

Proposal Draft

Panel Session Proposal for AECT 2025

Title (15/15 words):

The When Before the How: Ethical and Practical Boundaries of AI in Academic Research Writing

Short Description (71/75 words):

This panel explores the ethical and practical boundaries of AI-generated text in academic research writing. While AI tools like ChatGPT streamline workflows, their usage raises concerns about accountability and fairness, particularly for non-native English speakers. Panelists from diverse academic backgrounds will discuss foundational beliefs on practical use of AI in research, examine ethical considerations, and engage the audience in live polling exercises to assess perspectives on AI's role in scholarly writing.

Abstract (661/805 words max):

ChatGPT and similar Large Language Models (LLMs) generate original writing based on a prompt, producing text that can be indistinguishable from human-generated content (Bishop, 2023). Since its public release in 2022 (OpenAI, 2023), ChatGPT has quickly integrated into research workflows, changing how scholars approach tasks such as literature searches, summarization, and data analysis (Giglio & Costa, 2023; Tai et al., 2023). Some scholars liken ChatGPT's role in writing to that of SPSS in statistical analysis—an indispensable tool for efficiency (Hill-Yardin et al., 2023). However, while LLMs may alleviate tedious aspects of research writing, their integration raises critical concerns regarding ethical use and academic integrity.

Unburdened by mechanical writing tasks, researchers can redirect their focus to deeper inquiry, innovation, and theoretical contributions (Van Dis et al., 2023). Yet, the acceptance of ChatGPT in scholarly publishing remains contentious. Non-native English speakers (NNES) are particularly impacted, as over 90% of scientific publications are in English (Tai et al., 2023). AI-assisted writing may provide critical support for NNES researchers, potentially mitigating linguistic disadvantages (Giglio & Costa, 2023). However, ethical boundaries surrounding AI in research writing remain unclear. While it is widely accepted that LLMs should not receive authorship (Van Dis et al., 2023), defining responsible AI use remains an evolving challenge.

Scope of Discussion

This panel will focus on the use of AI-generated text in **academic research writing**, including journal articles, conference papers, grant proposals, and dissertations. The discussion will **not** address coursework-related writing, as that falls under a different set of pedagogical considerations.

Key questions to be explored include:

1. **Does the availability of ChatGPT for writing devalue the skill of academic writing?**
2. **When does the use of ChatGPT for research writing become unethical?**
3. **What factors most impact the determination between the ethical and unethical use of ChatGPT for academic research writing?**

Panel Format and Structure

1. Opening Remarks (5 minutes)

- Moderator introduces the topic, scope, and objectives.
- Panelists briefly introduce themselves and share their foundational perspectives on AI in academic research.

2. Structured Discussion Cycle (50 minutes total)

This section will feature **live polling** and interactive discussions based on audience input.

- **Step 1:** The moderator presents an AI-assisted writing scenario, inspired by Rowland's (2023) human-AI writing continuum.
- **Step 2:** The audience votes (via Google Forms) on where they believe the scenario falls on the continuum of ethical acceptability.
- **Step 3:** While the audience votes, panelists respond—without seeing the polling result—justifying their reasoning, discussing red flags, and engaging with audience input.
- **Step 4:** Live re-polling to assess shifts in audience opinion after discussion.
- **Step 5:** The process repeats with a new scenario.

Scenarios will be pre-designed to cover the middle range of Rowland's (2023) framework. We will over-prepare scenarios, assuming we may not complete all planned scenarios.

3. Closing Reflections (5 minutes)

- Panelists provide final insights and key takeaways.
- Moderator shares audience polling results and invites continued discussion beyond the session.

Panelists

Our panelists represent a diverse range of perspectives, spanning **senior faculty, early-career faculty, and doctoral students**. Additionally, we have ensured a balance of **native and non-native English speakers (NS/NNS)** to reflect global academic experiences. Each panelist will contribute insights from their research and professional experiences.

Faculty

- **Zhichun Liu (NNS)** – Assistant Professor (University of Hong Kong) researches computational thinking in K-12 education, focusing on game-based learning and quantitative analytics to examine learner behavior, competence, and problem-solving skills.
- **Bret Staudt Willet (NS)** – Assistant Professor (Florida State University) brings expertise in self-directed learning, learning analytics, and online communities, focusing on digital learning trends and engagement dynamics in educational environments.
- **Jewoong Moon (NNS)** – Assistant Professor (University of Alabama) specializing in learning analytics, AI in education, and inclusive design of immersive learning environments. His research explores the ethical and pedagogical use of AI to support student learning.

Doctoral Students

- **Chaewon Kim (NNS)** – Doctoral candidate (Florida State University) in instructional design and learning sciences who designs, develops, and evaluates meaningful learning experiences through interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Stephanie Gilstrap (NS)** – Doctoral student in Learning, Design, and Technology at the University of Georgia focused on program-level design collaborations that drive systemic change in higher education. Her research examines instructional designers as change agents and coaches, shaping online learning to create sustainable solutions that empower faculty and enhance student learning.

Moderator

- **G. Curt Fulwider** – Doctoral candidate in Instructional Design, researching game-based assessments of self-efficacy and human-AI interactions.

Justification and Contribution to AECT

This panel aligns with **AECT's Research and Theory Division** by examining AI's implications for academic integrity, authorship, and equity in research publishing. By emphasizing **the 'when' before the 'how'**, this discussion shifts the conversation from mere tool usage to the deeper ethical and epistemological considerations of AI in academic writing. Our innovative use of **live audience polling and scenario-based discussion** will foster dynamic engagement and contribute to emerging theoretical frameworks for responsible AI integration in scholarly research.