recommendations have not yet been subjected to large-scale, empirical validation across diverse educational contexts. The model lacks the specific empirical backing needed to confirm its generalizability across varying resourced

learning environments, different institutional cultures, or student populations with divergent baseline target language proficiencies.

To address these limitations, future research must prioritize empirical and longitudinal investigations into the practical application of the AIP-Mediated framework. Specifically, longitudinal studies are urgently needed to track L2 learners over extended periods, examining how sustained interaction with generative tools influences their long-term, unassisted language development and cognitive writing skills. Additionally, researchers should implement mixed-methods designs to evaluate the model's efficacy across diverse student demographics, language proficiency levels, and disciplinary cultures (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Gathering objective data from prompt logs, student portfolios, and classroom interventions will be essential for refining the model's components, establishing reliable instructional benchmarks, and ensuring the responsible evolution of L2 pedagogy in the AI era.

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