



‘The exciting AI adventure’: reflections on the ethical use of generative AI in academic writing

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Presentation abstract

Generative AI is rapidly and radically changing reading and writing practices and compelling HEIs to adopt new strategies for promoting academic integrity and incorporating emergent literacy-enhancing technologies into curriculum delivery. In his presentation, Lee-Price critically reflected on two academic writing workshops intended to develop undergraduates’ understanding of academic integrity and demonstrate a constructive and critical use of AI in academic work. The workshops were designed with the aid of ChatGPT, with one of them incorporating a paraphrasing activity using QuillBot.

Lee-Price explored how practitioners can work with AI in a way that embraces ALDinHE’s (2023) five values of Learning Development: in particular, supporting staff and students to ‘make sense of’ HE and foster ‘critical pedagogy’. In his analysis of the design and delivery of the workshops, Lee-Price adopted an academic literacies approach that encourages ‘alternative ways of meaning making in academia [...] by considering the resources that (student) writers bring to the academy’ (Lillis and Scott, 2007, p.13). He also drew on the concept of ‘slow reading’, which resists an emphasis on efficiency and the associated view of reading as information extraction, promoting instead ‘an ethical relation of openness with the otherness, ambiguity and strangeness of the text, and how this openness to intensity and intimacy can be transformative’ (Walker, 2017, p.xx). Themes explored included co-creation, lived experience, and ethical responsibility. Lee-Price proposed that Learning Developers should proactively support their institutions in engaging innovatively with the practical, pedagogical, and ethical challenges (and opportunities!) arising from AI.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; academic literacies; academic integrity; reading; writing; deep learning.

Community response

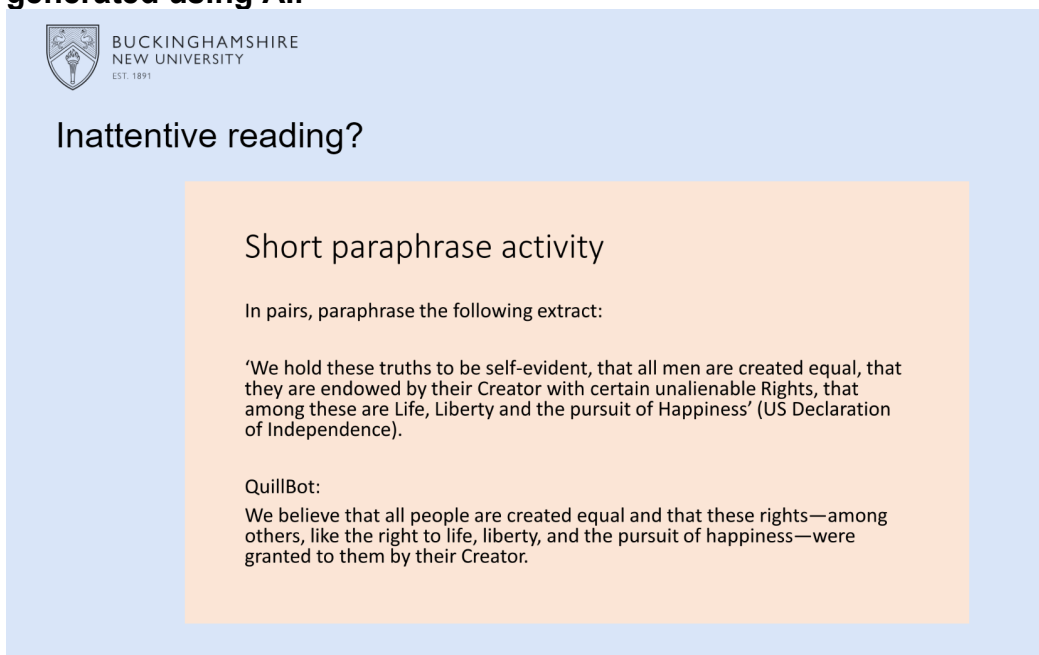
Lee-Price began his presentation with a recognition of and reflection on the pace of change within higher education institutions (HEIs) in terms of their engagement with Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI). He highlighted that at Buckinghamshire New University this transformation is advancing swiftly, marked by new academic, AI-focused appointments and the growing expectations for Gen AI use among staff and students. At other institutions the pace of change has perhaps been slower, either by necessity or due to hesitation. However, since the publication of the *Russell Group Principles on the Use of AI in Education* in July 2023 and the Government's *Policy Paper on Gen AI in Education* in October 2023, there has been a notable increase in the engagement and use of Gen AI tools across the sector.

Within this context, Lee-Price's paper recognised the importance of ensuring that students are equipped to engage with these tools critically and ethically. Drawing on a series of examples, Lee-Price detailed how he has supported students in understanding academic integrity and the constructive, critical use of AI in academic work. In a workshop focused on paraphrasing, he described how he asked students to paraphrase the opening of the United States Declaration of Independence, subsequently sharing with them how QuillBot, a commonly used Gen AI tool, had paraphrased the same text (see Figure 1). This exercise led to a discussion on the challenges of using the AI-generated extract, particularly in terms of language, context, and ethical responsibilities. Participants 'enjoyed the straightforward example' and the explanations on how Gen AI could be leveraged to foster discussions on academic integrity, critical thinking, and positionality, without allowing it to overshadow the primary topic.

Lee-Price facilitated a discussion on the importance of including reading in conversations around the use of Gen AI. Much of the current debate and scholarship has focused on writing outputs, given the generative nature of many AI tools. It is equally important, however, to consider how Gen AI is being used as a reading tool for students. Given its capacity to summarise texts quickly, it is becoming more common for students to rely on these summaries to develop their understanding. Of course, much like the paraphrasing outputs mentioned above, there are significant limitations students must acknowledge, including the lack of critical engagement in these summaries, which can lead to superficial interpretations and a lack of ethical nuances. Lee-Price highlighted the importance of

encouraging students to see the benefits of Gen AI as a tool to support their deeper thinking and 'slow reading', rather than a replacement for it. Participants agreed and supported the continued teaching of academic reading strategies for students, with Gen AI as one of many tools.

Figure 1. A slide from Lee-Price's presentation showing an activity from the workshop in which students compare their attempts to paraphrase with those generated using AI.



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Inattentive reading?

Short paraphrase activity

In pairs, paraphrase the following extract:

'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness' (US Declaration of Independence).

QuillBot:

We believe that all people are created equal and that these rights—among others, like the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—were granted to them by their Creator.

Participants questioned whether we should be 'resisting the juggernaut' of Gen AI as a reading tool or directing students towards more engaging and ethical uses, and how to resist students' assumptions that Gen AI is a 'timesaving tool'. Lee-Price acknowledged the need for strategic reading at times; for example, to gain understanding quickly or to refine reading goals. He emphasised, however, that while this approach could be timesaving, students needed the opportunity to develop their reading skills. He stressed the importance of demonstrating the multiplicity of reading and developing students' understanding of genre and purpose, with Gen AI as one tool they can use alongside more traditional Learning Development tools and frameworks. The session concluded with a reflection on how Learning Development colleagues are positioned within HEIs to lead conversations with academics and students about the practical, pedagogical, and ethical opportunities and challenges presented by Gen AI.

Next steps and additional questions

The session raised important discussion points among participants, some of whom were themselves involved in developing institutional responses to Gen AI in terms of academic integrity. Hosting open and honest conversations with students about the benefits and potential challenges of any new technology is the responsibility of all HEIs to prepare our students for life beyond education. Encouraging students to question how knowledge comes to be—through AI generation or academic study—remains an underpinning principle of Learning Development. Activities like those proposed in Lee-Price's paper are the first steps towards such exciting developments.

The questions for the community are how can we continue these conversations, share practice, and support colleagues in this new and emerging technological era? How can we ensure that students are critically engaging with AI tools rather than passively consuming information? What strategies can be adapted to balance the use of AI with traditional learning methods? How can institutions foster an environment in which ethical considerations are at the forefront of AI integration in education? What role should educators play in guiding students through the complexities of AI-generated content?

Author's reflections

I am grateful to the ALDinHE conference organisers for providing me with the opportunity to present and to share my reflections. I also appreciate the constructive responses from the participants, which address and raise vital questions about the multiple—but related—issues I touched upon. AI is rapidly transforming how HEIs operate across the entire range of their activities. My fundamental concern is how Learning Developers can engage with this ever-evolving technology in a way that aligns with our commitment to a critical and transformative pedagogy. As suggested in the responses, one method is to adopt an open and transparent approach in our embrace of AI. My short case study of AI-themed sessions I delivered hopefully showed one way that this might be done. Particularly important, I think, is acknowledging to our students that we, too, are beginners and still learning about AI, regarding both its technical aspects and potential and the complex ethical issues it raises. We should approach AI with a pedagogy of humility, committed to co-creation in which the positions of teacher and student are fluid.

My advocacy of 'slowness' as a strategy of resistance to the acceleration we are witnessing across HE and that frames institutional responses to AI is, admittedly, easier said than done. There is no blueprint for how it should be carried out and much will depend on individual and local circumstances. My aim in the case study was to show how AI itself, when engaged with critically, reflectively, and in dialogue with students (forms of engagement that all HEIs at least notionally champion) can bring about a slow down due to the questions it inevitably raises and the often-unexpected insights it provides. In simple terms, then, Learning Developers should seek to resist the general tendency to approach AI as a time-saving technology or a means to make academic reading and writing easier, and instead see it as a tool to encourage critical thinking and deep learning for a future that is enticingly uncertain.

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The authors and contributors did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

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