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Letter to the Editor

From Perceived Benefit to Demonstrated Competence: Rethinking AI-Assisted Academic Writing

Dr. Özgür Özünlü

Lecturer, Health Services Vocational School, Ankara Yildirim Beyazıt University, Ankara, Turkey

Corresponding Author: **Dr. Özgür Özünlü**

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article entitled "Academic Writing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Study on Efficiency and Authenticity in Higher Education" by Rodriguez Julius Jay N., published in the International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies (2025, 5, 1750–1756). The study addresses a highly timely issue by examining tertiary students' perceptions of artificial intelligence in academic writing, particularly with respect to authenticity, originality, efficiency, ethical concerns, and institutional policies. The authors' attention to students' experiences with AI-assisted writing is valuable, especially given the rapidly evolving role of generative AI in higher education. Nevertheless, several conceptual and methodological distinctions merit further consideration when interpreting the study's conclusions.

Although the study constitutes a timely contribution to the understanding of students' experiences with AI-assisted academic writing, an important methodological distinction warrants particular attention: students' perceptions of authenticity, originality, and efficiency should not be equated with objectively demonstrated changes in these outcomes. This distinction is especially important because the constructs examined in the study are largely assessed through students' self-reported perceptions. Although such measures can yield valuable information about how students experience and interpret AI-assisted writing, they cannot, by themselves, establish whether the resulting texts are objectively more authentic, original, accurate, or academically rigorous.

First, it is essential to distinguish between perceived authenticity and demonstrated authenticity. The study indicates that students hold positive perceptions of AI tools with respect to authenticity and originality. However, these perceptions alone do not guarantee that AI-assisted academic texts are objectively more original or authentic. Authenticity in academic writing involves intricate relationships among authorship, intellectual contribution, disciplinary knowledge, evidence utilization, and the writer's reasoning. Similarly, originality cannot be inferred solely from a student's perception that AI has functioned as a supportive rather than substitutive tool. Recent research on students' engagement with generative AI in academic writing suggests that students' perceptions and actual evaluative practices may not always align. It is therefore more appropriate to frame findings concerning authenticity and originality as perceived authenticity and perceived originality rather than as demonstrated improvements in these constructs.

Second, an analogous distinction is warranted with respect to efficiency. Students may reasonably perceive AI as useful for overcoming writer's block, generating ideas, revising language, or reducing editing time. Nevertheless, perceived efficiency should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of improved academic learning or writing competence. Generative AI may reduce the time required to produce a text while simultaneously altering the amount and type of cognitive engagement undertaken by the student. Recent work on generative AI in academic writing has emphasized the importance of having students critically examine AI-produced texts rather than treating AI-generated writing as an unproblematic replacement for students' own writing processes. Consequently, future studies should distinguish among time efficiency, writing quality, learning efficiency, and learning outcomes.

Third, a further issue concerns the functional heterogeneity of the AI and digital writing tools considered in this area. Generative AI systems such as ChatGPT, writing-assistance applications such as Grammarly, and text-similarity or academic-integrity technologies such as Turnitin serve substantially different purposes. Treating these technologies as a single category of "AI tools" may obscure important differences in how they influence authorship, text production, revision, feedback, and academic integrity. Future research should therefore specify the type, function, and intensity of AI use rather than treating AI-

assisted writing as a homogeneous phenomenon.

Fourth, and most importantly, the discussion of AI-assisted academic writing would benefit from a stronger epistemic dimension. Contemporary AI literacy frameworks increasingly emphasize that AI literacy entails more than the ability to use AI tools; it includes understanding AI systems, recognizing their limitations, making informed judgments, and applying AI in socially and ethically responsible ways (Ng *et al.*, 2021; Yim, 2024) ^[6, 9]. Similarly, recent research on AI literacy has highlighted the importance of higher-order thinking and the ability to evaluate AI-related information rather than merely operate AI systems. This distinction is particularly relevant to academic writing because generative AI can produce fluent and persuasive text even when the underlying claims, evidence, citations, or reasoning are inaccurate. From this perspective, AI literacy should extend beyond the ability to operate or prompt AI systems to include the capacity to evaluate AI-generated claims, verify evidence and sources, identify factual inaccuracies, recognize uncertainty, detect inappropriate reasoning, and justify whether AI-generated content should be accepted, modified, or rejected. In academic writing, these evaluative capacities may be more consequential than the ability to generate fluent text. The epistemic problem is therefore not simply whether students use AI, but whether they can determine when AI-generated information should be trusted, questioned, verified, or rejected. This issue is of particular significance in science and science education, where evaluating evidence, constructing explanations, examining claims, and recognizing uncertainty constitute central components of scientific literacy. Recent scholarship has explicitly connected generative AI with epistemic cognition and science education, emphasizing the need to reconsider how learners interact with knowledge in AI-mediated environments (Garofalo & Farenga, 2025; Tang, 2024; Tang & Cooper, 2025) ^[2, 7, 8].

This perspective also raises an important methodological issue. If students are asked whether AI-generated writing is accurate, authentic, original, or useful, the resulting data primarily represent students' judgments about AI rather than their demonstrated capacity to evaluate AI outputs. These are related but distinct constructs. A student may report confidence in evaluating AI-generated content while failing to detect fabricated references, unsupported claims, inappropriate reasoning, or scientifically inaccurate explanations. Conversely, a student may use AI extensively while maintaining a high level of epistemic vigilance. Accordingly, future investigations should incorporate performance-based measures alongside self-report questionnaires. For example, researchers could present students with AI-generated academic texts containing deliberately introduced factual inaccuracies, unsupported claims, fabricated citations, or inappropriate interpretations of evidence. Students could then be asked to identify problematic claims, verify the cited evidence, compare the AI response with authoritative sources, and justify whether each claim should be accepted or rejected. Such an approach would make it possible to investigate epistemic evaluation competence rather than merely students' perceptions of AI reliability. This approach is consistent with emerging research showing that students' interactions with AI-generated writing should be studied in terms of their evaluative judgments and disciplinary knowledge. Recent work has specifically examined students' evaluation of AI-

generated and non-AI-generated writing and highlighted the relationship between students' prior writing knowledge and their ability to judge AI-produced material. Similarly, research comparing students' accounts of AI use with assessors' evaluations has indicated that students may use generative AI predominantly for writing, paraphrasing, and rephrasing, while more sophisticated forms of critical sensemaking remain less common.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the educational value of generative AI should not be evaluated solely according to whether students perceive the technology as efficient, useful, or supportive. A more comprehensive framework should distinguish at least four dimensions: AI use, perceived benefit, demonstrated performance, and epistemically responsible use. Such a distinction could help prevent an important conceptual conflation in the emerging literature: the assumption that because students perceive AI-assisted writing as beneficial, AI has necessarily improved their academic writing competence. It is therefore proposed that future research on AI-assisted academic writing move from a predominantly perception-oriented approach toward designs that combine self-report measures with direct evaluation of student performance. Such studies could examine writing quality, evidence use, citation accuracy, source verification, argumentation, disciplinary accuracy, revision behavior, and independent performance after AI assistance. Longitudinal and mixed-method designs could further clarify whether AI-assisted writing ultimately develops students' academic competencies or primarily increases the efficiency of text production.

In sum, the findings discussed in the target article provide a useful starting point for understanding students' perceptions of AI-assisted academic writing. However, future research should move beyond perceived efficiency and authenticity toward the assessment of demonstrated writing competence and epistemic responsibility. A more comprehensive framework could distinguish four related but conceptually distinct dimensions: AI engagement, perceived benefits, demonstrated performance, and epistemically responsible use. Such a framework would allow researchers to examine not only whether students use AI and whether they perceive it as beneficial, but also whether they can independently evaluate, verify, and take responsibility for the knowledge claims produced with AI assistance. The central educational challenge, therefore, is not simply to determine whether students can use generative AI effectively; it is to determine whether they can remain intellectually and epistemically responsible for the knowledge claims produced with and through AI.

Sincerely,

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