How AI Is Quietly Bending the Way We Use Language

From tone to thought patterns, algorithms are reshaping how we speak and write.
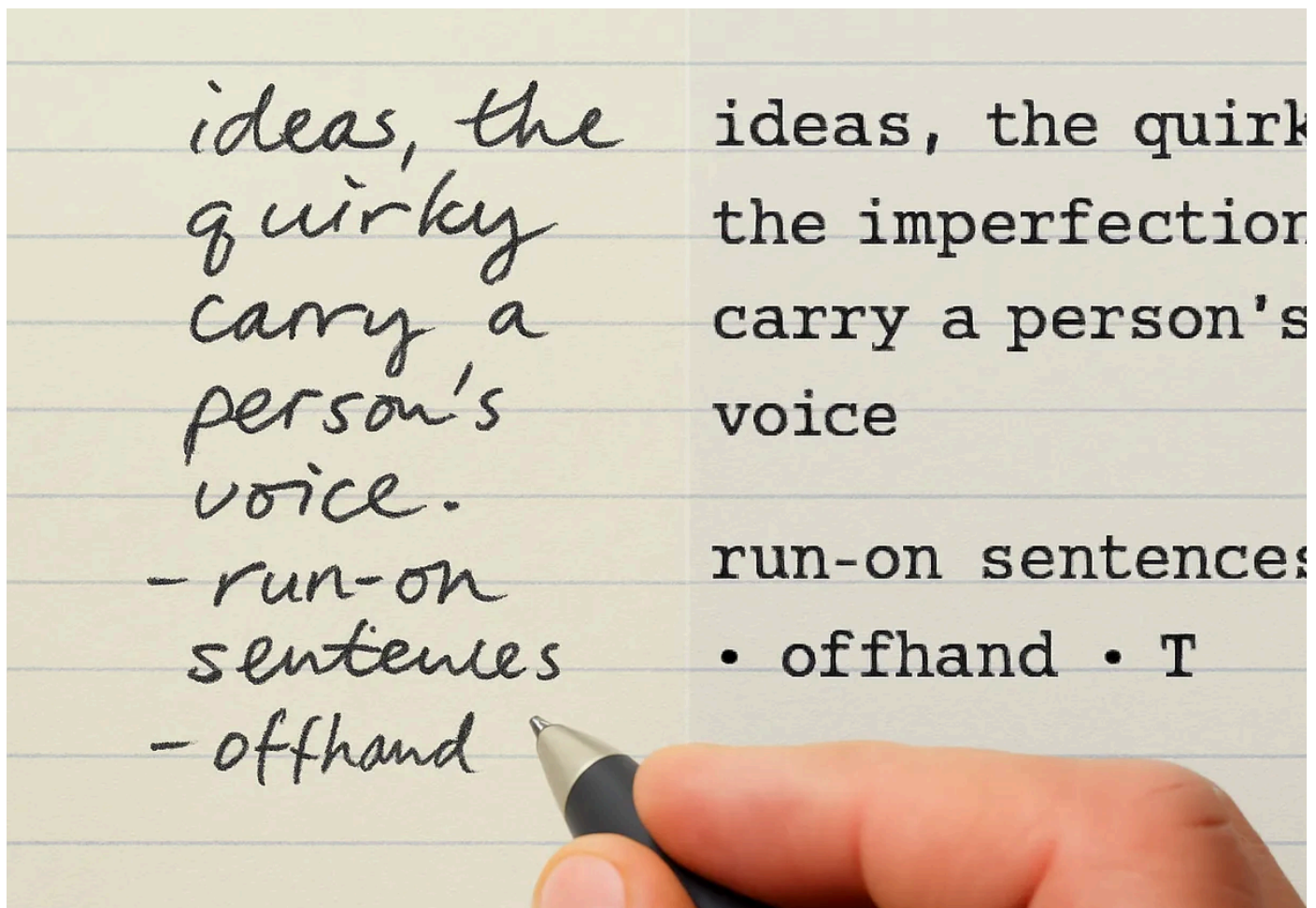
REALITY DRIFT

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*This essay is Part 2 in my ongoing series on "Semantic Drift", where I explore how AI resha[…]
language, meaning, and culture.*

The first signs of semantic collapse. When human voice and AI precision start to blur together.

I was grabbing a beer with a friend who works in Healthcare IT when the topic turn to AI. After a few headlines about GPT-5, he made a comment that stuck with me: *"The more I use LLMs, the more I catch myself using words and metaphors I never used before. They just sneak into my vocabulary."*

The more I thought about it, the more I realized the same thing was happening to r Just last week I wrote a work email that felt eerily ChatGPT like. The phrasing, the way I bolded certain words, patterns I've never used in ten years of corporate writin suddenly there. That's when it hit me:

> Language itself is beginning to bend under the influence of autocomplete and A trained phrasing

Language as a Cognitive Prosthetic

On the surface, this may not sound like a big deal. But language isn't just communication, it's the cognitive framework of thought and culture. As Jeremy Ler writes in *The Patterning Instinct*, language was humanity's first cognitive prosthetic, letting us extend thought through metaphor, narrative, and abstraction. That shift happened about 40,000 years ago which is incredibly recent in evolutionary terms. A every communication leap since: the printing press, the internet, and now LLMs; ha accelerated the pace of drift. This time, though, it feels less like a communication upgrade and more like the quiet rewiring of thought itself.

The Fingerprints of AI

You can already see this in niche corners of the internet. Some Substack posts and Discord threads are bursting with LLM fingerprints. The ideas may be rich, but the writing starts to feel the same: short, compressed sentences, metaphorically dense, delivered with precision. It creates that sensation of synthetic realness, a style that feels more real than real, but also strangely hollow.

Of course, it's not the same for everyone. For most, AI flattens voice into sameness. But for the 5% who use these systems differently, more as partners than tools, the opposite can happen. Language becomes a site of co-thinking, where new metapho and thought patterns emerge that wouldn't exist otherwise.

Semantic Drift

The effect is subtle but corrosive. Everyone starts sounding like everyone else. Even across wildly different topics, the cadence collapses into the same predictable patterns. I've started calling it semantic drift: a world where originality isn't missin ideas, but slowly leaking out of the way language itself is expressed.

Which raises a bigger question: what happens to thought when our language is increasingly modeled, predicted, and pre-chewed by machines? Will there be a push for cognitive sovereignty and a resistance to LLM style phrasing seeping into our speech and writing?

Why the Human Voice Still Matters

I don't know how I feel about it yet. Personally, I crave the friction of human writin the run-on sentences, the quirky asides, the little imperfections that carry a person' voice. AI writing is so precise, so compressed with meaning, it can feel more like a data dump than a journey.

Precise, but overwhelming. That's the paradox of thinking with a word prediction machine: we gain clarity, but risk losing the messy thing that makes human though human. In doing so, it gives us something smoother, but also something flatter. It seems the first signs of reality drift have already begun.

Further Resources:

[Reality Drift Glossary 2025: Key Terms] - Scribd

A look at how AI is changing language, thought,
and everyday life.

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