CHAPTER 27.

"HOW DO WE STOP STUDENTS FROM USING AI?" WRITING CENTERS, GENERATIVE AI, AND LINGUISTIC JUSTICE

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OpenAI's viral rollout of ChatGPT in the late fall of 2022 set higher education ablaze with think pieces, faculty learning groups, and social media posts (Taecharungroj) touting the end of the college essay, and the humanities at large (Chun and Elkins). Coming just months after most U.S. institutions had returned to fully in-person learning following the COVID-19 pandemic, the greater forces of academia seemed to collectively compartmentalize anxieties over generative AI (GenAI) for the spring 2023 semester. Metastasizing through the downtime of summer 2023, however, was the ensuing moral panic surrounding ChatGPT and other GenAI (García-Peñalvo). This panic manifested in a concerning manner at my institution, a small public research university whose student population is moving rapidly towards majority minority demographics but whose faculty and staff have yet to reflect that trend. The campus' fear over GenAI took shape as a wave of baseless plagiarism accusations against students of color. As assistant director of the Writing and Multiliteracy Center (WMC), I sought to work with the center's director to determine the reasons for this alarming trend and looked to leverage the WMC, a space on campus already committed to advancing ideals of linguistic justice, as a tool of student advocacy and a place to defend writers during this period of transition.

To position the WMC as a space for holding conversations surrounding AI usage on campus, I first needed to listen to the growing concerns. Faculty harbored trepidations about students utilizing the technology to write papers, chairs stressed the importance of framing writing as process-oriented rather than product-driven, and tutors expressed fears of their jobs transforming into AI police. All the while, co-workers came to me as a de facto AI expert with the million-dollar question: "How do we stop students from using AI?" This proved to not only be a difficult question to answer but one I became reluctant

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to answer at all. Rhetorically, the sentiment makes several problematic assumptions that require addressing. First, the question implies an inherent lack of trust between instructor and student, creating a defensive academic environment that situates students as cheaters to be foiled rather than learners to be taught. Instead, looking to understand the reasons why students might use GenAI in their writing became a priority, with an assumption that gradations might exist similar to modes of plagiarism (Moore Howard). As chapters in this collection demonstrate, students are rarely using GenAI for whole-cloth plagiarism but instead are patchworking it throughout the writing process in the form of grammar checks/translation, brainstorming, or conceptual clarification (Bleakney et al.; Miftah et al.). Further, Joe Essid and Cady Cummins demonstrate that despite 91 percent of their survey respondents admitting to using GenAI, "only 4.7% of respondents used AI to create a draft submitted for ungraded feedback and 2.3% (one respondent) for a grade" (para. 22). While students are using these programs at an extraordinarily high rate, they seem to be using them with ethical intentions.

Next, the question underscores a belief that GenAI has no value in the writing process. While I have since adopted policies of GenAI refusal (McIntyre et al.) in my own pedagogy, I initially wanted to avoid what might be considered a tech-adverse, reactionary stance and instead explore ways that GenAI might prove beneficial. Despite my own misgivings, many ethical, practical uses for the technology exist. As Cara Violini addresses in their chapter in this collection, "Integrating GAI technologies into a [Universal Design for Learning]-based non-linear writing process offers students the opportunity to develop their own writing process through creativity." At the local level in both the writing center and the classroom, GenAI is a tool that might have effective implementation for aiding all types of learners in the writing process.

Finally, the question foregrounds an all-or-nothing mentality to writing, in that the presence of any GenAI usage anywhere in a paper is outright grounds for violations of academic integrity. As a writing center practitioner modeling writing as collaborative, process-driven, and iterative, I felt concern over this blanket approach to GenAI usage. And so, as the technology remained in its infancy, I found myself hesitant to subscribe to any of these beliefs without first gaining a deeper knowledge of its capabilities. Even as one of my campus' "AI experts," I had little tangible experience with it myself, and so I set out to understand GenAI. This manifested in myriad ways: plugging assignment prompts into platforms like ChatGPT and Grammarly to gauge the tenor of responses; researching neural networks, predictive modeling, and the role of probability in machine learning (Ash; Wu et al.); and having open conversations with students and tutors about their own utilization of GenAI. But what

became the most fruitful aspect of this process was an encounter that took place in the WMC in late fall 2023.

AI AND PLAGIARISM ACCUSATIONS

After entering the WMC on an early December afternoon, I was called over by one of our senior tutors who was working with a clearly distressed student. The tutor explained to me that the student, a WMC regular, had just been accused by their instructor of using AI to revise a paper. The tutor attested that they witnessed the student physically type the paragraphs that their instructor had flagged as plagiarized content, paragraphs which the student specifically worked to revise after receiving particularly harsh feedback in an earlier draft. It seemed the more the student met their instructor's expectations, the more they ran the risk of accusation. To understand the situation more fully, I pointedly asked the student if they had used GenAI in their paper, to which they emphatically replied no, but that their instructor claimed to have used AI detection software to find them guilty. I looked through the paper, found it to be free of much of the tenor I had come to associate with GenAI text outputs and then asked the question that was forefront in my mind: "Do you think your instructor singled you out because your writing sounds too white?" As they burst into tears, they confessed that they did not want to be the one to say it, but it was what they heavily suspected. This was the third time at the WMC that semester in which a student of color was falsely accused by an instructor of using GenAI.

The director and I reached out to both the department chair and the instructor, finding the former open to discussion but the latter much less so. Meeting initial resistance, I put together a package of data: I first received permission from the student to take a single paragraph from their draft and then prompted ChatGPT to create a similar paragraph. With the two samples in hand, I input each into five separate AI detection software (ChatGPT Zero, Writer Detection Software, Scribbr Detection Software, Originality AI, and Content At Scale), generating ten separate outputs with no correlation, validity, or reliability – while some identified the student's paper as 100 percent AI-generated and my own artificial prompt as 100 percent human-generated, others showed the exact opposite to be the case. However, what I thought to be overwhelming evidence of the erroneous nature of these software programs proved to be rhetorically ineffective when weighed against the instructor's beliefs. The intention of this anecdote is not to disparage this individual or any instructor overwhelmed by a significant paradigm shift in higher education and looming existential threats to our professions. What this incident demonstrated, however, was a pressing need to position writing centers as

resources for both faculty and students to hold conversations about developments in GenAI. This is not a new trend, but one rooted in a long tradition of situating the writing center as a leading voice in conversations of linguistic justice (Del Russo et al.; Tinoco et al.; Greenfield and Rowan).

In higher education, concerns over GenAI use tend to focus on academic integrity violations (Abd-Elaal et al.) and threats to student learning (González-Calatayud et al.). However, this perspective takes a similar rhetorical tenor to the question posed to me by my coworkers, namely one that situates students as perpetrators utilizing AI rather than members of communities who fall victim to the well-documented and concerning biases which are ingrained in these platforms by a homogenous tech sector (Noble and Roberts; Lechman and Popowska; Charitsis and Lehtiniemi; Gross; Kuhlman et al.). Students of color, who often face the dilemma of choosing between writing in their learned language registers and being docked points for surface-level mechanical "errors" or learning new language practices to adhere to conventions of academic writing, are now faced with the context of GenAI, where if they deviate too far from their instructor's perceptions of their linguistic capabilities, they are accused of plagiarizing their work wholecloth. More so, on the surface, GenAI presents what appears to be a fundamental solution to this problem: students can draft in their own registers and utilize these platforms to "translate" their writing into more academic stylistic conventions as the final stage of their writing process, appeasing their instructors and ensuring higher grades for themselves. This use of GenAI as a translation software echoes a long history of writing centers being viewed as "proofreading shops" (North) or spaces on campus for students to "fix" writing born from non-standard social (Denny et al.) or cultural contexts (Bychkovska and Lawrence).

However, when considering the deeply rooted biases of academic writing or Standard Written English (SWE), which carry with it a well-documented history across disciplines (Clark et al.; Chen and Henning; Politzer-Ahles et al.; Hoover and Politzer) and which flattens cultural language practices in favor of a homogenized and colonialist paradigm, it becomes increasingly unethical to support such a "solution." Additionally, in my limited campus experience, when students of color have historically written in ways their instructors have judged to be "too academic," they were often flagged for plagiarism, and so the problem only threatens to worsen as fears over GenAI exacerbate and more students of color enroll in the university. From this perspective, the writing center exists in a unique context to hold conversations concerning linguistic justice and artificial intelligence, empowering student writers to embrace their distinct registers and working with faculty to expand their perceptions of what constitutes "correct" or "incorrect" usage. Without these conversations, superficial markers of language will undoubtedly push more students to utilize GenAI to "translate" their writing.

CONTEXTUALIZING GenAI THROUGH LINGUISTIC JUSTICE

Tenants of linguistic justice can help to frame these conversations and provide opportunity for both students and faculty to recognize the paradigms that GenAI are quickly reinforcing and look to other solutions for writing, assessment, and using new technologies in the context of artificial intelligence. The following are just some examples of how linguistic justice might be used to frame these conversations.

Analyze the Negation of Non-SWE Registers

Lawrence Frey and Joshua Hanan provide a framework for social justice as an action that exposes "material conditions that negate people" (para. 2). This concept of negation is particularly pressing when discussing linguistic justice in the context of higher education, where students are trained in SWE and often penalized for veering outside of that specific register. Students using programs like ChatGPT to translate their own writing to better adhere to instructor expectations of surface-level mechanics is a process of actively negating non-SWE registers. In the space of a writing center, which holds significant rhetorical potential as a third party in student/instructor dynamics, conversations can be held to mediate the experiences of these two sides. On the side of the student, tutors and writing center professionals can provide ways to use GenAI responsibly (by citing generated content or fact checking information provided through more credible sources of information) or, better yet, provide information about other AI software better fitted for research (Connected Papers, Semantic Scholar, Elicit, to name just a few), which do not interfere with the process work that is so central to writing. On the side of the instructor, writing center professionals can hold workshops and casual conversations about reducing their fears over GenAI and their reliance on faulty AI detection software, and encourage them to remove stylistic metrics from their grading schemas, factors that might pressure students to turn to such software in the first place.

Embrace Non-SWE Registers

As Rosina Lippi-Green writes, "Language is incredibly flexible and responsive; we make or borrow what we do not have. In this flexibility … all varieties of any given language…are equal" (9). Linguistic justice encourages us to not only recognize the fact that language is malleable, but to embrace and empower writing that communicates ideas clearly, even when styled outside of SWE registers. When used as a translation software, GenAI programs like ChatGPT or

Grammarly, a "typing-assistant," translate in a unilateral direction, towards the standards and conventions of hegemonic academic writing. Students often utilize these programs to appease stringent language practices of their instructors, but seldom do we ask instructors to embrace the language practices of their students. Writing centers can house conversations about the situational nature of both writing and reading and, more importantly, be a place in which instructors are introduced to the emerging and traditional, non-standard language practices of their students. An embrace of non-SWE registers is not meant to undermine the definition of "correct" usage but to expand the inherently limiting viewpoint of what constitutes usage as correct and incorrect in the first place.

Employ Introspective Pedagogy to Combat Monolinguistic Power Structures

April Baker-Bell states, "an Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy should involve consciousness-raising work that arms Black students with space to make sense of, name, investigate, and dismantle anti-black linguistic racism and white linguistic hegemony" (p. 13). Alexandra Watkins and Lindsey Ives further this sentiment with their discussion that linguistic justice requires introspective pedagogy to combat monolingualism. As practitioners in the field of linguistic justice, writing center professionals can reflect on the ways that their own tutoring and administrative practices, writing standards, and biases have contributed to monolinguistic power structures and work to rectify those biases to create a space where all students and all faculty can grow. Perhaps most importantly, writing center administration must reflect on their own biases in their hiring practices and ensure that they are promoting a space whose staff is diverse and reflective of all student demographics across campus. Within the context of GenAI, which have been proven to proliferate biases across all socio-economic lenses, writing centers must work with students and faculty to make those biases clear and to help educate respective parties about the implications of further employing these platforms as translation tools.

Think Globally

Linguistic justice cannot merely be focused on inclusion of registers across the United States. As Ronisha Browdy and Ester Milu, as well as Thir Bahadur Budhathoki, make certain, linguistic justice must also reflect global rhetorics and translingual practices. How English is taught to multilingual and international students is often through a colonial lens of integration and assimilation. Whether intentionally malicious or not, these practices strip away and negate cultural

language practices by upholding them to a certain standard, often SWE. GenAI, unregulated and unbound in its colonialist potential, threatens to conform global language practices to a single, ubiquitous register. Writing centers can push back against this threat with interdepartmental initiatives, which bring in the voices of language experts. Additionally, employing international and multi-language students and professionals in the writing center can ensure that these spaces remain focused on a global perspective and are fulfilling their mission to serve all students across campus.

CONCLUSION

For better or worse, GenAI will be an increasingly significant factor in higher education for the foreseeable future. As this edited collection argues, writing center practitioners must use this period of uncertainty to position themselves as leaders regarding the implementation and regulation of GenAI in an academic context. If it is to be successfully integrated into learning, then policy and practice must come from the localized level, addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of all stakeholders. Perhaps most vital is that we continue to advocate for the inherent humanity and the equitable treatment of our students, our staff, and ourselves. While the goal of this chapter, and edited collection as a whole, is to embrace a nuanced look at these technologies, it is becoming difficult to separate them from the underlying existential fears of those deemed obsolete by the technology, the deeply flawed industries which birthed them, and the wider capitalistic system which looks to implement them as tools of corporate extraction, labor devaluation, and exacerbated economic inequality. As institutional leaders, writing center professionals must closely consider these realities when considering adoption and integration of GenAI tools, both in and out of the writing center.

Further, the conversation concerning this technology, when filtered through a neoliberal media ecosystem, often falls into one of two flattened perspectives: singing the unadulterated praises these advancements will bring or prognosticating the "rise of the machines"-style apocalypse. Quite likely, neither of these futures will come to fruition, but in the meantime, we lose sight of many of the real impacts of GenAI, through its enormous demand on power grids, rampant hallucinations, and perpetuation of misinformation. In the introduction to this edited collection, Elisabeth and I argued that GenAI has ushered in a fourth stage in how writing centers engage with new technology. As the many insightful contributors to this collection have shown, it is our role as writing center administrators and staff to advocate for our students, work with our fellow faculty, and find ethical uses for this technology. Writing center professionals will find great import in positioning themselves as leaders of GenAI literacy, as voices that vocally and frequently point

to the many documented issues with these programs, and who continue to work to maintain student-focused, human-centered community spaces.

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