

Writing as Curation: Empowering Authorial Agency in AI-Assisted Composition Through Style Prompting and Quotation Glosses

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Abstract As artificial intelligence writing tools become increasingly prevalent in educational settings, students often report feeling alienated from AI-generated content, describing it as lacking their "authentic voice." This article presents a pedagogical approach that addresses this challenge by repositioning students as curators of their authorial identities rather than passive consumers of AI-generated text. Through a dual curation methodology combining quotation glosses with style prompting, students develop multiple authorial voices for different rhetorical situations while maintaining agency over their writing process. The approach builds on classical rhetorical traditions while leveraging contemporary AI capabilities, creating a framework where students collaborate with AI tools as thought partners rather than replacement authors. Implementation in composition courses demonstrates that when students curate both content (through analytical quotation glosses) and style (through persona-based prompting), they develop stronger metacognitive awareness of their writing processes and increased confidence in AI collaboration. This method transforms potential threats to authorship into meaningful partnerships that enhance rather than diminish student agency in academic writing.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, writing pedagogy, student agency, style prompting, authorial voice*

1. Introduction

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence writing tools into educational environments has created both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges for composition pedagogy. While these tools offer powerful capabilities for text generation, revision, and ideation, many students report feeling alienated from AI-generated content, describing it as lacking their "authentic voice" or personal investment. This alienation reflects a deeper pedagogical problem: traditional approaches to AI integration often position students as passive recipients of machine-generated content rather than active agents in the writing process.

Students frequently express concern that AI-generated writing doesn't sound like them or represent their authentic thinking. They worry that using AI tools compromises their academic integrity or diminishes their role as writers. These concerns stem partly from misconceptions about authenticity in writing—the belief that effective writing requires maintaining a single, fixed voice rather than adapting one's approach to different rhetorical situations and audiences.

The approach described here addresses student alienation by fundamentally reframing the relationship between writers and AI tools. Rather than viewing AI primarily as a tool for error correction or automated text generation, this method positions students as curators of their

authorial identities through personalized portfolios of quotation glosses and stylistic personas. By developing multiple voices for different rhetorical situations, students discover that authenticity in writing is not about maintaining a single, fixed voice, but about making intentional choices about how to present oneself across various contexts and audiences.

This pedagogical framework makes student agency visible and intentional rather than hidden or accidental, transforming AI tools from potential threats to authorship into collaborative partners that enhance students' rhetorical capabilities.

6. Literature Review

Traditional approaches to voice development in composition studies have long recognized the importance of systematic technique combined with intuitive understanding. Peter Elbow's (1973) concept of "methodical intuition" demonstrates that effective writing requires both structured approaches and personal insight, establishing a foundation for understanding how technological collaboration can enhance rather than replace human creativity. Similarly, Francis Christensen's (1967) work on "generative rhetoric" demonstrates how writers can use concrete methods to produce prose with particular qualities, prefiguring the kind of controlled generation now possible with large language models where precise prompting can guide AI tools toward specific stylistic characteristics.

Virginia Tufte's (2006) comprehensive taxonomy of sentence patterns illustrates how identifiable syntactic structures create specific impressions on readers, providing writers with concrete vocabulary for analyzing and directing stylistic choices that prove essential for effective AI collaboration. Walker Gibson's (1966) identification of distinct stylistic modes based on systematic linguistic criteria demonstrates how writers can adopt different "masks" or personas for various rhetorical purposes, an insight that directly informs contemporary approaches to AI prompting and persona development.

Joseph Williams and Joseph Bizup's (2016) principles of clarity, concision, and coherence emphasize writing as a product of conscious choices rather than mere intuition, highlighting how different authorial personas might prioritize different aspects of communication based on their rhetorical goals. This framework for intentional stylistic development aligns naturally with systematic AI collaboration, where writers must articulate their goals clearly to achieve desired outcomes. The creative nonfiction tradition's emphasis on voice development through imitation and experimentation provides additional support, as Root and Steinberg (2012) observe that discovering one's authentic voice often begins with trying on and practicing the voices of others.

The humanist tradition of developing stylistic abundance through variation exercises, exemplified by Erasmus's (1512) methods for generating multiple versions of similar content, demonstrates that effective writing has always involved conscious choices about presentation rather than simply discovering one "authentic" voice. Contemporary research on AI writing assistance reveals both significant promise and important limitations, as while AI tools excel at

mimicking established styles and synthesizing information, they frequently fail to preserve individual authorial voice across drafts and suggestions (Ippolito et al., 2022). The fragmented state of research on persona-based text generation (Tseng et al., 2024) highlights the need for systematic approaches to stylistic control that preserve human agency while leveraging AI capabilities, pointing toward pedagogical frameworks that position human curation and judgment as central to effective AI collaboration.

7. The Dual Curation Method

The pedagogical framework presented here employs a "dual curation" methodology that positions students as active curators of both content and style. This approach builds two complementary libraries that students develop throughout their writing process:

Research-Side Curation involves students gathering quotations, examples, anecdotes, and specialized information that will inform their writing content. Rather than simply collecting sources, students create analytical "glosses"—75-125 word reflections on meaningful quotations from their reading. These glosses function as snapshots of students' minds engaging with specific ideas, forming the foundation for later writing projects.

Author-Side Curation focuses on collecting examples of sentence structures, diction choices, tonal effects, and rhetorical moves encountered in reading. Students build a "stylistic library" that helps them define and refine distinct authorial personas, which they can then use to guide AI tools in generating text with specific stylistic features.

This dual approach draws inspiration from Renaissance humanist education, particularly Erasmus's (1512) methods for developing stylistic abundance through variation exercises. Students learn to generate multiple versions of similar content using different stylistic approaches, discovering that effective writing involves conscious choices about how to present information rather than simply finding one "authentic" voice.

The methodology is particularly powerful when working with AI writing tools because it requires thoughtful human guidance at every stage. By curating both stylistic examples and substantive content, students create frameworks that allow AI to amplify their intentions rather than generate generic text. The human remains the primary agent, making curatorial decisions about which quotations matter, which stylistic approaches serve particular purposes, and how to synthesize AI-generated material with their own insights.

8. Quotation Glosses as the Foundation of Student Agency

The quotation gloss serves as the cornerstone of this pedagogical approach. Students are instructed to view these short analytical reflections not as busy work but as the development of their "intellectual autobiography"—a personalized dataset of thoughts and responses to ideas that will inform all subsequent writing.

The process begins with students selecting quotations that genuinely resonate with their interests and questions. This selection process itself represents a crucial act of curation, requiring students to make judgments about which ideas deserve sustained attention and analysis. The resulting glosses become resources for various writing tasks while serving as the raw material for AI collaboration.

When students later work with AI tools, they feed their carefully crafted glosses into prompts, asking AI to suggest connections, identify patterns, or explore implications across multiple glosses. As one assignment description used in the author's existing composition course explains: "By feeding your carefully crafted reflections to an AI, you'll be able to explore new connections and perspectives that you might not have considered on your own. The AI will act as a thought partner, helping you refine and expand your arguments. But for this partnership to be truly valuable, the AI needs to understand your unique perspective."

This approach reframes AI tools not as replacement authors but as thought partners that work most effectively when given rich, student-generated material. The student's agency is preserved and strengthened through curatorial choices about which quotations matter, which connections are meaningful, and which perspectives deserve development. The AI becomes a collaborative partner in intellectual exploration rather than a substitute for original thinking.

The gloss-writing process also develops crucial metacognitive skills. Students learn to articulate their thinking processes, identify their intellectual interests, and recognize patterns in their responses to different types of material. These skills prove essential when working with AI tools, as effective prompting requires clear communication about desired outcomes and writing goals.

9. Style Prompting and the Development of Multiple Voices

Beyond content curation, students learn to shape AI outputs through systematic style prompting. The framework provides detailed models of various authorial personas, such as the "Precisionist Observer/Reporter," the "Contemplative/Lyrical Inquirer," or the "Passionate Advocate/Witness." Each persona is characterized by specific linguistic patterns including sentence structures, diction choices, tonal markers, figurative language, and voice characteristics.

This approach directly addresses the problem of student alienation from AI-generated content by demonstrating that authenticity in writing is not about maintaining a single voice but about making intentional choices appropriate to different rhetorical situations. Students discover that effective writers have always adapted their voices to serve different purposes and audiences—a practice that AI tools can facilitate rather than compromise.

The persona-based approach builds on Gibson's (1966) work on stylistic modes, which demonstrates how specific combinations of linguistic choices create distinctive effects. Students learn to analyze these patterns in exemplary writing and then use their analysis to guide AI tools in producing content that aligns with their rhetorical goals.

For example, when adopting the Contemplative/Lyrical Inquirer persona, students learn to recognize and direct AI toward "evocative concrete & sensory language," figurative language like metaphors and personification, and varied sentence structures that create a "meditative rhythm." This systematic approach to style gives students concrete tools for shaping AI outputs rather than simply accepting whatever the machine produces.

The process involves several steps: students select an appropriate persona for their rhetorical situation, analyze the linguistic patterns associated with that persona, curate examples from published writers who exemplify the chosen voice, and then construct prompts that direct AI to incorporate both their researched content and their chosen stylistic approach. Finally, students revise and refine the AI's output, adding their unique insights and ensuring alignment with their vision.

This systematic approach to style development serves multiple pedagogical purposes. It builds students' analytical skills as they learn to identify and categorize linguistic patterns. It develops their rhetorical awareness as they consider how different voices serve different purposes. Most importantly, it maintains their agency as primary decision-makers in the writing process while leveraging AI capabilities to expand their stylistic range.

10. Implementation and Classroom Results

Implementation of this approach in college composition courses follows a structured progression designed to build students' curatorial skills before introducing AI collaboration. Students begin by creating glosses on quotations from assigned readings, gradually building collections of 40 individual analytical reflections. These glosses form the foundation of everything in the course.

By mid-semester, students present the patterns and potential arguments emerging from their glosses to the class, then begin using these materials as the basis for AI-assisted brainstorming. Students experiment with different combinations of glosses, asking AI tools to suggest connections and possible arguments while maintaining control over the direction and development of their ideas.

For final essays, students adapt their writing to different audiences and stylistic approaches, using their curated glosses to guide AI in generating drafts that maintain their unique perspectives while adopting appropriate authorial personas. The progression from shorter drafts of essays to longer, more rigorous arguments allows students to develop confidence with the method while tackling increasingly complex writing challenges.

This approach situates AI collaboration within an explicit philosophy that treats artificial intelligence as an integral part of contemporary thinking and writing processes. Rather than viewing AI as either a threat to academic integrity or a simple productivity tool, the framework positions these tools as natural extensions of how humans have always thought and written with technological assistance.

Informal and anecdotal student responses suggest that this approach successfully addresses the alienation many initially feel toward AI-generated content. When students develop systematic approaches to content curation and style prompting, they report stronger ownership of their work and greater confidence in their ability to direct AI tools effectively. The method appears to transform potential threats to authorship into productive partnerships that enhance students' rhetorical capabilities.

11. Discussion

The pedagogical approach described here offers several advantages over more common methods of AI integration in writing instruction. By positioning students as curators rather than consumers of AI-generated content, the framework preserves and strengthens human agency while leveraging the capabilities of contemporary language models.

The dual curation methodology addresses a fundamental challenge in AI-assisted writing: how to maintain student investment and ownership when machines can generate text more quickly than humans. By requiring students to build substantive foundations through quotation glosses and systematic style analysis, the approach ensures that AI tools enhance rather than replace student thinking.

The emphasis on multiple authorial personas also addresses common misconceptions about authentic voice in academic writing. Many students believe they must discover and maintain a single, fixed voice throughout their writing careers. This framework demonstrates that effective writers have always adapted their voices to serve different rhetorical purposes, and that AI tools can facilitate this adaptation when used with appropriate guidance.

The systematic approach to style prompting provides students with concrete skills for directing AI outputs rather than simply accepting whatever machines produce. This capability becomes increasingly important as AI tools become more prevalent across educational and professional contexts. Students who develop these skills in composition courses (and other writing-intensive courses) will be better prepared to use AI effectively in other disciplines and career settings.

The framework also contributes to broader discussions about human-AI collaboration in creative and intellectual work. By demonstrating how human curation and judgment remain essential even when working with sophisticated AI tools, the approach provides a model for productive partnership rather than replacement or competition.

However, the method requires significant investment from both instructors and students. Building collections of quotation glosses and developing systematic approaches to style analysis takes time and sustained effort. The approach works best when integrated throughout an entire course rather than introduced as an isolated unit or assignment.

The framework also assumes access to reliable AI tools and sufficient technological literacy among both instructors and students. Implementation may be challenging in contexts where such resources are limited or where there is significant resistance to AI integration.

12. Conclusion

As artificial intelligence tools continue to reshape writing practices across educational and professional contexts, composition pedagogy must evolve to embrace these technologies while preserving essential human capabilities. The dual curation approach described here offers a promising framework for achieving this balance by positioning students as active agents in AI collaboration rather than passive recipients of machine-generated content.

Through systematic development of content curation skills and stylistic awareness, students learn to direct AI tools effectively while maintaining ownership of their intellectual work. The approach transforms initial feelings of alienation from AI-generated content into productive partnerships that enhance students' rhetorical capabilities and metacognitive awareness, enabling the crucial shift from dependence to collaboration, from alienation to empowerment, that effective AI integration can achieve. When students develop systematic approaches to content curation and style prompting, they discover that AI tools can amplify their intentions rather than substitute for their thinking.

The framework presented here suggests that the future of writing instruction lies not in choosing between human and artificial intelligence, but in developing approaches that leverage the strengths of both. By treating AI as a collaborative partner guided by human curation and judgment, educators can prepare students for a future where such partnerships become increasingly common while ensuring that essential human capabilities remain central to the writing process.

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