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Exploring the frontiers of hybrid authorship in the development of AI-assisted L2 crime stories

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This study examined the role of Generative AI (GenAI) in facilitating multimodal reading and writing in crime story creation. To investigate how language learners engage with AI as part of their linguistic development, we examined a single 45-minute workshop, learners' first opportunity to freely use GenAI in creating 500–1000-word crime stories. Analysis revealed most students used AI in a simple, directive style; not conversationally. Results may reflect student's lack of digital literacy and prompting ability, however, the lack of guidelines at the macro and micro levels of our institution, and lack of time to integrate TPACK – Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) into the larger context of curriculum also contribute to these challenges. Findings suggest faculty development, increased space for exploring GenAI-related tasks, and better specification of meta-concepts for building stories, combined with shorter units of text output, such as a scene rather than a whole story, could improve L2 learner-AI interaction.

Keywords: Generative AI, hybrid authorship, creative writing, postmodern authorship, crime stories

Introduction

The advent of General Pretrained Transformers (GPTs) has unlocked AI's potential in creative writing, particularly for on-demand fiction. AI systems can now craft compelling prose and poetry almost autonomously. Tsao and Nogues (2024) suggest that “creative collaboration with GenAI may be a promising way to foster emancipatory practices in the classroom, while nurturing creative and critical skills” (p.

1). OpenAI's ChatGPT defined such hybrid authorship as "combining contributions from multiple intelligences" (OpenAI, personal communication, November 30, 2024).

Recently there has been an increase in the implementation of conversational AI in language learning (Ji et al., 2023). Yet, the connections between AI text-based conversation and collaborative writing remain underexplored, since language programs view authorship as individual, making language borrowing taboo. In contrast, Pennycook (1996) asks, "At what point does a phrase or an idea become owned? And at what point does it become public?" (p. 204). And with regard to the development of voice, Bakhtin (1981) claimed individual voice in writing comes primarily through dialogic channels (p. 272). Further, the communal construction of narrative aligns with both Open AI's policies and literary theorists such as Barthes (1977), who said, "... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author." (p. 148). While modernist views of authorship support language learning, *postmodernist* theories of authorship support the experimentation of collaborative authorship with AI. By collaborating with generative AI, L2 learners can craft interiority through dialogue and inner thoughts, helping develop their L2 voice.

Normalizing new technologies in language classrooms requires investigating student interactions. We explored students' prompting styles for AI-enhanced creative writing and understanding of literary meta-concepts through these research questions:

1. What strategies and tools do students use when crafting prompts to develop a crime narrative?
2. What concepts and skills are needed for students to generate comprehensible output that meets the criteria for a crime narrative?

Method

The study took place at a mid-sized private university in Japan, within an English Program where domestic students were in the pre-advanced class or an equivalent elective (CEFR B1+ to CEFR B2-). Research was conducted in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, using ChatGPT 3.5, Google Gemini (Basic), and Copilot. The university ethics committee approved the methodology, and all students consented to participate. Students worked in pairs or small groups, selecting ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot to write a CEFR B1-level crime story (~500+ words), incorporating plot, characters, dialogue and crime-related concepts (perpetrator, witness, means, motive and opportunity). The crime story task aligns with Puentedura's (2013) highest level of technological integration, using AI to enable a previously inconceivable task. The task aimed to help students use fiction-writing building blocks collaboratively with AI. The low-stakes, 45-minute, in-class task involved 80 students (non-probability sampling), generating 151 prompts across 33 AI-interaction sessions.

Collected data included student prompts and AI-generated output. The data were analyzed to examine student-AI interactions in completing tasks. Open tagging characterized individual prompts, later condensed into a final system by consensus. Overall group sessions were tagged according to Budiu et al., (2023) with two dominant tags from their typology, which included search queries, funneling, exploring,

chiseling, expanding, and pinpointing. Final stories were aggregated and analyzed for text complexity using Text Inspector (2021).

Results

Individual prompts and prompt series will be used to illustrate the results qualitatively. Individual prompts were categorized into “Cursory” (vague, brief, a copy-paste of the original task instruction), “Elaborate” (detailed, specific, included the specific stylistic interest of each student), or “Research” (asking AI model for information).

Table 1. Group A prompts for creating a crime story about trespassing categorized

Prompt #	Prompt content*	Category tag
1	What is trespassing?	Research
2	What is example of trespassing?	Research
3	I want your idea about perpetrator who did trespassing.	Research
4	I want to make funny trespassing story. do you have a idea about charactor who commits trespassing	Research
5	@ could you make a princes who comiits trespassing like grimm story. The story have to be CEFR Level B1+. T	Elaborate
6	could you make a princes who comiits trespassing like the story of Eichi Oda who writting manga one piece. The story have to be CEFR Level B1+. T Daring 16C. About 500 words.	Elaborate
7	About 500 words	Cursory

*Note: Prompts are verbatim copied from the student input, including errors

Group A’s development of prompts demonstrated gradation toward elaborate prompts that are iterative and added specific meta-stylistic concepts which met both – the demand of the assignment and the interest of the student pair. This shows the students’ ability to move from guided to freer prompting.

Table 2. Group B prompts for creating a crime story about trespassing categorized

Prompt #	Prompt content*	Category tag
1	list some examples of Trespassing	Research
2	please make a story about trespassing into school	Elaborate
3	include witness	Cursory
4	make it easier to understand	Cursory
5	add dialog	Cursory
6	Alex is a high school student and found a hole in the school fence so wanted to try sneak in	Elaborate
7	add more narrative aspects	Cursory

*Note: Prompts are verbatim copied from the student input, including errors

Group B’s prompt development was observed as mostly cursory, relying on simplistic, isolated prompts. Their individual prompts tended to lack meta-stylistic specificity and did not effectively meet either the assignment’s demands or the students’

interests. Thus, the prompt samples in Table 2 did not indicate a transition from guided prompting to more independent prompting.

About 37% of the total prompts were merely “Cursory” (C) in the larger corpus of the activity data whereas 42% crossed the threshold of “Elaborate” (E) and 21% of the total prompts remained “Research” (R) oriented (Figure 1).

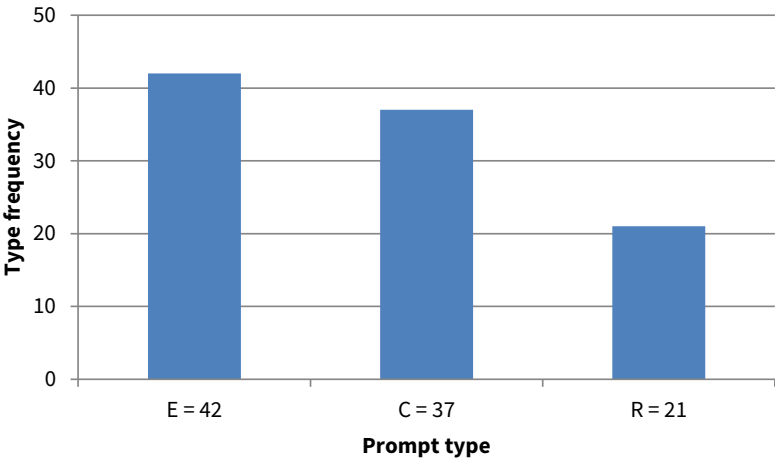


Figure 1. Distribution of individual prompt types (percentages)

Another important pattern observed in the interaction is the type of exchange that students were having with the AI models by tagging each session into different sub-categories. The students generally resort to directive prompting, reducing the AI model to a functional tool and not a collaborative resource.

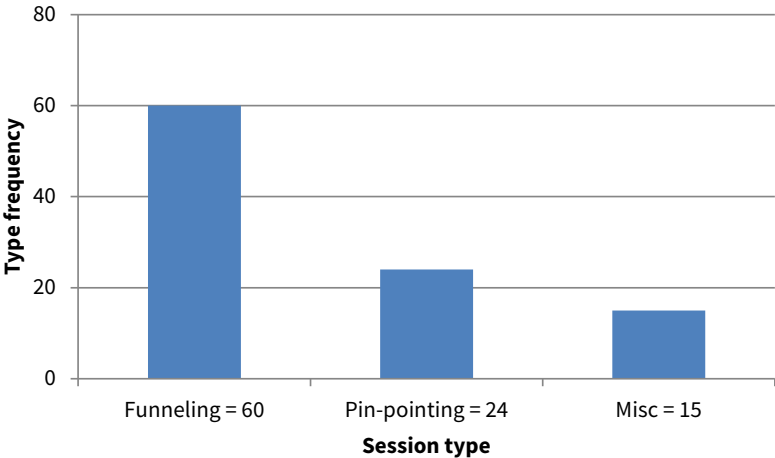


Figure 2. Distribution of session quality (conversational exchange quality) in three categories prescribed by Budi et al., (2023) (percentage)

Almost 61% (see Figure 2) of all collected sessions can be categorized as funneling where a larger vague query is refined through additional constraints (see Table 3). This type of interaction cannot be considered “conversational” as it misses elements

of conversational such as initiations in the form of questions, comments, feedback, follow up, or transitions (Tsui, 1994).

Table 3. Prompts showing funneling conversation with AI

Prompt #	Prompt content*
1	Noah 21 age is perpetrator and APU student. witness is Kazuki 20 years old. They don't know each other. The setting is in APU. Can you make a story of vandalism?
2	can you make a story of vandalism again such as above?
3	can you make a story about above again? Noah is a kind boy
4	can you add a pepetrator, witness, and main character?
5	I want to make 500 words or more story

*Note: Prompts are verbatim copied from the student input, including errors

It is important to note that when we analyzed the final, submitted story output from the GenAI systems they were found to be CEFR C1 or CEFR B2+ on the Common European Framework of Reference according to Text Inspector (2021), which is well above the CEFR B2- level of the participants. Note also, that the results are on output coming after the GPTs were prompted to provide CEFR B1+ level output (see Table 1).

In the next section, we will discuss the answers to the research questions and their connections to relevant literature.

Discussion

Research Question 1: What strategies and tools do students use when crafting prompts to develop a crime narrative?

From the results we can see students generally use funneling as a prompting strategy for the crime narratives required in this task, within a linear execution mode where neither the student prompter, nor the GPT, were providing the types of reactions, confirmations, or follow-ups one would encounter in an authentic conversation. Students generally imposed arbitrary constraints (In Table 3, prompt 4, “..... add a pepetrator [sic], witness, and main character?”) without specifying plot-related narrative elements adjunct to them, which resulted in heavily descriptive output.

While research shows that LLMs can interact with humans, producing language-based outputs to prompts that appear, feel, and are perceived as natural (Demszky et al., 2023), there was a disconnect in the ability of students at the research site to interact with LLM models in ways most effectively aligned with the capability frontier of such software. Several factors may be involved in shaping the funneling type interaction we observed. First, this was the students’ first experience in prompting in English in class, and we did not explicitly teach prompting. Second, the output was a 500+ word monologue at CEFR C1 level, usually. Thus, according to Budiu et al’s (2023) categories of prompts, a next step for these learners would be to try ‘pinpointing’ unknown vocabulary words in the output and asking the GPT to provide simpler terms or to remove them. Such repetitive pinpointing work might also be seen as ‘chiseling’ where the learners could have asked the GPT to remove all CEFR B2 level adjectives, for example. These moves would have taken a lot more time, as well, and

so the time allotted for the workshop was another factor that impeded the students from transitioning into a more negotiated, conversational style with the GPT.

Research Question 2: What concepts and skills are needed for students to generate comprehensible output that meets the criteria for a crime narrative?

Students need to know meta-stylistic concepts associated with fiction writing, such as exposition, climax, rising/falling action, etc. to be able to chisel away at stories generated by AI and make them more immersive. Additionally, students need to learn how to implement the same types of strategies they would use to negotiate comprehensible input from high-level native speakers (Long, 1983) with chatbots, that is, assertive strategies for eliciting elaboration, recasts, and clarification with reference to specific words and phrases in the output. Additionally, since this study, ChatGPT 4 has added reactions, confirmations, and follow-ups to the end of its output, which was not offered by ChatGPT 3.5.

Conclusion

This classroom project explored how generative AI like ChatGPT 3.5, might simultaneously support composition and comprehension skills. While feasible, this study highlights the need for further pedagogical interventions before normalizing chatbot use in L2 story writing. Findings suggest students should focus on co-writing a single scene, intensively negotiating specific GPT-generated lines. Shorter output segments would provide learners with more manageable text. Even short dialogues can incorporate complex meta-stylistic concepts (e.g., free indirect discourse, interior monologue, or stream of consciousness). Expanding meta-stylistic prompts while reducing output would improve the quality of human-AI interactions. Additionally, a final assessment rubric would help teachers define desired output and refine prompt specifications.

This exploratory study alone cannot determine whether prompting behaviors stemmed from L2 use, task design, or other factors. Future research could trace student prompt-writing skills over time through interventions, practice sessions, and controlled studies with pre- and post- assessments. All things considered, GPTs allow students to explore crime types and meta-stylistic concepts that once required a full semester. Additionally, this study echoes TPACK-in-action findings that excessive policy focus hinders TPACK development (Koh et. al, 2014). We hope this article encourages program administrators to allow more experimentation with technology in language classrooms.

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