# Rethinking Creativity and Plagiarism in the Age of Generative AI

Renuka Khatiwada[1], Ambir Khadka[2]

[1]Department of English, University of Texas at El Paso, USA

[2]Department of English, University of Texas at El Paso, USA

**Article History**: *Submitted*: 24 February 2026; *Reviewed*: 28 February 2026; *Revised*: 4 April 2026; ***Corresponding Author***: akhadka@miners.utep.edu



**DOI:** https://doi.org/10.3126/spectrum.v4i1.92920

***Abstract***

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), which has been a topic of debate in higher education contexts, has complicated traditional definitions of plagiarism and creativity, for there is no consensus among scholars whether text generated by GenAI is original and/or creative or not. In this paper, we propose a rethinking of definitions of plagiarism and creativity in the age of GenAI. We draw on existing conversations about the use and misuse of GenAI and on the changing discourses of plagiarism and creativity. The discussion shows that there are discontents about the use of GenAI, and the traditional concepts of plagiarism and creativity are potentially challenged. Our analysis reveals that reconceptualized definitions and concept of plagiarism and creativity position GenAI as a collaborator in the process of learning there by undergirding the need of AI-informed framwork for learning. The framework of human-GenAI collaboration not only proposes the ethical use of AI but also tends to give rise to innovative pedagogical approaches. As an attempt to join the ongoing scholarly conversations about the use of GenAI, we hope that our analysis opens up new avenues for further discussions and research.

***Keywords****:* AI, Human Intelligence, Collaboration, Plagiarism, Creativity

## Introduction

Plagiarism is a crucial topic of discussion in the academic world (Pecorari, 2013). It is normally defined as borrowing other people's ideas without crediting or citing them (Foltýnek, et al. 2020). More recently, since Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) can generate text and plagiarism-detecting tools cannot clearly determine whether the text was authored by a human or a machine, the idea of plagiarism has undergone a crisis (Anders, 2023). Likewise, the definition of human creativity has been problematic, as GenAI may seem creative and innovative in generating texts (McGeorge, 2024). There are also discontents about the use of GenAI, especially ChatGPT, for academic purposes. Scholars claim that the use of AI impedes creativity in students and "restricts their creative processes" (Runco, 2025; Bal & Arseven, 2025). Some scholars are also concerned that using AI inappropriately or trusting it blindly could raise concerns about academic integrity or plagiarism (Torres-Díaz et al., 2025; Ananya, 2025). Academics, especially teaching faculty, are troubled by students' indiscriminate use of AI in their academic papers.

As First-Year Composition (FYC) instructors at a university, we face the ongoing challenge of students asking us whether they can turn in AI-assisted assignments. One of our colleagues told us that one student submitted a paper that appeared to be directly generated from AI, as it included template placeholders such as "[your name]" instead of the student's actual name, indicating that the response had been copied and pasted without careful revision. Another instructor from a different university told us that a student included fabricated citations in weekly discussion posts referencing authors, page numbers, and quotations that do not appear in the assigned textbook or course readings. When we researched possible pedagogical solutions in the age of AI, we found that FYC instructors in the US are in a dilemma: "FYC instructors are unable to precisely determine the methods by which these technologies can enhance rather than encroach upon the learning experience in FYC classrooms" (Pandey et al., 2025, p. 9). This US-based research, since we are also FYC instructors, encouraged us to explore the nuances of AI from the perspectives of plagiarism and creativity.

In this paper, we explore key concerns about the use of AI, and at the same time, we argue that the growing presence of AI requires us to reconceptualize traditional notions of plagiarism and creativity. We stress

that human writers may not be able to isolate themselves from AI technologies, as these tools are already embedded in our digital and intellectual environments. Hence, instead of pointing out their mistakes or trying to find their weaknesses, we believe that it is time to rethink these concepts and redesign our pedagogical approaches because "with the growing availability of AI affordances, the interventionist role and responsibility of human intelligence on artificial intelligence are ever-increasing" (Bhusal, 2025, p. 1485). However, the lack of clear theoretical frameworks and pedagogical guidelines creates a pressing research question: How to rethink plagiarism and creativity in AI-mediated contexts? This is the question we will try to address in this paper.

In what follows, we will first examine the reasons behind the discontentment using ChatGPT in the academic context. Then, we will offer critical perspectives on the ideas of creativity and plagiarism. While exploring the complexity inherent in the erminologies, we will rethink—if not redefine—both terms, as we hope rethinking may help us get a direction toward a new understanding of the terms, which is necessary these technologies have become integrated in our learning process.

**Dialogues and Debates on Use of GenAI**

Recent scholarship on generative AI reveals growing concerns about plagiarism (Ibrahim, 2023; Pandey et al., 2024), authorship (Moulaison-Sandy, 2025), and the meaning of creativity (Medeiros, 2025). Rather than presenting AI as a simple tool, scholars increasingly describe it as a force that complicates long-standing definitions of originality and intellectual labor. A number of important research studies have been done, highlighting the need for ChatGPT literacy skills advocacy to ensure proper prompting, such as literacy in hooking and specifying, qualifying and quantifying, and rhetorical situations in English as a Second/Foreign language classrooms (Pandey & Bhusal, 2025). The question, however, is how to make the prompting skill ethical and responsible. Ananya (2024) argues that AI-generated papers may accidentally copy other researchers' ideas without giving credit. For Ananya, with tools like the *AI Scientist*, capable of generating hypotheses, running code, and writing full manuscripts, researchers have found that some outputs closely mirror existing methods or concepts without proper attribution, raising growing concern in academia. The use of AI poses a new challenge for detecting plagiarism, unlike traditional methods. Because AI models remix information they were

trained on, they can produce research that looks new but is actually very similar to existing work, creating a new kind of "idea plagiarism" (p. 599). Unlike copying sentences, which is easier to detect, copying ideas is very hard to prove. This makes it difficult to build automated tools that can check whether AI-generated research is truly original. As she quotes Weber-Wulff, there's no one way to prove idea plagiarism in the age of GenAI. This highlights a structural challenge: current plagiarism-detection frameworks are designed to identify textual similarity, not conceptual overlaps generated through probabilistic modeling.

Moreover, in their qualitative research, Torres-Diaz, Duart, Rivera, and Beltran Flandoli (2025) examine whether the use of generative AI tools, especially ChatGPT, is linked to plagiarism among university students in Ecuador. They find that students who trust ChatGPT a lot, use it for assignments, or "students who indicate they disclose their AI use to instructors are also more likely to report engaging in plagiarism behavior" (p. 8). On the other hand, students who understand AI tools better or believe that AI can positively support their learning are less likely to engage in plagiarism. The study concludes by stating that use of AI does not automatically cause plagiarism, but how students use it and understand it makes a difference.

In the same vein, Başer, Kozak, and Erdoğan (2026) introduce the term "AI-giarism" to describe AI-related plagiarism. They identify a gap in research that very little study has been conducted on why students choose to misuse AI. To understand the issue better, they use a "fraud triangle" (p.3), a model that looks at what pushes people toward dishonest behavior. They found that most students are likely to commit AI-giarism because of various reasons such as when they feel confident using AI as AI-generated texts are difficult to detect with software, justify plagiarism as acceptable, and don't realize that AI can produce misleading or wrong information, and feel pressure to perform well in school.

In addition, King (2025) situates the emergence of ChatGPT within a broader pedagogical disruption. He explains how the launch of ChatGPT in 2022 created a major disruption in higher education by transforming how people think about teaching, learning and academic integrity. He argues that many instructors and students felt that the academic world had been "turned upside down" (p. 1) as AI-generated writing suddenly became widely available and easy to use. Some people feared the negative consequences of

generative AI such as harming students' ability to write, think critically, and learn while others welcomed the possibilities for creativity and reduced workload. King's analysis reflects the ambivalence that defines much current discourse: AI is simultaneously perceived as threat and opportunity.

Furthermore, the debate becomes particularly complex in discussions of creativity. Runco (2025) argues that AI-generated work is often mistaken for real creativity, and this misunderstanding can affect how educators support students' "authentic creativity" (p. 2). AI can produce outputs (poems, images, ideas, solutions) that look creative, but he explains that AI lacks the psychological processes that make human creativity genuine, such as self-expression, intrinsic motivation, personal meaning-making, and problem finding. AI can be used in the classroom, but it should be seen as a tool, not a creative partner as GenAI is not itself authentically creative in itself.

In this context, Bal and Arseven (2026) present a balanced approach stating that the advent of generative AI, "it becomes clear that undergraduate students adopt a more experimental approach" (p. 13) and discover new identities of writing. They also write that AI's impact on creativity depends on students' grade level, how they use AI, and the teaching methods around it. For them, AI can inspire creativity when used carefully, but overusing it can weaken students' ability to come up with original ideas on their own. For example, students can use generative AI to produce creative materials for multimodal writing projects, since it "can process data involving still images, sound, and moving images" (p. 9) as mentioned by the MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI (2023). This shows that AI not only assists with text but also enables experimentation across multiple forms of media, giving students new ways to express ideas.

Additionally, one of the insightful studies on the ethical and responsible use of AI tools has been proposed by Bhusal (2025), who calls it a decolonial and critical approach to AI. He theorizes that "encouraging students to use ChatGPT decolonially and critically, ESL/EFL teachers can connect English (L2) with students' L1 more responsibly" (p. 1485). Even though the decolonial and critical approach proposed by Bhusal can be used across disciplines, it is truly applicable to multilingual pedagogical settings. Therefore, stepping on Bhusal's critical AI literacy, we propose to rethink plagiarism and creativity.

The review of existing resources suggests an urgent need to rethink traditional understandings of plagiarism and creativity. In existing research, what remains underdeveloped is a framework that simultaneously redefines plagiarism and creativity in AI-mediated contexts, which can be used in pedagogical practices. This gap points to a central research problem that we aim to address in this paper: the absence of a unified theoretical and instructional model to guide how plagiarism and creativity should be understood, taught, and assessed in the age of generative AI.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper is a discussion paper. Our discussion is informed by the concept of GenAI in light of plagiarism and creativity. For that purpose, as a representative theoretical modality, we have used the insights proposed by the MLA–CCCC Joint Task Force workshop (2023; 2024), which approaches AI as a tool that must be used ethically and critically, emphasizing that plagiarism now includes misrepresenting AI-generated text as one's own. This framework encourages transparency about AI use while showing that creativity remains a human-driven process, with AI serving only as support for ideas and revision, not as a replacement for original thought. It stresses that AI systems are "not thinkers but statistical models that 'learn' by recognizing patterns in large bodies of training data" (p. 5). This highlights that AI does not create truly original ideas, which raises concerns about creativity and the risk of presenting AI-generated work as one's own. Similarly, the taskforce, noting that "the landscape of GAI technologies and programs is rapidly evolving" (p. 9), underscores the need for educators to engage directly with AI technologies. In the meantime, the MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI (2023) presents the benefits of such technology. For instance, GenAI has "the promise to democratize writing, allowing almost anyone, regardless of educational background, socioeconomic advantages, and specialized skills, to participate in a wide range of discourse communities" (p. 8). These frameworks highlight that while AI is not a substitute for human creativity, it can expand who can contribute meaningfully to written discourse and how they engage with ideas. This framework allows people to use AI tools ethically, and within this ethical framework, we aim to bring plagiarism and creativity into conversation. Thus, given the framework of GenAI, we propose rethinking the discourses on plagiarism and creativity.

## Discussion

Based on our review of more than 100 scholarly publications across diverse journals and platforms, we identify three recurring themes: discontent with the use of GenAI, the discourse of creativity, and the discourse of plagiarism. From this broad corpus, we focus on the most representative studies that directly address plagiarism and creativity in context of higher education. While we acknowledge as a limitation that the review was not exhaustive, our critical engagement with the selected literature and its core arguments revealed a clear need for a coherent framework to reconceptualize these discourses in the age of generative AI.

### *Discontent with the Use of GenAI*

Discontent is very human and is due to twofold reactions, in our opinion, caused by our experience of the academic surroundings. One is that, after all, we are interacting with an emotionless machine. For example, while interacting with Siri and Alexa, at times, we are happy that we get many answers from the voice assistants, but they have no human role as our office assistant with whom we can have live interaction. Nevertheless, we still may forget that our conversation is with a machine that has no faculty to consider us as humans. It has no desire or emotion, only a set of algorithmic data. Only when needed, we connect to AI like Siri or Alexa to get information and help with writing our research and term paper, in the case of ChatGPT. When Alexa and the like turn into significant AI, the discontent with its presence makes critics apprehensive of its power and the subsequent disempowerment of human capacities. This type of discontent is related to the ambivalence of humans toward machine relations. The other discontents are ethical in terms of the loss of human creativity and over-reliance, leading to constant theft of its resources. Possessing and using that which is not ours is not being creative but committing plagiarism.

Hanemaayer (2022) in her edited volume, *Artificial Intelligence and Its Discontents: Critiques from the Social Sciences and Humanities* focuses on the doubts and rejections to AI along with digital ethics and machine learning. Her very first line in the "Introduction" begins with a question: "On what basis can we challenge Artificial Intelligence (AI) - its infusion, investment, and implementation across the globe?" (p. 1). What is going to happen with AI is looming almost everywhere and the answers come from a wide field of Humanities and Social Sciences. The key criticisms come

from both within and outside the field, from both the field of computation and social sciences, as she writes:

> Although AI discontent was ignited within the computing environment, it is worth noting the connections between the social and philosophical project of critique and AI criticism. The Frankfurt School and similar critical projects, such as critical race theory and feminism, have fostered foundations of critique and modes of analysis from outside the computing field. (p. 6).

It argues that AI criticism extends beyond technical issues, connecting ethical and creative concerns to broader social and philosophical frameworks, which helps guide responsible AI use.

The argument adds to the point that discontent with the use of AI is pervasive from various disciplines. For instance, the concern of Burton (2022) is that human intelligence cannot be achieved due to the very differences of 'thinking' faculty. Differentiating AI from humans, she notes that when an adult human is the norm, it is by such a norm that children and machines are compared. Burton further asserts: "Beings of AI are neither children nor adults, but at times we may find ourselves behaving as though they're one or the other and acting accordingly" (p. 41). The existence of machines being ageless in this context cannot have evolutionary growth which is essential to knowledge formation. AI does not belong to the tradition of intelligence which has million years of evolutionary history. One may like to question the very word 'intelligence' tagged with AI. We can question that but the scope of this paper does not allow us to differentiate intelligence and artificial intelligence here.

Ullmann (2022) focuses on the sexism fueled by AI in the domain of media; it is not biased and neutral regarding gender sensitivities. Her discourse is geared toward being ethical and all-inclusive in such context of biases to avoid harm: "The nature of our highly interconnected world has made online translators indispensable tools in our daily lives. However, their output has the potential to cause great social harm" (p.123). It shows that there is a necessity to deal with problems like biases and ethical concerns not only in this specific case but in different ways AI is used, particularly in areas that are sensitive, such as how AI shapes media portrayal. Since the familiar argument is that language is masculine, the

algorithm from which AI language is constructed has to have male ideological structure.

Furthermore, regarding the issue of resistance, Schelenz (2022) maintains how the implementation of AI can connect with the issue of margin and oppression and resistance to such discriminations. AI can be taken into consideration while dealing with injustices on Blacks or women of color. The influence of AI on this social issue is the major discourse in Schelenz's essay. Schelenz writes that "resistance against harmful AI includes political activism, science fiction and art production, and the development of alternative social justice-oriented frameworks and designs for AI (p. 226). There is no domain in the social sciences, in posthuman discourses, media, governance, law and ethics where the problem of AI has not been only critiqued but alarmed.

Moreover, Chomsky (2023) in his opinion piece "False Promises of ChaptGPT" writes even though AI tools may prove helpful in some ways "they differ profoundly from how humans reason and use language. These differences place significant limitations on what these programs can do, encoding them with ineradicable defects" (para. 3). Therefore, for Chomsky, these kinds of programs might struggle with abstract or contextually complex tasks that require deeper understanding or revised interpretations of the terms like creativity and plagiarism.

The existing conversations demonstrate that the discontents come from understanding that even though AI is highly advanced, it is still very different from how humans think. Despite the fact that Sam Altman of OpenAI is devising Q as the most advanced AI in the near future, there will be questions and debates about creativity, plagiarism, and ethics. ChatGPT or its avatar Q cannot do everything humans can do, which makes it having limits in what it can achieve.

### *Discourse of Creativity*

In this section, we examine how creativity has been historically defined and redefined in order to demonstrate that the concept has never been fixed or stable. By tracing philosophical, theological, and educational perspectives on creativity, we aim to show that what we now consider "creative" has always been shaped by cultural, intellectual, and historical contexts and thus asks for reconsideration of the concept in the age of GenAI.

As Saebo et al. (2007) state "Creativity is, like all brain-based functions, ethereal and elusive" (p. 206), there is no fixed definition of creativity. Many writers and philosophers along with ordinary people define it from their own perspectives. That is why it is often complicated to pin down the definition of creativity. "It has been used in so many different contexts that it has lost much of its meaning and power" (Webster, 1990, p. 22). The meaning the creativity embodies is profound and difficult to grasp as it is fleeting, contingent, and amorphous. Creativity is seen as something very rigid and constrained but at the same time it is also a matter of liberating the mind. If we compare the meaning of creativity from history till date, the meaning and definitions have been constantly changing and evolving.

Creativity was plated with orthodoxy shaping the belief of people that it is not attainable or teachable, only few people are born with this quality, and they are God-gifted. Creativity was often linked with divinity, God having the power to create something out of nothing. However, John Wilmot in his poem "Upon Nothing" problematizes the notions as 'nothing' in its most basic or primitive form gives rise to 'something.' Surkova (2012) states that the idea of creation from nothing remains unsolved until present. He presents different views on creativity and how they keep changing with time. In orthodox Christian view, human cannot create something because he is already created by the God and he is the puppet, controlled by another. Surkova puts forward another view on creativity as below:

> There is a view grounded in empirical investigations of natural sciences that creativity means the transformation of something that previously existed, excluding novelty from the process - nothing new can be created. That is creation as change in the existing condition, re-creation, preservation and creation as evolution, i.e. as blind variation, adaptation, and selection. (p. 116)

Under this concept of creation, nothing may be created entirely new, but they are modified and recreated. In other words, creativity involves the process of alternating the existing essence of something and involves a transformative process based on what is already created—like the evolution process.

Creativity has intrigued thinkers, artists, scientists, and philosophers across centuries. White (1968) presents four cases—where children are assigned to different activities without any set of guidelines or rules—to better understand creativity. He reaches the conclusion that all children possess creative abilities in some way but only a few "can become Dostoevskys or Einsteins" because "creative thinking is a matter of letting the mind play round a topic" (p.124). Creativity thrives with practice but diminishes if restricted. Hence, constant practice eventually leads to creative activities. Creativity cannot be injected in people nor people possess inherent creative capacity, but it is a matter of diligence and tenacity. "Creativity [. . .] does not come from any sudden inspiration invading the idle mind and idle hands but from the labour of the driven person" (Surkova, 2012, p. 132); it does not come out of sudden, but it is a matter of persistent practice, determination, and dedication. The process needs effort and constant practice, a "balance of imagination, intuition, and analysis" (p. 132).

However, if a person does not produce something substantial out of constant practice, the person is not creative. This idea aligns with the view presented by Surkova (2012) who writes about "understanding creativity only in terms of finished work" (p. 117). Even White (1968) believes that to say someone highly creative is also not justifiable, "To say that a person is 'highly creative' is not very informative unless it is clear in what area of activity he is creative, that is, has produced valuable work" (p. 125). In this sense, labeling someone as 'highly creative' gains significance when it is contextualized within a specific area where their innovative ideas, creations, or problem-solving skills have made significant and valuable contributions.

Discussions of creativity in the context of AI require careful definition, because the term is often misunderstood. As Balkin (1990) observes, creativity 'is overused, misused, confused, abused, and generally misunderstood' (p. 29). This underscores the need to clarify what we mean by creativity when examining how AI can support human innovation, ensuring that AI complements rather than replaces genuine creative effort.

Sometimes, it is contested with the idea of originality and sometimes with talent. Balkin writes that there could be some essence of novelty in creativity but talent is entirely opposite. Creative person can be a talent, but all the talented people cannot be necessarily creative. Creative people produce something whereas talented people may not produce anything

despite being talented. He writes, “To create means to do. . . Creative people do things. They make. They assemble. They put together. They make connections where connections were not previously apparent” (p. 30). He further argues that if an individual's actions, even in intent, aim to contribute positively to society, they are exercising creativity. This assertion broadens the scope of creativity beyond artistic or innovative pursuits, suggesting that actions contributing to personal well-being or societal improvement can also be deemed creative.

Admitting a fear that “AI will lead to a decline in the students’ writing and creative and critical thinking” (p. 973), as a solution to the debate on GenAI and creativity, Niraula (2024) writes, “some scholars have suggested designing assignments so students can rely on their creativity. One such assignment can be multimodal digital compositions” (p. 975). It suggests that much of the resistance to generative AI in academic settings stems from a perceived threat to student creativity.

Amid the many debates about whether creativity can be taught, another question emerges in this era of technology: if someone produces something with the help of ChatGPT, will it be considered as creativity of the person or not? The question prevails in contemporary times with the easy access of OpenAI. “The philosophical writings on creativity have done more to impoverish than to enlighten our understanding of creativity” (Maitland, 197, p. 397). If the understanding of creativity is improvised constantly, if it is in the process of evolution, then why not redefine it from new perspectives? In the pervasive use of technology, redefinition of creativity can be proposed if not entirely but in changing contexts of the rise of technology that has been assisting human physically and mentally, one must rethink. The use of AI aids in the loss of creativity is a question to be pondered upon. It is true that with the excessive use of ChatGPT, people may be passive to produce the idea on their own, but taking help from these AI softwares to enhance ideas does not steal the creativity of people.

At a large language model (LLM) symposium held during our personal development meeting, a colleague of ours expressed strong support for ChatGPT, which convinced us too. They mentioned using ChatGPT as a brainstorming tool: When generating ideas, we often seek help from instructors, professors, or friends. Through discussions and arguments, we collectively reach to conclusions. In this process, participants present their opinions, discard some, and propose new ideas, and continue the

discussion. The colleague inputs a prompt into ChatGPT, asking for elaboration. If unsatisfied, he gives prompts again for another idea. He inputs his own ideas and asks ChatGPT to expand on them, and it complies without any fuss. He doesn't need appointments with instructors or professors to discuss his ideas. Nor does he hesitate to seek software validation for his concepts. Some people, especially introverts, find it easier to express themselves using such modern software. These tools can cultivate critical thinking and creativity if used ethically. However, it is essential to have a clear purpose. Rather than blindly relying on AI or copying ideas outright, we should use these tools positively to enhance our latent creativity. This can be achieved by using AI as a starting point rather than a final product. Users should critically evaluate and refine AI-generated ideas, compare outputs, and integrate their own perspectives. Setting clear goals and engaging actively with the content helps develop both creativity and critical thinking while maintaining originality.

Just for using ChatGPT one cannot be considered less creative, or one should not assume that the use of modern technology demolishes creative power. Using AI does not reduce creativity because it serves as a tool to inspire and expand ideas rather than replace human thought. When users critically engage with AI outputs—adapting, refining, or combining them with their own insights—they exercise creativity. This connects to plagiarism because ethical AI use encourages proper attribution and original development, ensuring that AI assists rather than substitutes for genuine intellectual work. Creativity being the production of something new or original, even the most creative works emerge from engagement with existing ideas, texts, or influences. This interdependence creates a blurred boundary between inspiration and imitation. As a result, when similarities appear between a student’s work and existing works, instructors may interpret these overlaps as borrowing or even plagiarism. Consequently, creative work is often subjected to greater scrutiny, even in cases where the student has independently developed their ideas while drawing on prior influences.

What matters, however, is how humans can keep on using AI and sharpening and enhancing creativity. Evidence from educational and cognitive research shows that when humans interact critically with AI outputs—adapting and refining them—AI becomes a tool for enhancing creativity rather than replacing it. Structured AI use, such as iterative brainstorming and reflective evaluation, helps users develop original ideas

while maintaining ethical standards and avoiding plagiarism. After all, we cannot claim that humans have been less creative by the advent of machines with industrial revolutions, rocket science, computers, and smartphones. In the times of multidisciplinary world of knowledge and information, creativity will have new cognitive possibilities. Humans have been using resources to augment their mental capabilities, and in our opinion, in this context, proper use of AI has more potentials like in the field of medicine where patients are saved by rapid information and research done by LLM like ChatGPT. Combining human skills and machines to save a patient is a creative act. Peter Lee et al. (2023) in *AI Revolutions in Medicine* have presented multiple cases of such creative and critical thinking to save patients demonstrating how AI can augment human problem-solving. This illustrates that AI is not merely a tool for replication or automation, but can actively support original thinking—a point that resonates with our discussion of AI-assisted creativity and the fine line between inspiration and plagiarism. While AI may enhance creativity, its use simultaneously raises significant ethical concern of plagiarism. The integration of AI into academic writing complicates traditional understandings of authorship and originality.

### *Discourse of Plagiarism*

With the pervasive use of AI, especially after the launch of ChatGPT, the issue of authenticity and the potential for increased plagiarism became an evident concern along with that of creativity. “Many claimed that Chat-GPT and other GenAI platforms would facilitate widespread cheating, plagiarism and other form of academic dishonesty” (Dobrin, 2023, p. 12). The use of GenAI in educational sector has become more complex as it gives rise to the question of authenticity and the issue of plagiarism. AI—ChatGPT— is now seen with the equivalency to plagiarism. When there is a discussion on AI, plagiarism emerges automatically as if they are the metonyms.

According to Oxford Dictionary, plagiarism is “the practice of copying another person's ideas, words or work and pretending that they are your own.” Plagiarism revolves around the act of taking ideas, words or work of other people and considering them rightfully yours. This involves not properly acknowledging or giving credit to the author from whom the concepts were borrowed. Similarly, Victoria University of Wellington defines plagiarism on its website: “Plagiarism is when you present someone

else's work as if it were yours, whether you mean to or not. "Someone else's work" means anything that is not your own idea." Plagiarism thus involves an act of using other's ideas intentionally or unintentionally without proper documentation. Whether the purpose of borrowing idea is because of lack of proper knowledge of documentation or due to carelessness, it is considered as "theft." These ideas are not limited to texts; it encompasses visuals, charts and graphs, or statistics (Krizner & Mandell, 2012, p. 332). Park (2003) has collected terms of reference to explain what plagiarism is, arguing that plagiarism is often described in highly moralistic and emotive language, portrayed as a "sin," a violation of identity and intellectual integrity, or even a corrosive force that damages the foundation of scholarship. At the same time, it is framed in legal and academic terms as theft, forgery, or poor scholarly practice, reflecting a wide range of interpretations from serious crime to lapses in academic rigor. Thus, the concept behind plagiarism has not been taken positively in such definitions. The connotation regarding the term is what the act is taken as negative. There is no possibility of defending stealing ideas from other people and sources and not giving credits. About creativity, Walia (2019) explains: "Over the course of literary debates, there seems to be a general agreement that creativity involves the production of novel and useful ideas and products" . . . "and where the process of innovation takes over, that is, the need to implement a creative idea" appears (p. 1). The possibility of those two coming together has been facilitated by unwise and dishonest use of AI. The question also is whether the birth and nature of AI is based on plagiarism. The question is important but not within the scope of this paper.

There are many reasons behind people committing plagiarism. Not only students but also educators are equally responsible for such a practice. Roberts (2007) stresses that unintentional plagiarism is distinguishable which involves lack of correct references whereas intentional is "deliberate copying of words or ideas" and pasting without giving credit to its creator (p. 45). Despite knowing it is wrong, students don't leave an opportunity to exploit it, knowing the fact "that there was no immediate consequence for them if they cheated occasionally" (Ma et al., 2008, p. 200).

Plagiarism is not a recent phenomenon; it likely has existed throughout history. However, the adoption of modern technologies, especially the internet, has significantly expanded its scope and possibilities. "Plagiarism is not new—it has probably been occurring since the beginning of time - but the use of new technologies in general, and the Internet in particular, have

opened up a vast new area" (Roberts, 2007, p. 45). There was stealing of ideas too, along with selling and buying, before the advent of modern technologies, for instance,—the time when there was no overwhelming use of technology—some students paid a hefty amount for their thesis to be bought. Such practice continues even today despite the growing use of AI technology.

With the advent of technology, copying and pasting have become so easier and is furthered with digitized plagiarism. Ma et al., (2008) remark some of the names of the sites that openly encourage students to copy the contents: "There are Web sites that provide free essays for students to plagiarize reports and term papers. Some examples are www.al-termpaper.com www.academicpapers.com, www.bignerds.com, www.cheater.com, and www.cheathouse" (p.199). Confining plagiarism with the use of ChatGPT is something to be thought of. Copying other's ideas and presenting as own was prevalent without the launch of OpenAI and even if such AI programs are banned in the future—which seems impossible seeing the influence and adoption of the AI technology—the stealing of other's idea will not be eradicated. Theft will take another form, but it will be in continuation. Thus, instead of criticizing the use of ChatGPT and other LLM tools, it is important to reconceptualize the concept of plagiarism.

First, it is necessary to understand who holds the power to have copyrighted the ideas generated with the help of AI. Is it really a theft to use ideas from AI or is it technically acceptable? If we consider the definitions posed by Oxford dictionary and researchers, plagiarism is "stealing people's ideas" considering the ideas and concept their intellectual property. But the question is: who is the owner here? The ideas generated by ChatGPT do not belong rightfully to any people but the machine-produced viewpoints. AI systems generate output by analyzing patterns in large datasets of human-created texts, which can sometimes result in reproducing ideas or phrasing similar to identifiable authors. To address this concern, it is important to distinguish ownership, authorship, and plagiarism: ownership refers to who legally holds the rights to a text or idea; authorship identifies who originally created it; and plagiarism occurs when someone presents another's ideas or expressions as their own without proper acknowledgment. In practice, ethical AI use requires transparency about AI's role in generating content, careful citation of sources when

known, and teaching users to critically evaluate outputs rather than presenting them as fully original human work. This approach recognizes AI as a tool that can assist creativity while minimizing the risk of unintentional appropriation of others' intellectual property. Nevertheless, we can also make a provision to cite ChatGPT if the ideas are taken from them as Robillard (2009) quotes Mary Alice, "when students take information without acknowledging the source, they are not borrowing but stealing!" (quoted in Robillard, p. 410). We can get rid of the burden of stealing by citing them. However, if the ideas belong to you and you have only taken help from such programs to elaborate or revise the ideas then who holds the authority to claim the originality of the ideas?

If the issue of plagiarism is troublesome, then there should be some steps to be considered by the faculty and instructors. In most of the cases, plagiarism takes its worst form and the reason is students—those copying other's ideas—not knowing the consequences of plagiarizing other's work. There should be "strict policies to deter cheating and plagiarism" (Ma et al., 2008, p. 201). Students should be made aware of such policies repeatedly. Reminding them about the policies frequently would make them think twice before committing such an act. Instead of considering ChatGPT the cause of plagiarism, the educators should be aware of creating assignments which are to be attempted on the basis of primary research.

In this way, teachers and educators need to be more creative in designing assignments. Additionally, they should bear the responsibility when the assignments are attempted. Instead of just checking passively and pointing out if the assignments are plagiarized or not, the time should be utilized in appropriating their assignments. They can ask students questions about their papers as Dobrin (2023) posits, "Is the work your own?" (p. 13). Validating can be done by not directly submitting the paper but by being interactive to the students, asking different components from the written paper. If things become more interactive, then students will be aware of taking assistance from GenAI. Moreover, "Our role as instructor must now include teaching students how to engage Gen tools critically and responsibly" (p. 19) in and beyond the classroom as the use of technology cannot be controlled. Thus, plagiarism has to be rethought in the context of how to tackle it because plagiarism is like a part of academic life. Our argument about rethinking is relocating plagiarism in strict disciplinary discourses which are interactive, rule-bound and accountable.

## An AI-informed Framework

Not only in academics but humans can benefit with the wise use of AI in other fields as well. For example, Altman (2023) in The *AI Revolution in Medicine* notes that AI has solved many medical problems regarding serious diseases, providing diagnoses and prescriptions within minutes, which humans cannot. To do the same thing, humans could take months or weeks, but AI can do it in a fraction of a second as AI can "scour and scrape data from the massive and complex information available on the Internet" (Dobrin, 2008, p. 6). AI in medicine has provided immense solutions; AI is working wonders in the field of business and management, and many other fields, like climate change. In the context of creativity and plagiarism, this technological leap can be appropriated given the constantly changing quality of AI. Furthermore, just as AI revolutionized medical diagnostics by rapidly processing vast amounts of information, AI-driven tools can aid in content creation across various domains. Though AI quickly and effortlessly creates content, it can not create entirely new ideas like humans can. It is up to us how we can make a connection to AI-produced content.

Therefore, the convergence of AI and human input becomes equally essential or even more importantly in academic writing and the classroom teaching-learning process as in other related fields and activities. People need to watch over and team up with AI to make sure it does not copy too much and stays original. One such way is for humans to ensure originality by actively monitoring AI outputs, using plagiarism-detection tools, and critically reviewing suggestions before incorporating them. By editing and integrating AI-generated ideas with their own knowledge and insights, users prevent overreliance on AI and maintain authentic creative expression. This oversight helps guarantee that AI serves as a supportive tool, not a source of copied content, aligning ethical use with the development of original work. That ensures that the users, e.g., students and instructors, actively supervise and collaborate with AI to ensure its outputs remain original and do not excessively replicate existing work.

By guiding AI use and combining human judgment with its capabilities, we can support creativity while minimizing the risk of plagiarism. When humans and AI tools like ChatGPT team up, they should focus on creating content in fair and honest ways. Therefore, we propose to position AI as a collaborative tool rather than an independent creator,

guiding users to combine human judgment with AI outputs through ethical use, transparency, proper attribution, and reflective practices that support originality and critically informed creativity. Such a collaboration leverages AI's speed of processing while incorporating human thought and new ideas, ensuring the content is original and meets ethical standards.

The development of AI in the 21st century, in its more advanced stage, is an important paradigm shift. We do not know what will happen regarding its potential and uncertainties, regarding both its role in plagiarism and its impact on creativity. While AI is not a comprehensive solution for all problems, it is vital to incorporate it with human ingenuity. This necessitates a collaborative relationship between AI and human ethics, aligning with concerns about plagiarism and furthering creativity. By building a collaborative alliance between human creativity and technological innovation, we aim not to succumb to machines but to enhance our creative capacities alongside them. The framework strengthens its practical value by outlining clear strategies for ethical AI use, such as transparent disclosure of AI assistance, proper attribution, and reflective evaluation of generated content. It also emphasizes integrating AI-guided activities into pedagogy to foster original thinking and responsible creativity among users. Ultimately, it is crucial to strike a balance where AI supplements human efforts rather than overshadowing them, particularly in the realms of addressing plagiarism and nurturing creativity.

To strike this balance, the framework should clarify the roles of AI systems and human users. For instance, AI can be integrated as a preliminary screening tool to detect potential instances of plagiarism or provide citation suggestions, while final evaluative decisions remain the responsibility of human reviewers. In terms of creativity, the framework can position AI as a generative aid—supporting idea generation, outlining, or feedback—while requiring users to critically assess, adapt, and build upon these outputs. Additionally, embedding guidelines for transparent AI use and encouraging reflective engagement with AI-generated content can help preserve originality and ensure that human creativity remains central to the process

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper illustrates that the rapid integration of generative AI in higher education has profoundly disrupted traditional understandings of plagiarism and creativity, raising urgent ethical,

pedagogical, and conceptual questions. Our analysis shows that while GenAI can mimic originality and produce seemingly creative outputs, it also challenges instructors and students to reconsider what counts as authentic authorship and intellectual labor. By proposing a framework that positions GenAI as a collaborative partner rather than a substitute for human creativity, we emphasize the importance of transparency, proper attribution, critical reflection, and intentional use of AI tools in the learning process as GC (2026) argues in the introduction of this issue. This collaborative approach not only mitigates risks of plagiarism and misuse but also creates opportunities to develop innovative pedagogical strategies that integrate AI responsibly into teaching and learning. Ultimately, our discussion contributes to scholarly debates on AI in education, highlights avenues for future research on ethical practices, fosters authentic creativity, and redefines learning outcomes in AI-mediated contexts.

**Funding details**

We have not received any financial support or funding from anywhere for the study.

**Disclosure statement**

We do not have any conflicts of interest to disclose.

## References

Ananya. (2025, August 21). The hidden plagiarism risk of AI science. *Nature, 644*, 598–600.

Anders, B. A. (2023). Is using ChatGPT cheating, plagiarism, both, neither, or forward thinking? *Patterns (New York, N.Y.)*, *4*(3), Article 100694. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2023.100694

Bal, M., and Arseven, T. (2026). Students' writing skills and creativity in the age of artificial intelligence: A systematic review of creativity across diverse AI supported writing contexts. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 60*, Article 102118. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.102118

Balkin, A. (1990). What is creativity? What is it not? *Music Educators Journal, 76*(9), 29–32. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3401074

Başer, M. Y., Kozak, M., and Erdoğan, İ. H. (2026). Do we worry about the use of artificial intelligence and plagiarism? Students' AI-giarism behaviour through the fraud triangle. *The Internet and Higher Education, 69.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2025.101071

Bhusal, P. C. (2025). Fostering critical AI literacy through a decolonial use of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL classrooms. *Advances in Mobile Learning Educational Research*, *5*(2), 1472-1487. https://doi.org/10.25082/AMLER.2025.02.005

Chomsky, N., Roberts, I., and Watumull, J. (2023, March 8). The false promise of ChatGPT. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/08/opinion/noam-chomsky-chatgpt-ai.html

Dobrin, S. I. (2023). *Talking about Generative AI: A Guide for Educators.* Broadview Press.

Foltýnek, T., Meuschke, N., & Gipp, B. (2020). Academic plagiarism detection: A systematic literature review. *ACM Computing Surveys*, *52*(6), 1–42. https://doi.org/10.1145/3345317

GC, S. (2026). Introduction: Academic writing/publishing, writerly virtues and human knowledge. *The Spectrum, 4*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.3126/spectrum.v4i1.92913

Hanemaayer, A. (Ed.). (2022). *Artificial Intelligence and Its Discontents.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88615-8

Ibrahim, K. (2023). Using AI-based detectors to control AI-assisted plagiarism in ESL writing: "The Terminator Versus the Machines." *Language Testing in Asia*, *13*(1), Article 46. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-023-00260-2

King, A. E. (Ed.). (2025). *Artificial Intelligence, Pedagogy and Academic Integrity.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-92534-4

Krizner, L. G., and Mandell, S. R. (2012). *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide.* Bedford/St. Martin's.

Lee, Peter et al. (2023). *AI Revolutions in Medicine: GPT4 and Beyond.* Pearson.

Ma, H. J., Wan, G., & Lu, E. Y. (2008). Digital cheating and plagiarism in schools. *Theory Into Practice, 47*(3), 197–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802153809

Maitland, J. (1976). Creativity. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 34*(4), 397–409.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/430575

McGeorge, D. (2024). *The ChatGPT Revolution: Get Curious, Get Productive and Get Creative with AI* (Second edition, fully revised and updated edition.). Wiley.

Medeiros, K., Cropley, D. H., Marrone, R. L., & Reiter-Palmon, R. (2025). Human-AI co-creativity: Does ChatGPT make us more creative? *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, *59*(2). https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.70022

MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI. (2023). Working paper 1: Overview of the issues, statement of principles, and recommendations. *Modern Language Association & Conference on College Composition and Communication*. https://hcommons.org/app/uploads/sites/1003160/2023/07/MLA-CCCC-Joint-Task-Force-on-Writing-and-AI-Working-Paper-1.pdf

MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI. (2024). Working paper 3: Building a culture for generative AI literacy in college language,

literature, and writing. *Modern Language Association & Conference on College Composition and Communication.* https://hcommons.org/app/uploads/sites/1003160/2024/11/MLA-CCCC-Joint-Task-Force-WP-3-Building-Culture-for-Gen-AI-Literacy.pdf

Moulaison-Sandy, H. (2025). *AI and authorship in scholarly communication: writing with intelligence* (First edition.). Routledge.

Niraula, S. (2024). The impact of ChatGPT on academia: A comprehensive analysis of AI policies across UT system academic institutions. *Advances in Mobile Learning Educational Research*, *4*(1), 973-982. https://doi.org/10.25082/AMLER.2024.01.009

Pandey, H. L., & Bhusal, P. C. (2024). ChatGPT literacy for fostering language proficiency and writing skills in ESL/EFL classrooms. *Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, *7*(3), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.3126/njmr.v7i3.70859

Pandey, H. L., Bhusal, P. C., & Niraula, S. (2025). Large language models and digital multimodal composition in the first-year composition classrooms: An encroachment and/or enhancement dilemma. *Computers and Composition*, *75*, Article 102892. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2024.102892

Park, C. (2003). In Other (People's) Words: Plagiarism by University students—literature and lessons. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 28*(5), 471–488. https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293032000120352%20Words.pdf

Pecorari, D. (2013). Teaching to avoid plagiarism: How to promote good source use (1st ed.). McGraw-Hill Education, Open University Press.

Perez, D. (2023, July 25). UTEP helps faculty use ChatGPT, AI in class to curtail academic integrity concerns. *El Paso Matters.* https://elpasomatters.org/2023/07/25/chatgpt-artificial-intelligence-utep-epcc-academic-integrity/

Roberts, T. S. (2007). Student plagiarism and the Internet. *Educational Technology, 47*(2), 45–47. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44429488

Robillard, A. (2009). Pass It On: Revising the "Plagiarism is Theft" Metaphor. *JAC, 29*(1/2), 405–435. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20866905

Runco, M. A. (2025). The misleading definition of creativity suggested by AI must be kept out of the classroom. *Education Sciences, 15*(9), Article 1141.

Saebø, A. B., McCammon, L. A., and O'Farrell, L. (2007). Creative teaching—teaching creativity. *Caribbean Quarterly, 53*(1/2), 205–215. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40654985

Surkova, I. (2012). Towards a creativity framework. *Society and Economy, 34*(1), 115–138. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41472190

Torres-Díaz, J. C., Duart, J., Rivera, D., and Beltrán Flandoli, A. (2025). Artificial intelligence and academic integrity: Exploring plagiarism in Ecuadorian universities. *International Journal for Educational Integrity, 21*, 35. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-025-00209-3

Walia, C. (2019). A Dynamic definition of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2019.1641787

Webster, P. R. (1990). Creativity as creative thinking. *Music Educators Journal, 76*(9), 22–28. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3401073

White, J. P. (1968). Creativity and education: A philosophical analysis. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 16*(2), 123–137. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3118455