

Ghost-writer in the Machine: Examining Student/Teacher/AI Collaborative Potential in Creative Writing

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Abstract

Generative AI (GenAI) has quickly been adopted by students around the world, especially within tertiary education. Many educators are excited by the potential for student/teacher/AI collaboration to enhance learning, but questions remain about its pedagogical value and how extensively it should be incorporated into education. One particularly complex area is the use of GenAI in creative writing. The main objective of this paper is to assess GenAI's (Gemini) capability of understanding and explaining genres and associated creative writing techniques,³ then examine whether it can help students improve their knowledge and mastery of these skills. This study involved 26 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduate students. Two-part workshops were held twice; in 2024 and 2025. Students engaged with the AI by prompting, writing and adapting creative pieces across a range of genres. Pre- and post-surveys measured their self-reported knowledge regarding creative writing and GenAI. Across workshops, student interest in using GenAI varied and while the extent to which GenAI was able to assist students understanding comparative to the input required is undetermined, it is clear that student/teacher/AI collaboration would be essential within teaching contexts when GenAI is being implemented, especially as students increasingly use AI unassisted.

Key Terms: GenAI, creative writing, genres, writing techniques, L2 learners, collaborative learning

1. Introduction

In recent years student use of GenAI has increased exponentially. As such, many teachers are incorporating it more into their classrooms, from help creating teaching materials, or activities that involve students directly interacting with it. This trend is demonstrated clearly in the systematic review by Rizvi et al. (2023), which examined empirical studies on AI in K–12 education from 2019 to 2022. They found that the number of classroom interventions during this short period grew significantly, reflecting the growth of interest in integrating AI into schools globally. While the majority reported positive effects on both students' knowledge of AI concepts and their enthusiasm for learning, they noted that such efforts remain fragmented and small-scale, frequently designed by researchers rather than teachers. Rizvi et al. (2023) emphasized the urgent need for more systematic curricula and long-term evaluation. GenAI tools are inevitably going to be present in the immediate future of education, and students will continue to make use of them, with or without help from their teachers. In their study on GenAI perceptions, Chan & Hu (2023) found that university students were enthusiastic about GenAI but also concerned about creativity erosion, highlighting the importance of teacher guidance.

For language learner students, high levels of creativity in writing can feel out of reach, with a less than full grasp of language being a significant roadblock. This not only makes students desire to use GenAI as a shortcut understandable but also demonstrates a further need for teacher support, as using such tools through a second language creates greater barriers for critical engagement. This research is situated within the context of higher education in Japan. In their policy-focused presentation on AI and curriculum planning in Japan, Tara McIlroy (2024) agreed that educators cannot ignore these technologies. Importantly, she stressed that while AI literacy frameworks are developing rapidly in countries like the UK and US, Japan risks lagging behind unless policy, curriculum, and teacher training evolve in

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³ Creative writing techniques were discussed and explored such as repetition, show don't tell, metaphors, personification, as well as use of genre themes (such as family, justice, survival, good vs. evil) etc.

tandem. This study hopes to contribute new insight into the ways GenAI can support and scaffold creativity in L2 contexts, while also highlighting the essential role of teacher mediation.

1.1 Research Questions

This study addressed the research question: to what extent can GenAI help deepen students' knowledge of genres⁴ within creative writing⁵ techniques⁶? The goal of this is to assist students who are specifically interested in creative writing and developing their understanding and skills in that area. The research is focused on L2 learners and with the following questions:

1. How useful are GenAI tools in assessing and understanding genres and associated creative writing techniques?
2. How useful are GenAI tools in helping students identify and reflect on writing techniques within specific genres?
3. In what ways does teacher/AI collaboration shape students' engagement with GenAI during creative writing activities?

1.2 Conceptual Framework

In this study, teaching of creative writing is deployed as a workshop-based, teacher-mediated scaffolded process to build L2 students' genre awareness and narrative technique application. This was conducted via voluntary workshops outside the classroom, and comprises of: (a) brief explicit instruction on prototypical conventions (genre, common settings, common themes, key features, example prompt), (b) student text generation/analysis using own writing or on-site simple pieces prompted via GenAI and (c) iterative AI prompting for genre/theme transformations with teacher-guided reflection on outputs. This process-oriented approach emphasizes drafting, revision cycles, and critique that is tailored for L2 workshop constraints such as time and fluency limits and aligns with recent models of teacher support fostering writing engagement through structured guidance and AI integration (Li & Chiu, 2025; Yin et al., 2025).

For the context of this study, a short story is operationalized as a complete narrative arc of around 300-800 words containing conflict, minimal character development, and resolution/twist. This flash/microfiction scope suits L2 workshop constraints while providing sufficient material for genre analysis and AI-mediated transformation tasks (Sinha, 2024). Genre is operationalized through a prototype theory approach (Rosch, 1975), where texts exhibit family resemblances to central exemplars via recurring markers (for example, science fiction and speculative technology, romance and a secret admirer) rather than rigid classification rules. This acknowledges genre hybridity and contextual instability in creative writing, particularly for L2 learners navigating second-language nuance (Woo et al., 2023). GenAI genre identification thus functions as a pedagogical starting point—surfacing prototypical cues in student texts for teacher-guided analysis and revision—rather than definitive categorization, aligning with the interpretive workshop paradigm (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

2. Literature Review

During preliminary research for this paper, both ChatGPT and Gemini were tested for their ability to produce and analyze creative writing at the university level. In a previous study by Karaca (2024) AI's ability to produce creative writing stories for primary, secondary, high school and undergraduate education levels (L1 learners) was tested.

⁴ Categories of narrative e.g. romance, horror.

⁵ Defined here as imaginative, non-academic prose.

⁶ Meaning common writing techniques such as repetition, show don't tell, metaphors, personification, as well as use of genre themes (the central ideas and motifs within a piece of genre writing) such as family, justice, survival, good vs. evil etc.

ChatGPT and Gemini were prompted with questions such as “can you create a story appropriate for the undergraduate education level?” (p.209). The stories were then analyzed for their readability based on a number of factors using the Ateşman, Bezirci-Yılmaz formulas which assess Turkish texts. Both produced level-appropriate stories, but Gemini was more consistent and effective (p.211). This is not to say Gemini is infallible or without limitations as Karaca found that both ChatGPT and Gemini frequently generated stories that were above the intended educational level. However, Gemini was found to produce stories whose difficulty rose more consistently with the intended level. This was further supported by Rane et al.’s. (2024) research comparing Gemini and ChatGPT that found that Gemini outperformed ChatGPT in capabilities and factual accuracy due to Google integration (pp. 70-71). These results were corroborated in both this paper’s initial pre-workshop planning and the two-part workshops run in 2024, however the secondary round of workshops in 2025 demonstrated a potential shift in the efficacy of Gemini comparative to ChatGPT.

2.1 Genre Theory Framework

This study engages genre theory to frame GenAI’s role in identifying literary markers within L2 creative texts. From discourse community perspectives, genres function as social actions shaped by shared rhetorical purposes (Woo et al., 2023), serving pedagogical scaffolds for technique mastery in creative writing workshops. Drawing on prototype theory, genres can be conceptualised as categories organised around more central or prototypical examples, with fuzzy edges and gradience rather than strict necessary-and-sufficient boundaries (Rosch, 1975). Reader-response theory further supports this task: genre is understood not as a fixed property of the text but as something that emerges through reader–text transactions (Iser, 1978). Recent large-scale work on the history of genre in English-language fiction similarly treats genres as historically contingent, perspectival categories, noting that many works belong fully to several genres at once and that the distinction between subject labels and genres is often blurred (Sharma et al., 2020). In this context, GenAI functions as an exploratory “first reader” that surfaces plausible genre cues for teacher-guided discussion, rather than as a definitive classifier. For example, in the text used in the pre-workshop development of this study, the phrase ‘bioluminescent plants’ is linked to the genre of science-fiction. This theoretical framing supports the workshop tasks while acknowledging genre complexity, strengthening the study’s construct validity within its interpretive paradigm (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

2.2. Prior AI/Creative Writing Studies

Woo, Guo and Salas-Pilco (2023) explored AI support for creative writing potential in a similar way to the research outlined in this paper, with focus on secondary school students in Hong Kong. The authors used a task-based approach and developed a “1st Human-AI Creative Writing contest” as the end goal of their students’ work. Prior to that, they developed seven workshops to prepare students for their creative writing task of 500-word limit stories based on one or two short prompts. Students were voluntary participants from secondary grade levels 1-6 and would write on Google Docs using a Text Generator of the researchers’ own devising, an AI-NLG (narrative language generator). Each workshop was designed with specific learning outcomes focused on helping students learn to use the AI tool and to apply this to improve their creative writing skills and knowledge such as ‘I can evaluate the AI-NLG writing tool’ and ‘I can plan the characters, time, place and sequence of events for a short story’. It is important to note the Text Generator does not operate in the same way AI tools like ChatGPT or Gemini do. Rather than interacting in a ‘conversation’ with a GenAI large language model (LLM), students input the starts of sentences, select various options such as number of outputs, and the Text Generator suggests the rest of the sentence or paragraph. For the analysis, the researchers developed a creative writing performance rubric that examined three aspects of creativity in writing: “Elaboration (refers to the degree of detail and precision of ideas), Flexibility (refers to the number of categories of new ideas), Originality (refers to the generation of new ideas)” (p.22) and found that their overall results indicated their Text Generator did

contribute significantly to these aspects of student writing, with elaboration being most improved and flexibility least.

The authors found these workshops and exploration with AI tools helped with student reflection. By examining their processes as necessary when effectively engaging with AI, students can better reflect on the actions they are taking. AI is a tool that can accommodate a wide variety of input and generate a wide variety of output, allowing it to be extremely accessible to each individual user and will be personalized to them as they engage with it. Of course, from an accessibility perspective, as Woo et al. (2023) state, technology does present some problems, requiring tools and access that can have issues, and are not accessible to all. There is also potential for problems that result from technological failures. Finally, there is some reflection on one of the main issues that educators face, the ethical problems with having students supplement or support their work with input from AI. However, as the article suggests, there are a number of potential avenues to mediate and manage this in their specific situation (such as utilizing only in idea generation stages or in reflection and critique stages).

As AI is an emerging tool, the research in this area is still being developed, and this study hopes to add to the growing understanding of the limitations and strengths of GenAI. In part, the research in this paper came out of seeking to address student needs and challenges specific to creative writing. In their research, Sevigny (2018) details an L2 creative writing course that demonstrated how even highly advanced L2 students struggled significantly with creative writing in a second language, research that has been corroborated in other papers such as Yang & Zhu (2022). Therefore, it is interesting to consider the potential for GenAI to assist students in this area. That being said, many educators express AI integration concerns requiring new facilitation skills (Gentile et al., 2023; Harry, 2023), while students anthropomorphize AI, necessitating explicit limitations instruction (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

This project is best understood as small-scale, practice-oriented research conducted by teacher-researchers within their own institutional context. It aligns with interpretive and practitioner-inquiry traditions in language education, which focus on understanding situated experiences and meanings rather than producing generalisable causal claims (Richards, 2003). In line with this paradigm, the analysis focuses on participants' perspectives through workshop interactions and student/AI transcripts and uses simple descriptive frequencies to illustrate patterns in self-reported attitudes and perceived learning, rather than to support inferential statistical conclusions.

This study involved undergraduate students at a mid-sized private university in Southern Japan during the spring semesters of 2024 and 2025 and were run as out-of-class workshops at the Self Access Learning Center (SALC). Students joined voluntarily and although the workshops were advertised for exploration of using GenAI to develop creative writing skills, the reasons for student attendance varied between wanting to 1) improve creative writing skills 2) improve academic writing skills and 3) learn more about GenAI.

The workshops were structured as two 100-minute sessions placed a week apart. The first session was held in spring 2024, with the first workshop on May 16th with five attendees. The second workshop was held the following week on May 23rd with 10 attendees (four returning students and six new). The first workshop focused on a discussion of genres and associated creative writing techniques and the second built upon this by using knowledge (existing and gained through the previous workshop) to create and improve their own writing. After analyzing the data from the first sessions, it was determined that further study was needed and so a second round of workshops was conducted in spring 2025, following the same structure as 2024. The first workshop was held on May 12th with 10 attendees (all new). The second workshop was held on May 15th with five attendees (no returning students).

This study took a primarily qualitative, interpretive, workshop-based approach situated within a single university context (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Qualitative data was gathered through the pre- and post-surveys, workshop discussions, and student conversations with the GenAI tool. Descriptive quantitative data from the closed-ended survey

items were also used to show patterns in students' self-reported knowledge and perceptions, but no inferential statistical analyses were conducted, in line with research that treats quantitative summaries as supporting rather than primary evidence in qualitative and mixed-methods designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Full ethics approval was obtained from all participants, and the sharing of these conversations was voluntary. The study was designed and facilitated by the two authors in their roles as teacher-researchers, so the findings are rooted in this specific institutional context rather than aiming for broad statistical generalisation (Burns, 2010).

3.1 Institutional AI Policy

For the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to clarify the AI policy for the institution at which the study took place. The university's 2023 AI policy cautioned against inaccurate information and unauthorized exam use, with directions to follow (unspecified) field-specific guidelines (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, 2023). The university has since published an updated 2025 policy. This post-dated the workshops and did not influence study design.

3.2 Generative AI Tools

This paper focused on the use of two GenAI tools: OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini. Both were used in the pre-workshop development stage, and Gemini was used during the workshops. During the preliminary research of 2024 it was found that Gemini was better able to work within the parameters required for this paper. Primarily, it was more useful in areas of creative writing, long-form writing, and genre/writing technique analysis as it provided lengthier, more detailed and more accurate responses, output and advice which aligned with findings reported in previous work comparing Gemini and ChatGPT (Karaca, 2024; Rane et al., 2024). When continuing the research in 2025, it was clear that ChatGPT had overtaken Gemini in terms of accuracy and detailed responses. However, for accurate comparison between years, the decision was made to continue with Gemini in the workshops.

3.3 Participants

A total of 26 participants attended across four workshops and all participants were L2 English speakers. The university has two pathways to graduation involving language. Those enrolled as an English-basis student have a high standard of English and are required to study Japanese, while those enrolled as a Japanese-basis student have a high standard of Japanese and are required to study English. Some are exempt from studying a language. The participants in this study included 12 English-basis and 14 Japanese-basis students. The CEFR level of English-basis students ranged from B1 to C1, while the CEFR level of Japanese-basis students ranged from A2 to B1.

3.4 Pre-workshop Development

The pre-workshop development was conducted prior to each workshop session; once in 2024 and once in 2025. During this development, prompts were tested with Gemini to see which structure worked best and to analyse its ability to adapt and create creative writing. A short story written by one of the authors of this paper (a 500-word science-fiction piece) was used as the base text. In the 2024 pre-workshop development, it was found that Gemini gave detailed and largely correct responses to prompts about genre, themes, key phrases, and writing techniques. In 2025, the same pre-workshop development revealed that Gemini's answers were less accurate and more generic. These differences were framed in relation to emerging concerns about "knowledge collapse" and model degradation in LLMs as they are increasingly trained on AI-generated data (Peterson, 2025; Shumailov et al., 2024).

As Peterson (2025) explores in their article *AI and the problem of knowledge collapse*, this could be in part due to the way that GenAI tends to generate average outputs, which, if relied on recursively, may cause this aforementioned concept of 'knowledge collapse'. This may be working in conjunction with another major concern: when LLMs are

trained on data that already contains AI-generated content, this recursive training leads to ‘model collapse’ where the diversity and tails of the data distribution disappear (Shumailov et al., 2024). As GenAI models develop, potential issues arise. Preventing collapse is crucial to sustain the benefits of large-scale web-scraped training data, and, as this paper is concerned with genuine human-generated data, will become increasingly valuable as AI content floods the internet. This becomes more complex when working with users who are interacting with AI in a second language as more nuanced understanding is less likely to occur, resulting in greater generalisation and simplification. Additionally, defining genres and associated techniques (such as themes) within creative writing is complex and lacks academic consensus. Therefore, this theoretical ambiguity creates another layer of complexity for students to navigate.

In preparation for the workshops, various questions were asked of Gemini, in relation to the science-fiction story. Below is a copy of the questions asked (Q) and some answers given in 2024 (A1) and 2025 (A2). The answers have been summarized from Gemini’s response.

Q: What genre is this story?

A1: science-fiction/horror/adventure

A2: adventure/thriller/dark fantasy

Q: What words or phrases helped you identify the genre?

A1: unusual plant with bioluminescent properties/trip inducing vision/unidentified entity

A2: glided across/she was alone/panic started to set in

Q: What writing techniques can you identify?

A1: sensory details/contrast/shifting pacing/vivid imagery/first person POV/cliffhanger ending

A2: sensory details/figurative language/show don’t tell

Q: Rewrite this story and change the genre to romance

Q: What words and phrases did you change from the original text to use the romance genre?

Q: How could I improve the original text to make it fit the genre science-fiction better?

3.5 Workshops

The location of all workshops was the university’s SALC, which is open five days a week during the semester and offers peer and tutor sessions, online and face-to-face. It also has private study space and hosts various workshops by the SALC team and faculty. The aim of the SALC is to encourage autonomy and provide opportunities for intercultural communication. These workshops were held across two years; two in 2024 and then two (repeated) in 2025, details as seen in Table 1. Although similar in design, methodology and results did vary and in all workshops participants worked individually.

Table 1: *Description of workshops*

2024		2025	
Workshop 1 (W1-24)	Workshop 2 (W2-24)	Workshop 1 (W1-25)	Workshop 2 (W2-25)
Length: 100 minutes Location: SALC (APU) Date: May 16 th Attendees: 5	Length: 100 minutes Location: SALC (APU) Date: May 23 rd Attendees: 10 (4 returning, 6 new)	Length: 100 minutes Location: SALC (APU) Date: May 12 th Attendees: 10 (all new)	Length: 100 minutes Location: SALC (APU) Date: May 15 th Attendees: 5 (no returning)

W1-24 opened with a discussion of genres and writing techniques to ascertain current knowledge on creative writing. The results of the pre-workshop development were shown as an example for how to interact with and prompt Gemini for this activity. Participants were given the choice of using their own creative writing, a fable or song lyrics. In W1-25

the choice was between their own creative writing or asking Gemini to create a short story. Participants copied the chosen writing into Gemini and prompted the AI tool with the following questions;

- What genre is this writing? (if using their own piece)
- What words or phrases helped you identify that genre?
- What writing techniques can you identify?
- Rewrite this story and change the genre to _____.
- What did you change from the original story?
- What words or phrases did you change for the new genre?
- How did you change the writing craft techniques?

This workshop ended with a discussion about the activities. In W1-24 participants responded with interest and a desire to continue working with GenAI in this way. In W1-25 participants mostly had negative reactions to the use of GenAI, ranging from confusion with the responses to concerns about sharing personal information.

Workshop 2 focused on the output of participants' own creative writing and then prompting Gemini to analyze and adapt. First, to save time and to help with creativity in an L2 context, participants asked Gemini for a writing prompt. In W2-24 they used this structure: "Give me a writing prompt for a short piece of creative writing using the theme of ____, the genre of ____ and the location of ____." This was updated in W2-25 to "Give me a simple writing prompt for flash fiction with the genre ____ and the theme ____." If they needed more detail, participants were encouraged to ask Gemini to give an outline or write the first sentence. The newer prompt worked better in terms of manoeuvring Gemini into giving a simple and easy prompt for L2 learners to use. After the stories were written, participants analyzed the writing using Gemini and the following questions;

W2-24

- Please assess my writing. Give me positive and negative feedback on language, structure and narrative with examples.
- Please assess how well I have used the theme of ____ and genre of ____ with examples.
- How can I improve this piece of writing using different writing techniques?
- Can you help me change the genre of this from ____ to ____.
- Can you help me change the theme of this from ____ to ____.

W2-25

- What genre and theme is this story?
- What words or phrases helped you identify that?
- What writing techniques can you identify?
- Please assess my writing, giving positive and negative feedback.
- How can I improve this piece of writing using different writing techniques?
- Help me change the genre of my story to _____.

Participants did move beyond these questions while engaging in a conversation with Gemini.

4. Findings

This section will present findings from the pre- and post-surveys of 2024 and 2025 workshops as well as participant/AI conversations and workshop discussion and observations. Regarding the pre- and post-surveys, all surveys were created using Microsoft Forms and completed by participants in the workshop itself. In 2024 the pre-survey was conducted at the start of the first workshop, and the post-survey was conducted at the end of the second workshop. In 2025 the pre-survey was conducted in both the first and second workshops as the second workshop had all new attendees. Below, the findings will specifically focus on student responses most relevant to the research questions of this paper.

RQ1: Usefulness of GenAI in Genre and Creative Writing Technique Identification

The pre- and post-surveys provided insight into students' initial understanding of creative writing and how this changed after the workshops. In the pre-survey, most participants rated their knowledge of themes between moderate ($\approx 50\%$) and good ($\approx 33\%$) and for genres students were split fairly evenly between good and moderate knowledge (each around 35–40%).⁷ In the post-survey, they were asked whether this knowledge has improved. The majority agreed it had, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2: *Do you think your knowledge of themes/genres in writing has improved with the use of AI?*

Year	Themes knowledge	% of students	Genre knowledge	% of students
2024	Improved a lot	38	Improved a lot	33
	Improved somewhat	63	Improved somewhat	56
	Not improved	0	Not improved	11
2025	Improved a lot	75	Improved a lot	56
	Improved somewhat	25	Improved somewhat	33
	Not improved	0	Not improved	11

Note. Responses in 2024 – 8. Responses in 2025 – 9.

The participants were also asked about how helpful GenAI was in improving their creative writing skills. As shown in Table 3, the majority of students in 2024 placed it mostly on the 'helpful' scale. However, in 2025 a much larger proportion ranked it as 'not helpful at all'. This contrast suggests a noticeable shift in students' attitudes toward GenAI over the one-year period. This seems to be reflected across recent findings as students become more familiar with AI technology (and its limitations) and as the practice of using AI becomes increasingly integrated into student life. The Jisc report *Student Perceptions of AI 2025* (Atwell, 2025) found that UK students increasingly view AI as unavoidable but express growing concern about trust, data, and the impact on learning quality, rather than simple excitement. Similarly, in a recent article on university student perceptions and use of GenAI, Farinosi and Melchior (2025) report extensive uptake in student use, alongside increasing ethical concerns and fears about the impact on critical thinking skills. When responding to the post-survey question of how likely it was that they would continue using GenAI for creative writing in the future, 37.5% of students in 2024 reported being likely to do so, whereas in 2025, 55.6% of students said they were not likely at all. These results, along with comments during the discussion section of the workshops, suggest that interest in GenAI for these kinds of tasks has dropped.

Table 3: *How helpful did you find AI in improving your creative writing?*

Scale	% (2024)	% (2025)
Very helpful	25	0
Somewhat helpful	25	0
Neutral	25	33.3
Somewhat unhelpful	12.5	22.2
Not helpful at all	12.5	44.4

⁷ Responses 2024 - 9. Responses 2025 - 15

Note. Responses in 2024 – 8. Responses in 2025 – 9.

Note. It was decided that this question deserved a wider Likert scale of options (5 compared to the previous 3) as the previous question was less complex.

RQ2: Gen AI in Writing Technique Identification

This research question explores whether GenAI can help students identify, analyse, and evaluate writing techniques within different genres and associated themes. Data for this question was drawn from student/AI workshop transcripts. Overall, Gemini was able to identify writing techniques within original stories written by the participants. Many received a similar list of techniques, the majority being ‘show, don’t tell’ and ‘sensory details’ but there was a difference in Gemini’s responses, as can be seen below.

These conversation excerpts are taken from W2-25;

Conversation 1

Student: What writing techniques can you identify?

Gemini: Based on your evocative description, I can identify several writing techniques at play:

Sensory Details: You vividly engage the reader’s senses through specific descriptions: “thick with the sweet perfume of frangipani,” “sound of night market,” “eating ripe mango sticky rice,” “weathered bamboo table,” “surrounded by bamboo.” This allows the reader to immerse themselves in the scene.

Imagery: You create clear mental pictures through your word choices. The “weathered bamboo table” and the image of being “surrounded by bamboo” paint a tangible setting.

Show, Don’t Tell: Instead of saying “it was a peaceful evening,” you show it through the sensory details and the solitary act of enjoying mango sticky rice on a balcony.

Setting as Atmosphere: The description of the balcony, contrasted with the rising sounds of the night market, establishes a specific mood and atmosphere – a sense of peaceful solitude amidst a subtly vibrant backdrop.

Conversation 2

Student: What writing techniques can you identify?

Gemini: Based on the excerpt, I can identify several writing techniques:

First-person narration: The story is told from the “I” perspective, allowing the reader direct access to the narrator’s thoughts and feelings (“The dust motes danced...”, “These questions just popped up in my mind...”, “My heart almost stopped skipping...”). This creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy.

Sensory details: The author uses vivid descriptions that appeal to the senses, such as “dust motes danced in the attic’s dim light,” “faded photograph,” and the simile “my tears just fell unstoppably like a river.” These details help the reader visualize the scene and connect with the narrator’s emotional state.

Figurative language: The use of similes like “my tears just fell unstoppably like a river” helps to convey the intensity of the narrator’s emotions in a more impactful way. The phrase “My world went black-feeling betrayal and frustration” also employs a metaphor to describe the sudden and overwhelming nature of their feelings.

Internal monologue: The narrator shares their immediate thoughts and questions as they look at the photograph (“Who’s this? When was this photo taken? Why is this photo here?”, “What’s their relationship?”). This technique allows the reader to follow the narrator’s train of thought and experience their confusion and realization in real-time.

RQ3: Teacher/AI Collaboration

This question examines the balance needed between teacher support and conversations with GenAI. The data for this

comes from discussion during workshops. In general, it was found that student/AI interaction alone was not sufficient. Teacher collaboration was most effective in helping shape AI prompts, then clarifying and contextualizing the output.

In the 2024 workshops, many students found the use of Gemini in creative tasks interesting. However, they did identify some limitations themselves. For example, one participant wished to create a violent horror story, but the output could not push to heightened levels of violence and gore. During these workshops, the main focus of teacher support was in leading the group through the best way to prompt; first with the initial prompting and then helping them structure the conversation further. With regards to the horror limitation, the student initially prompted “can you change this story genre into horror?” The teacher’s suggestion was to be more specific, so the prompt was changed to “can you make this a violent body horror?” In the original prompt, Gemini wrote “her smile a grotesque echo of her usual cheer.” This was changed when asked for more violence to “her usually cheerful face contorted in a silent scream,” showing a little more depth in the horror genre.

Prompting was also a key component of teacher support during the 2025 workshops, but extra clarification from the teacher was also necessary, to explain Gemini’s responses. During W2-25, when asking Gemini for a story idea, many students needed an explanation of terminology or plot. For example, one student asked for a story idea in the romance genre. Gemini suggested two people meet reaching for the same book and wrote “they reached for ‘Cosmos’ by Carl Sagan, an unlikely catalyst for a meeting.” The student did not have context for the book mentioned, nor understood what was happening in the scene, and so the teacher needed to provide a simpler explanation; “two people in a bookshop want the same book. That’s how they meet.” In the 2025 workshops, much more explanation was needed from the teacher throughout, in particular for certain vocabulary and writing techniques. The most common techniques that weren’t understood included juxtaposition, evocative and cliff hanger.

5. Discussion

The findings of this paper show that GenAI tools may be helpful in a second language context, to create and analyze creative writing. There are two caveats here; one, that collaboration of student/teacher/GenAI is essential and two, that students are given the tools to engage meaningfully with GenAI, if taking it beyond an educational context. In line with this university’s policy that appropriate use of GenAI depends on the academic field and should be guided by faculty, these workshops suggest that GenAI is most productive when teacher collaboration is built in at three points: (1) setting clear boundaries for when and how students may use GenAI (for example, using it in SALC workshops for exploration and analysis rather than for assessed assignments), (2) jointly designing and refining prompts that focus on analysing and experimenting with genres and craft rather than generating whole texts, and (3) mediating AI output through explanation, comparison with human-written models, and critical discussion of accuracy and style that fit with course goals. In this way, the study helps to concretise what ‘faculty guidance’ can look like in practice, and aligns with institutional expectations that GenAI should support, not replace, human judgment, creativity and academic integrity.

Student interest declined markedly within one year. In 2024, participants were generally interested in how they can interact and collaborate with GenAI to improve their skills and were keen to continue using it in this way in the future. Compare that to the 2025 workshops, where students felt less inclined to continue using GenAI for creative tasks, and it can be seen that the interest has declined. This is verified in verbal student feedback at the end of the workshops. In 2024, one comment from a participant was that “in the absence of feedback from readers, asking AI can also reveal problems in the text and improve them” (*Participant A, W2-2024*) showing that interest was strong in using GenAI for tasks where human intervention may not be possible. In 2025, one participant said that “writers have their own unique style of writing” and on using AI “I’ll just be a person in this mould” (*Participant B, W4-2025*). The participants in 2025 were more invested in the human creative element, with collaboration from teachers, rather than intervention with GenAI. Students may now be concerned that their widespread use of AI may devalue their output if

they engage with it. As previously mentioned, this seems to align with the findings of other contemporary research, such as that of Farinosi and Melchior (2025) and Attewell (2025) that suggest a growing wariness towards AI from student users as their knowledge of it, and its limitations, have become more known.

Beyond reporting student perceptions, the findings point to several areas of knowledge within creative writing that students developed through their interactions with GenAI. They were able to gain a clearer understanding of genre conventions, for example recognizing how horror requires shifts in atmosphere or how romance often begins with a chance encounter. They became more aware of craft techniques such as sensory description, evocative language, and the idea of 'show don't tell.' The process of collaboration with GenAI enabled students to recognize limitations firsthand and they noted where outputs felt constrained or formulaic, which allowed them to reflect on the importance of human creativity.

Through these areas, use of GenAI can support language acquisition in the classroom. Genre exploration can provide a scaffold for understanding structures in different types of prose while discussion of craft techniques introduces and reinforces specialized vocabulary, deepening lexical range. The collaboration of GenAI prompting and teacher support encourages metalinguistic reflection, as students consider how word choice and phrasing affect meaning. This is supported by recent work by Dhillon et al. (2024), who found that high scaffolding in LLM-assisted co-writing tasks significantly boosted writing quality for less experienced writers, and by Li & Wilson (2025), whose review showed that scaffolded AI integration that preserves learner agency fosters creativity without reducing student autonomy. Importantly, the creative context lowers the affective filter, giving students a space to take risks in English while remaining engaged in imaginative tasks. Therefore, teacher/AI collaboration may not only develop students' awareness of creative writing but also strengthen their broader L2 learning.

This paper stresses that collaboration between student/teacher/AI is essential for full understanding. During the workshops, participants often needed to adapt their prompting to gain a clearer, more exact answer. For example, if a participant used vague language such as 'give me a writing prompt for a short story in the horror genre' often Gemini's response was too detailed, giving a long prompt and the introduction paragraph of the writing. This would stall the creative process for the other party. Prompts that were more specific such as 'give me a writing prompt of 3-5 lines...' or 'write a short story of 200 words using the theme justice and the genre mystery' were able to deliver better results. It was also helpful if participants already had a basic level of knowledge about the craft of creative writing and could use that to engage GenAI in a back-and-forth conversation. When analyzing a piece of their own creative writing, one participant received a response from Gemini that they had repeated a certain word and should remove that element. The participant wrote back to Gemini that they had intentionally done that to create a feel of monotony in the story. This back-and-forth collaboration seems essential to using GenAI in the classroom and should be actively encouraged when teaching students to engage with GenAI for effective results.

6. Conclusion

This paper explored to what extent GenAI can help deepen L2 students' knowledge of genres and associated techniques within creative writing, drawing on a small series of voluntary workshops with L2 learners at a Japanese university. It focused on three questions: how useful GenAI tools were in assessing and understanding genres and associated creative writing techniques, how they helped students identify and reflect on writing techniques within specific genres and in what ways teacher/AI collaboration shaped students' engagement with GenAI during creative writing activities. In this setting, GenAI played a supportive role in creative writing activities when used alongside a knowledgeable teacher. Gemini often helped students identify and name themes, genres and common craft techniques, but its feedback was sometimes too abstract or complex for learners to interpret without mediation. Teacher input was central in designing and refining prompts, steering AI/student interactions, contextualising GenAI output, and encouraging students to

critically evaluate AI-generated suggestions rather than accepting them uncritically.

At an institutional level, this small, situated study also offers a concrete illustration of how university AI policies can be enacted in practice. In line with the university's guidance that GenAI should support, rather than replace, human judgment and must be framed by course-specific rules, the workshops treated GenAI as a visible, critiqued tool used in low-stakes SALC activities, with clear boundaries on use for assessed work. The findings suggest that faculty guidance should go beyond simple permission or prohibition statements and instead involve structured teacher/AI collaboration: setting task-specific limits on GenAI use, explicitly modelling and rehearsing effective prompting, and mediating GenAI output through discussion of accuracy, bias and fit with creative and linguistic goals.

6.1 Limitations

This study has several limitations. The student sample size was relatively small, self-selected and confined specifically to one Japanese university. Furthermore, the authors' dual role as both teachers and researchers necessarily shapes what was observed, asked, and interpreted (Richards, 2003). The findings should therefore be read as offering context-dependent insights into how GenAI and teacher mediation can interact in an L2 creative writing workshop setting, rather than as claims that can be straightforwardly generalised to other institutions or learner populations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In addition, students' existing knowledge of creative writing in English was captured through Likert scale pre-survey questions, no limitations on students' ability was required, and improvements in understanding were student reported Likert scale post-survey questions, which makes it difficult to relate specific workshop outcomes to prior ability. Future work could adopt a more robust design with pre- and post-workshop, rubric-based assessments of students' creative writing, combined with a longer period of engagement with the same participants, to examine how GenAI-supported activities relate to changes in learners' creative writing development over time. Research that integrates similar teacher-mediated GenAI activities into established creative writing or composition courses, and compares different institutional and cultural contexts, would also help clarify when and how GenAI can support, rather than overshadow, L2 learners' creative expression.

A further conceptual limitation concerns the use of the term collaboration to characterise student/GenAI interaction. Although there are concerns about the use of this term to refer to student interaction with GenAI, this research was a combination of student/teacher and GenAI interactions, meaning that student/teacher collaboration was a major focus of the process. That being said, this paper does discuss purely student/GenAI interaction as collaboration. While this reflected the language commonly used when the study was initiated, more recent studies have problematised applying collaboration to human/GenAI interactions. For example, Stockwell & Wang (2025) argue that although human/AI interaction can display surface features such as "task interdependence" and "complementary capabilities" (p. 5), it fundamentally lacks shared purpose, reciprocal understanding and genuinely distributed responsibility, all of which are central to establish definitions of collaboration. Therefore, this study aligns more closely with a model in which GenAI functions as a powerful but non-agentive tool that learners and teachers orchestrate. Future research should examine more critically how different framings such as "resource," or "interlocutor" (p. 13) shape students' expectations, ethical judgements, and patterns of use, particularly in creative writing contexts where notions of authorship and ownership are especially salient.

Bio Statements

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Pre-survey 2024 (completed May 16th)

1. What is your name?
2. What is your APU email address?
3. Are you Japanese or English basis?
4. If you are a Japanese basis student, what is your current level?
 - Elementary (ELE)
 - Pre-Intermediate (PIE)
 - Intermediate (IE)
 - Upper-Intermediate (UIE)
 - Advanced (AE1)
 - Advanced (AE2)
5. How often do you use AI to help you write?
 - lways

- Sometimes
 - Not often
 - Never
6. If you do use AI to write, which programs do you most often use? e.g. ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini.
7. On a scale of 1-5, how useful do you find AI?
- 1 = very useful
- 5 = not useful at all
8. How often do you engage in creative writing?
- Very often
 - Sometimes
 - Not often
 - Never
9. If you do write creatively, do you write in English?
10. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your knowledge of themes in literature? e.g. love, death, power, identity, nature etc.
- 1 = very good knowledge
- 5 = no knowledge
11. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your knowledge of genres in literature? e.g. romance, comedy, action, fantasy, science-fiction etc.
- 1 = very good knowledge
- 5 = no knowledge
12. If you write, what genre(s) do you prefer to write? e.g. romance, comedy, action, fantasy, science-fiction etc.
13. On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you in your ability to switch between different genres?
- 1 = very confident
- 5 = not confident at all
14. What do you hope to gain from this workshop?

Appendix 2: *Pre-survey 2025 (completed May 12th and May 15th)*

1. What is your name?
2. What is your APU email address?
3. Are you Japanese or English basis?
 - Japanese basis
 - English basis
4. If you are a Japanese basis student, what is your current level?
 - Elementary (ELE)
 - Pre-Intermediate (PIE)
 - Intermediate (IE)
 - Upper-Intermediate (UIE)
 - Advanced (AE1)
 - Advanced (AE2)
5. If you are an English basis student what is your CEFR level?
 - B1 (Intermediate)
 - B2 (Upper Intermediate)

- C1 (Advanced)
 - C2 (Proficient)
 - Don't know
6. Do you have a score for any English based test? e.g. TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS. Please write the name of the test and your score.
7. How often do you use generative AI? e.g. ChatGPT, DeepL, Gemini
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes (once or twice a month)
 - Often (once a week)
 - Very often (multiple days a week)
8. Do you use generative AI to help you with personal or work tasks?
- Personal
 - Academic/Work
 - Both
9. How do you usually use generative AI?
- AI provides most of the work for me
 - I use AI to get ideas and help with my assignments
 - I use AI as a support tool to edit and improve
10. How often do you use generative AI to help you write?
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes (once or twice a year)
 - Often (once a week)
 - Very often (multiple days a week)
11. If you do use AI to write, which programs do you most often use?
e.g. ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini.
12. How often do you do creative writing? e.g. short stories, poems, novels. (choose the closest answer)
- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes (once or twice a month)
 - Often (once a week)
 - Very often (multiple days a week)
13. If you do write creatively, do you write in English?
- Yes, I write in English
 - No, I write in another language
14. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your knowledge of themes in literature?
e.g. love, death, power, identity, nature etc.
1 = no knowledge
5 = very good knowledge
15. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your knowledge of genres in literature?
e.g. romance, comedy, action, fantasy, science-fiction etc.
1 = no knowledge

5 = very good knowledge

16. If you write, what genre(s) do you prefer to write?

e.g. romance, comedy, action, fantasy, science-fiction etc.

17. On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you in your ability to switch between different genres?

1 = not confident at all

5 = very confident

18. Why did you join this workshop?

- To improve my creative writing skills
- To improve my academic writing skills
- To learn about AI
- Other

Appendix 3: Post-survey 2024 (completed May 23rd)

1. What is your name?

2. What is your APU email address?

3. Are you Japanese or English basis?

- Japanese basis
- English basis

4. If you are a Japanese basis student, what is your current level?

- Elementary (ELE)
- Pre-Intermediate (PIE)
- Intermediate (IE)
- Upper-Intermediate (UIE)
- Advanced (AE1)
- Advanced (AE2)

5. On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find AI in identifying themes and genres?

1 = very useful

5 = not useful at all

6. Do you think your knowledge of themes in writing has improved with the use of AI?

- It's improved a lot
- It's improved somewhat
- It's not improved

7. Do you think your knowledge of genres in writing has improved with the use of AI?

- It's improved a lot
- It's improved somewhat
- It's not improved

8. On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you now feel in switching between genres in your writing?

1 = very confident

5 = not confident at all

9. On a scale of 1-5, how likely is it you'll use AI to write creatively in the future?

1 = very likely

5 = not likely at all

10. On a scale of 1-5, how helpful did you find AI in improving your creative writing?

1 = very helpful

5 = not helpful at all

11. What do you think you learned from this workshop?

Appendix 4: *Post-survey 2025 (completed May 15th)*

1. What is your name?

2. What is your APU email address?

3. Which workshop did you attend?

- Tuesday May 13th
- Thursday May 15th
- Both

4. In the writing tasks, what theme and genre did you pick and why?

5. On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find generative AI in identifying themes and genres?

1 = not useful at all

5 = very useful

6. Do you think your knowledge of themes in writing has improved with the use of AI?

- It's improved a lot
- It's improved somewhat
- It's not improved
- I'm not sure

7. Do you think your knowledge of genres in writing has improved with the use of AI?

- It's improved a lot
- It's improved somewhat
- It's not improved
- I'm not sure

8. On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you now feel in switching between genres in your writing?

1 = not confident at all

5 = very confident

9. On a scale of 1-5, how helpful did you find AI in improving your creative writing?

1 = not helpful at all

5 = very helpful

10. On a scale of 1-5, how likely is it you'll use AI to write creatively in the future?

1 = not likely at all

5 = very likely

11. What do you think you learned from this workshop?