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The Pen of the Digital Age: Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Virtual Assistant, Not a Replacement for Human Creativity



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Associate Professor III
Mindoro State University, Oriental Mindoro

The Bird's Eye View

This essay illustrates how artificial intelligence is beneficial to human creativity, especially in making artistic and intelligent works. From my personal experience as an associate professor in addressing student inquiries about the legitimacy of using AI in academic work. Through the illustrative example of composing an original poem with AI-generated word suggestions, this essay argues that AI should be understood as analogous to traditional professional instruments—the calligrapher's pen, the programmer's computer, the dentist's chair, the teacher's lesson plan—tools that augment human capability without erasing human thought, creativity, or emotional authenticity.

A Question That Echoes Through the Classroom Halls

I seldom encountered the question, “Mam, Pinapayagan nyo po ba ang paggamit ng AI sa klase ninyo?” [“Mam, do you allow the use of AI in your class?”]

My answer to this recurring question has remained consistent. I also practice the use of AI in my daily work. I always go on the philosophy that “The AI is created to assist. The idea should be yours, and the hands-on work should be yours.” This seemingly simple response contains within it a nuanced position on the relationship between human creativity and artificial intelligence—one that neither demonizes technological assistance nor surrenders the essential elements of authentic creation to algorithmic generation.

The Anatomy of Assistance: A Simple Illustration

To illustrate this principle, I offer an example from my own creative practice—the composition of a love poem. Mind you, not every day will you have the mood to create a love poem. The conventional fear surrounding AI in creative writing suggests a scenario in which the poet simply requests, “Write me a love poem,” and accepts the algorithmic output as their own. This represents a fundamental misunderstanding of both the potential and the proper use of AI assistance.

When I set out to compose a poem about love, I did not ask AI assistant, to write the poem for me. Instead, I approached the AI with a specific, bounded request: I wanted my poem to employ rhyme, which is traditionally accepted, and I asked for words ending in “-ight” that might be suitable for a love poem. The AI responded with a curated list: “light, night, sight, bright, delight, moonlight, starlight, twilight, sunlight, flight, right, might.” It even suggested natural pairings: “night/light” and “sight/delight.”

Armed with linguistic abilities and a love for poetry, I was trained to be a writer when I was in elementary school. I usually consult the thesaurus to give me synonyms, but the problem I encountered is that it never rhymes. As said earlier, I just asked the AI to give me words related to love with endings in -ght and -ing. The result was “When the Love is Right,” a poem that emerged from my own emotional experience, my personal feelings, my own understanding of love's nature, and my own artistic sensibility:

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When the Love is Right

When the love is right
You only feel the dazzling bright
He will be your light
Even though he is out of sight

When the love is right
You will hold on tight
No matter how dark is the night
Surely there will be sunlight

I never thought I'd be falling
On the way, your eyes are looking
My love for you is always hoping
My heart will forever be beating
When the love is right

Your embrace is really calming
When I am not with you, I am yearning
My lips keep on smiling
while you are calling
My heart beats for our next meeting
When the love is right

Travelling with you is a delight.
Being with your arms under the moonlight
I'll be yours in the twilight
Always looking forward to our next flight
When the love is right

When we are kissing
Our souls are melting and uniting
Your soft kiss is awakening
Your eyes seem to be burning
I almost lost the air I am breathing
Sudden satisfaction is the feeling
Yes! After the oneness and loving!
When the love is right

On the obstacles of life without light
We will fight together with all might
Even in the midst of thunder and height
I will be peaceful with your insight
You will pacify me to skintight
When the love is right

The Difference That Matters: Generation Versus Assistance

What's the difference between AI generation and AI assistance?

When a student asks an AI to "make me an introduction of my thesis about teaching strategies," they have surrendered the intellectual labor—the analysis and the synthesis of evidence and insight—to an algorithm. They are simply putting away the experience to think. As we all know, thinking and being creative are harnessed and developed, not born, and not an instant-cooked noodle. This practice of letting the AI do the dirty work is alarming. When the students generate the resulting text, it produces a polished output, but it represents a form of academic dishonesty because it claims to be human, but it was not.

My personal experience in writing sometimes frustrates me when the result of my work is AI-generated. I knew from the very start that words were mine. I often associate it with the Grammarly since I am also conscious about my grammar and follow what Grammarly suggests. My students also share these sentiments. So their recourse is to use AI as a copy and paste. Anyway, you will be accused of using AI no matter what. These are my students' answers in jest.



However, I emphasized to them the importance of a process. There is a process for us to become skilled and competent. If we skip these steps, we can contribute to the statistics that Filipino graduates who are poor in comprehension. In my simple example of creating a poem, I am emphasizing the importance of harnessing the unique ideas of a student as a reader and thinker. There is a fundamental truth about creativity and learning: the value lies in the process, not merely submitting the best output. AI-generated text cannot help develop specific skills, refine our expressions, and build cognitive abilities.

Understanding AI's Proper Place

Let us dissect the appropriate role of AI in creative and intellectual work. I have a simile of which I consider the broader philosophy of tools and their relationship to human agency. Every profession relies upon instruments that extend and refine human capability. The question is, "Is there a replacement for human skills and contribution?"

Look at the calligrapher. As a calligrapher myself, I found that proper use of a tool helps me enhance my prowess. The pen—whether brush, reed, or steel nib—is essential to the practice of calligraphy. Yet no one tells us that the pen creates the art itself. The calligrapher brings knowledge of letterforms, an understanding of composition, a trained hand, and an aesthetic sensibility that transforms ink marks into visual poetry. The pen is just the tool through which human artistry reveals itself. Artificial intelligence, on the other hand, is the pen of the digital age—a sophisticated tool created by humans that can assist in the mechanics of creation.

Consider the programmer. The computer upon which code is written does not itself conceive of software solutions. The programmer brings problem-solving ability, algorithmic thinking, knowledge of systems architecture, and creative vision to bear upon technical challenges. The computer is the medium through which these human capacities find expression and implementation. Similarly, AI can assist programmers in debugging, suggesting syntax, or identifying patterns, but the conceptual work of software design remains fundamentally human.

Look at the doctor. The stethoscope, along with its array of instruments and modern technologies, enables procedures that would be impossible with bare hands alone. Yet the stethoscope does not diagnose conditions, plan treatments and operations, or execute procedures with professional judgment. The doctor's years of training, clinical experience, and diagnostic insights are what transform a collection of tools into effective healthcare. AI in medicine may assist with imaging analysis or treatment planning, but it cannot replace a doctor's expertise and judgment in curing a specific disease.

Glance at the teacher. The lesson plan and syllabus are a tool—a structured outline that guides instruction. Yet the lesson plan and syllabi do not teach. The teacher brings pedagogical knowledge, an understanding of student needs, the ability to adapt in real time, and the relational qualities that make learning meaningful. A lesson plan generated by AI might provide a useful starting framework. Still, it cannot respond to the raised hand, the confused expression, or the breakthrough moment that transforms learning.

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Preservation of Human Creativity

When I wrote "When the Love is Right," I drew upon a lifetime of emotional experience—the particular feeling of loving and being loved and the specific texture of longing, waiting, and hoping that characterizes romantic attachment. I have been in a long-distance relationship for decades. The AI that provided my rhyming words has no such experience. It just processes patterns in language; it does not feel love, the excitement of being loved, fear of loss, or hope for seeing each other again. What distinguishes human creativity from the algorithmic generation of an AI? The answer lies in emotion, intention, experience, and the real meaning.

The words I chose from the AI's list were not arbitrary selections. "Bright" resonated with my understanding of how love illuminates existence. Bright is associated with feeling loved. "Sight" is connected to the visual memory of seeing the beloved face of the man you love. "Night," on the other hand, illuminates the particular sadness or loneliness of loving someone absent. These associations, these resonances, these meanings emerged from human consciousness engaging with language—not from statistical patterns in training data.

It is fun to see the AI's output, which is found to be grammatically correct, thematically coherent, and stylistically polished. However, it is basically empty of authentic human experience. AI cannot feel real love and sadness. When AI assists human creative works, it supports and extends human capability while preserving the essential elements that make creative work more meaningful.

Points to Ponder

Ang henerasyon ngayon ay nagiging tamad! [This generation becomes lazy!]. I disagree with this statement. Artificial intelligence was not created to stop us from thinking, doing, and evaluating. It was created to assist us in thinking more effectively, more efficiently, and more expansively. In my case, I use AI to help me improve my grammar expressions. It will never replace my authentic experience when I translated my anecdote into ink.

To my dear students, I say this: Use AI as you would use any tool—thoughtfully, purposefully, and in service of your own learning and creation. Let it assist you in finding words, clarifying ideas, checking your grammar, and expanding your possibilities. But never let it think for you, create for you, or feel for you. The ideas must be yours. The hands-on work, or the dirty work, must be yours. The meaning must be yours. All the thinking must be yours. Do not skip this process. It will help you and your future workplace.

The pen may be digital now, but the hand that guides it—it is you! You have the heart and experience that moves the hand and makes a beautiful creation!

