

Infante B., Estefany.

**Estefany Infante, Licenciada en Idiomas Modernos, es profesional freelance en el área de lenguas modernas. Correo electrónico: estefanym.infante@gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2996-1883>.*

Abstract

The rapid rise of artificial intelligence, particularly large language models (LLMs), is transforming how writing is performed, produced, and understood. For modern-language professionals, understanding these changes and learning to work effectively with AI tools is essential, as engaging with, analysing, and producing texts remains central to our work. Therefore, this work aims to explore the distinct role of human creativity and intentionality in writing and examines how the skills developed as modern-language professionals, including critical thinking, information literacy, and digital literacy, can be applied beyond academic contexts to engage ethically and critically with AI writing tools.

Key words

artificial intelligence, AI-powered writing tools, critical thinking, information literacy, digital literacy, intentionality, creativity.

AI and the future of writing: a modern-language professional's perspective

Resumen

El rápido auge de la inteligencia artificial, en particular de los modelos extensos de lenguaje (LLM), está transformando la forma en que se escribe, se produce y se entiende la escritura. Para los profesionales de idiomas modernos, es esencial comprender estos cambios y aprender a trabajar eficazmente con las herramientas ofrecidas por la IA, ya que la interacción con los textos, su análisis y su producción siguen siendo fundamentales para nuestro rol. Por lo tanto, este trabajo tiene como objetivo explorar el papel distintivo de la creatividad y la intencionalidad humana en la escritura y examina cómo las habilidades desarrolladas como profesionales en idiomas modernos, incluyendo el pensamiento crítico, la alfabetización informacional y la alfabetización digital, pueden aplicarse más allá de los contextos académicos para interactuar de forma ética y crítica con las herramientas de escritura de IA.

Palabras claves

inteligencia artificial, herramientas de escritura basadas en IA, pensamiento crítico, alfabetización informacional, alfabetización digital, intencionalidad, creatividad.

AI and the Future of Writing: A Modern-Language Professional's Perspective

This essay examines these changes from our perspective as modern-language professionals, whose training emphasizes critical thinking, information literacy, creativity, and cultural awareness. It traces the evolution of AI-mediated writing tools, from early rule-based checkers and statistical writing assistants to contemporary generative systems, to show how technological capabilities have expanded while remaining fundamentally distinct from human meaning-making. Although AI tools can support tasks such as drafting, brainstorming, and stylistic refinement, they operate through pattern prediction rather than intentional communication. They cannot reproduce the purposeful, culturally grounded, and interpretive choices that characterize human authorship. Drawing on linguistics, writing studies, and cognitive theories of creativity, the essay argues that modern-language professionals are crucial for ensuring ethical and effective use of AI through expertise in textual analysis, communicative purpose, and cultural context. Their disciplinary literacies, including critical literacy, digital literacy, and information evaluation, provide essential safeguards against bias, misinformation, and the homogenization of language. AI technologies can enhance writing but reinforce the importance of human creativity, intentionality, and reflective engagement.

From the very beginning of our education as modern-language students, we are taught how to interact with texts, both as consumers and as producers.

Throughout the program, we develop important reading and writing skills, including critical thinking, information literacy, creativity, innovative thinking and curiosity that enable us to research as well as analyse, question, comprehend, and create texts. However, with the advent of artificial intelligence and its accelerated development and evolution, particularly large language models such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, the way writing as a practice and as a cultural product is conceived, performed, and discussed is changing. The growing presence of generative AI and AI-powered writing tools has sparked debates over the future of authorship, originality, and the role of human creativity. As modern-language professionals, keeping up with these innovations and understanding the shifts they provoke, as well as our role and responsibilities as text producers and consumers, is indispensable, and this includes recognizing both the possible limitations and advantages. While AI writing tools may enhance productivity and support idea generation, they lack the human creativity and emotional depth that define writing as a cultural expression, highlighting their role as tools, not replacements, in a space deeply rooted in human experience and cultural identity. Rather than replacing human creativity and diminishing its value, AI technologies challenge us to apply our training in critical thinking, information literacy, and cultural awareness to become informed, reflective users of emerging writing technologies. Therefore, these skills gained as modern-language students can be extrapolated from the academic context and serve as the tools that allow

us to engage with AI critically, ethically, and efficiently.

Although artificial intelligence feels like a modern invention, the idea of creating intelligent machines has ancient roots that have evolved significantly in modern times. As early as ancient Greece, myths and legends described mechanical beings designed to mimic or assist human actions. Even the word automation comes from the Greek *automatos*, meaning “self-moving,” reflecting our early fascination with artificial life. However, the first ever tangible efforts to this end can be found in the mid-20th century, when pioneers such as British mathematician Alan Turing began to explore the possibility of machines simulating human thought, and the first programs were trained to play board games like chess and checkers (Wooldridge, 2021). This growing interest and experimentation led to the official coining of the term “artificial intelligence” at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence, a conference held at Dartmouth College in 1956. This event is also widely recognized as the founding moment of AI as a formal field of research (Wooldridge, 2021).

Over the next decades, AI research hit significant milestones, such as the development of expert systems in the 1970s, which could simulate the decision-making abilities of human specialists, and the rise of machine learning techniques in the 1980s and 1990s. This enabled computers to improve performance through experience rather than explicit programming (Russell & Norvig, 2021). Following these breakthroughs, the 21st century brought exponential advances

with the advent of big data, increased computational power, and neural networks, leading to breakthroughs in natural language processing and computer vision (Russell & Norvig, 2021). These developments also led to the creation and evolution of digital writing tools to support the writing process.

Beginning with simple, rule-based systems and culminating in today’s sophisticated generative models, AI writing tools have progressed rapidly since the 1950s, marked by significant advancements in both their autonomy and the scope of their capabilities. Early AI tools began as rudimentary grammar checkers that analysed sentence structure based on fixed rule sets (Dale, 2016). These systems were limited in accuracy, often failing to identify or correct errors that fell outside their programmed parameters. In the 1970s, spell checkers and basic autocorrect functions were introduced, relying on dictionary databases to detect and correct spelling errors.

The 1980s and 1990s brought a notable shift toward more context-aware tools with the emergence of writing assistants based on statistical language models that were capable of offering suggestions on tone, redundancy, and stylistic elements (Dale & Viethen, 2021). A trend that potentially accelerated in the 2000s with the development of more commercial tools, such as Grammarly or Microsoft Word’s integrated spell and grammar-checking. (Dale, 2016). Thanks to these earlier innovations, modern AI writing tools have evolved from simple correction programs into complex systems that can process and generate language,

leading to the rise of generative AI tools that can produce content based on user input, ushering in a new chapter for AI writing tools and writing as a craft.

Nowadays, when we think about AI-powered writing tools, chatbots with integrated conversational AI technology are the first thing that come to mind. These programs use a mix of technologies to process human language in order to understand the input of the user, and generative AI and learning patterns in order to create new content and learn and adapt from previous experiences (Caldarini et al., 2022). Large Language Models (LLMs) are a category of foundation models trained on vast amounts of data to understand, generate and translate text and other types of content related to natural languages (Peykani et al., 2025). These models form the backbone of today's most advanced AI writing tools, marking a significant shift in how we interact with language-based technologies.

Chatbots such as OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's Gemini are not only based on these models, but prime examples of them, valued for their ability to produce coherent and context relevant content across a wide range of topics. A pilot study carried out by the government of Pennsylvania showed that the most common use among participants was as an assistant for text-based information, such as research, brainstorming, writing and summarizing (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2025). Moreover, according to OpenAI, ChatGPT has over 400 million weekly users (Kant, R., & Syamnath, D, 2025), while Gemini shares a similar number. This kind of AI-powered writing

technology has definitely changed the way we write, and millions of users benefit from them throughout the writing process.

The impact and advantages provided by AI-powered writing tools such as the chatbots mentioned above have demonstrated considerable value, notably regarding productivity and information accessibility. When it comes to brainstorming, ideation and editing, chatbots such as ChatGPT provide a boost due to the large amount of information and data these LLMs are trained on. However, what these tools offer in efficiency, they often lack in originality, voice, and cultural depth, elements that are intrinsic to writing as a human activity and cultural product.

Language is a fundamentally human ability. Through language, we are able to express thoughts, beliefs, and ideas, shaping our reality and how we interact with the world and with one another. Therefore, it serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a reflection of culture, identity, and shared experience, which in turn shapes the way we use language. The ways we speak, write, and interpret meaning are deeply influenced by historical, social, and individual contexts, which are diverse by nature. LLMs introduce a different approach to the way we interact with language, which raises the question of how the presence, creation and consumption of AI generated text affects culture, both on particular and global scales. While these models are trained on vast amounts of data, these come from limited perspectives, as 400 million users is not much when compared to the 8 billion people inhabiting the Earth at the moment. Moreover, these perspectives tend to be biased and mostly

Western-centric (OpenAI, 2025), resulting in a risk of reinforcing dominant norms and promoting homogenized versions of language and culture. These concerns are particularly relevant when we consider the practice of writing.

Writing is not just the physical manifestation of spoken human languages, but a key cultural practice and a product of culture itself (Barton & Papen, 2010). As students of Modern Languages, we learn in Literature and Culture related courses that writing is the manifestation of the cultural configuration of individuals and societies, reflecting not only how we communicate, but how we think, feel, and relate to the world and to each other at specific times. Not all pieces of writing follow the same structure, have the same length or serve the same purpose. However, all writing can be considered creative (McVey, 2008) whether a text is made with casual, personal or professional intent (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). It is in the creative essence that lies the main difference between AI generated and human writing.

Creativity involves multiple cognitive and cultural dimensions that have been defined by many scholars. A standard definition of creativity frames it as both a skill and an activity resulting from the interaction of aptitude, process and environment that allows an individual or a group to create a product that is regarded both as novel, and relevant within a social context (Plucker et al., 2004). Moreover, psychologist E. Paul Torrance (1988) identified four key elements found in creative thinking: fluency, which refers to the number of new ideas a person can generate; flexibility, which indicates

a person's capability to approach an issue from multiple perspectives; originality, which refers to the degree to which an idea is unique, and elaboration, which refers to the ability of developing an idea further, making it clearer and more specific. Therefore, in a broader sense, creativity is defined by the generation of ideas and their quality.

From a more critical perspective, creativity lies in the ability to make choices and distinguish the most promising ideas from among thousands of possibilities. (Pölonen, 2021). In the context of writing, creativity manifests through the choices a writer makes about features such as tone, structure, perspective and language, that reflect both a personal vision and a particular cultural context. These choices are guided not just by skill or experience, but by intentionality: the purpose behind each word, the message the writer wants to convey, and the emotional or intellectual impact they hope to achieve (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

De Beaugrande and Dressler identify intentionality as one of the key textual standards that determine what qualifies as a text (1981). For them, a text is a communicative event in which the producer arranges sentences with a particular purpose, and it is the realization of this intention that allows coherence and cohesion to arise. Moreover, although writing follows a set of somewhat fixed genre-specific conventions, the act of choosing in writing is not predictable, since every human experience and perspective is unique. Understanding the role of intentionality in the creative process is essential when assessing what AI can and

cannot contribute to it.

In order to do this, it is important to make a clear distinction between form and meaning, as the text produced by LLMs may seem intentional and coherent even though these qualities arise from pattern-matching rather than comprehension. Bender and Koller (2020) propose a framework that distinguishes form as any observable realization of language, such as marks on a page, pixels or bytes in a digital representation of text, or movements of the articulators, and meaning as the relation between form and communicative intent, which in turn refers to realities outside of language, whether tangible or abstract. Since LLMs are trained purely on form, it cannot learn or create meaning (Bender & Koller, 2020). At this moment, AI chatbots can replicate patterns and generate text that mimics coherence or style because they have been trained on form, but, as these authors state, because language is tied to the real physical, social, and mental world of speakers, responding meaningfully means relating the input to real-world knowledge, which chatbots don't have.

LLMs do not make choices based on self-aware intention or originality. Its outputs are products of probability, not personal insight, and therefore cannot be considered creative. Since they operate exclusively on form and have no access to the world that gives meaning to linguistic expressions, they are also not capable of interpreting the results they produce or developing a stance or opinion. As a result, they cannot produce content guided by intentionality in the way human writers do. Instead, AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, assemble text by selecting the most

statistically likely linguistic and cultural patterns from the data they were trained on, functioning as what has been described as “stochastic parrots,” systems that reproduce patterns without understanding them (Bender et al., 2021). Because of this, AI-generated text is often characterized by repetition, surface-level consistency, and occasional contradictions or incoherence (Guo et al., 2025).

Humans, however, have a natural predisposition to interpret any familiar linguistic signal as intentional communication, even when the source is not capable of producing text with genuine communicative intent (Bender & Koller, 2021). This tendency becomes especially visible when interacting with chatbot-generated text. The computers are social actor's paradigm proposed by Clifford Nass and colleagues (1994) suggests that people transfer the same social and linguistic norms they use in human communication to their interactions with computers, which helps explain why AI outputs are so easily interpreted as meaningful or intentional. However, as noted earlier, text produced by language models is not grounded in communicative intent as they are purely trained in form rather than any understanding of the world described by that form. In other words, these texts seem coherent and intentional because of our interpretive habits, not from any communicative purpose within the model itself.

Therefore, though it is important to recognize the shortcomings of AI in the realm of writing, it is important to emphasize that, as a tool, it also greatly depends on the user. Writers conceive the

use of ChatGPT in a variety of dynamic roles, which may shift depending on the task, their personal values, and their writing abilities, according to a study on the use of AI in creative writing. Some writers point out LLMs as a means to overcome writer's block, providing starting points for text or ideas that reduce the cognitive load of deciding what to write next (Guo et al., 2025). Others use it as a space for creative experimentation, helping them refine their vision of the text they want to create. In these cases, ChatGPT does not replace the writer's voice but instead acts as a collaborator that prompts reflection, offers alternatives, or inspires new directions. This highlights the importance of intentional use and critical thinking and related skills when engaging with AI tools in the writing process, particularly in our role as language professionals.

Critical thinking is the active and self-disciplined intellectual process of skilfully and successfully questioning, analysing, interpreting, synthesizing, conceptualizing, and applying information gathered through observation, reflection, and experience that determines the beliefs and actions of the critical thinker (Scriven & Paul, 2003). Therefore, critical thinking also entails the ability to recognize patterns, problems and workable ways to solve them (Glaser, 1941). As modern-language students, critical thinking and information literacy are fundamental skills laid out early into our academic journey. In courses such as Reading and Writing I and II and English Literature, we learn how to research for specific purposes and to actively engage with texts from different perspectives, which provides us with the necessary tools

to assess both texts and information.

By applying critical thinking, modern-language professionals can make use of AI-powered writing tools with intentionality and ethical awareness because it allows us to evaluate the quality, reliability, and purpose of the text these systems produce. By questioning the origins of the information, identifying biases, recognizing inconsistencies, and comparing AI-generated content with established linguistic and cultural knowledge, we can determine when the tool is useful and when its output is misleading or insufficient. Critical thinking also encourages deliberate decision-making about how, why, and to what extent AI should be incorporated into a writing task, ensuring that the tool supports rather than replaces the writer's original purpose and communicative intent.

Information literacy is another skill closely related to critical thinking that can support the intentional and ethical use of AI-powered writing tools. As defined by the American Library Association (2006), "information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information". In this sense, an information literate person should be able to recognize and articulate a need of information for a particular purpose or issue, understand how to find and distinguish reliable sources for the information needed (depending on the issue or purpose at hand), organize and assess the information gathered in a critical manner and, finally, effectively use said information to address the issue or purpose (ALA, 2006). Moreover, information

literacy is context dependent, meaning that the research criteria and techniques vary according to the discipline or field where it is needed (Grafstein, 2017). For modern-language professionals, these abilities are essential when using AI tools because they enable them to verify the sources behind AI-generated claims, identify when the tool provides inaccurate, outdated, or fabricated references, and supplement AI output with credible, discipline-appropriate research.

Digital literacy is another complementary skill that strengthens and broadens what critical thinking and information literacy already provide. Defined as the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies, it equips professionals with a practical understanding of how digital tools and platforms work and how information circulates within them (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). It also entails our ability to adapt to the constant growth of digital technologies (University of Iowa College of Education, 2024). While critical thinking helps evaluate the meaning and implications of AI-generated text, and information literacy supports the assessment of sources and the relevance of information, digital literacy adds the layer of being able to navigate digital systems with awareness of their constraints, risks, and possibilities. For modern-language professionals, this includes understanding how AI models are trained, understanding how to approach prompts, recognizing potential biases, managing data privacy, and making informed decisions about when and how to use AI in their writing process.

Together, these three literacies provide a grounded, responsible framework for interacting with AI in ways that are critical, ethical and aligned with our specific communicative needs as writers.

Ultimately, the emergence of AI-powered writing tools marks a turning point in the evolving relationship between technology and society. While these tools offer undeniable benefits in terms of efficiency, accessibility, and support for the writing process, they fall short in replicating the core elements that make writing a human act: creativity, intentionality, and cultural depth. As history shows, technological change is inevitable, but how we choose to engage with it remains within our control. The future of writing in the age of AI will not be determined solely by the capabilities of machines but by the values and decisions of the people who use them. When writers approach these tools with critical awareness and keep human creativity at the centre of the process, AI can serve as a helpful support to the imagination, one that contributes to but never replaces the richness of human expression.

In this sense, the training modern-language students receive becomes especially relevant. The literacies we cultivate throughout our academic formation are not only transferable but also essential to navigating this technological shift with responsibility and clarity. Critical thinking, information literacy, and digital literacy work together to help us understand what AI can offer, identify its limits, and make informed choices about its role in our writing. These skills empower us to maintain authorship, preserve cultural diversity, and uphold ethical standards while still benefiting from

technological innovation. As long as we remain active, reflective, and intentional participants in the writing process, AI will function as an extension of our abilities, not a replacement for them.

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