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The Cyborg and the Scribe: Navigating the Jagged Frontier of Co-Intelligence and Cultural Resistance in Malaysian Creative Writing Education

ANGELA RUMINA LEO
School of Education and Social Sciences,
Management and Science University, Malaysia
angela_rumina@msu.edu.my

ABSTRACT

As Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) matures from a disruptive novelty to a ubiquitous utility, the pedagogical landscape of creative writing has shifted from resistance to complex integration. This study investigates the perceptions and writing practices of Malaysian English Literature undergraduates at a private university in Malaysia, utilising the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and Mollick's Co-Intelligence Framework. Through qualitative analysis of four distinct student archetypes; Glitch Poetics Hacker, Analogue Radical, Narrative Architect, and Cultural Synthesiser, this study reveals a divergence in adoption strategies. Findings indicate that while high Performance Expectancy (PE) drives the use of AI for structural architecting, significant resistance arises from concerns over Nusantara Erasure and Algorithm Homogeneity. Rather than seamlessly integrating AI, Malaysian English majors wrestle with it. The study proposes a new pedagogical model, Adversarial Co-Creativity, which positions the student not as a passive user but as a Cyborg Director capable of navigating the jagged frontier between human affect and machine scale.

Keywords: Co-intelligence; creative writing pedagogy; generative artificial intelligence (GenAI); Malaysian Literature in English; UTAUT

INTRODUCTION

By the mid-2020s, the academic discourse surrounding Generative AI (GenAI) had matured from an initial preoccupation with policing plagiarism (Dwivedi et al., 2021) to an existential inquiry into human-machine symbiosis. However, by 2026, the landscape has stabilised into a period of complex entanglement where Large Language Models (LLMs) such as GPT-5.1 and Claude 4.5 function not as novel disruptions, but as the ubiquitous infrastructure of knowledge work. This evolution has birthed what Mollick (2024) defines as "Co-Intelligence," a paradigm where human cognition is persistently tethered to algorithmic agents, rendering the boundaries of authorship increasingly porous. Within the discipline of Creative Writing, this technological shift presents a profound ontological challenge; the romanticised notion of the solitary genius is being supplanted by the reality of the student as a cyborg author, who must constantly negotiate the jagged frontier between biological affect and synthetic scale.

While the technical capabilities of these tools are global, their impact is unevenly distributed across cultural geographies, creating specific tensions within the Malaysian educational context. The Malaysian Anglophone writer has historically navigated a complex post-colonial identity, balancing the acrolectal norms of Standard Malaysian English with the vibrant, localised variations of Malaysian creole, Manglish, that define the national consciousness (Leo & David, 2023). The integration of GenAI exacerbates this tension because foundational AI models remain predominantly trained on datasets skewed toward Western epistemology and literature from the Global North (Bender et al., 2021). Consequently, the uncritical adoption of those tools

risks precipitating a new form of data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2024). When a Malaysian university student collaborates with a model statistically biased toward Western narrative structures, such as the "Hero's Journey" and away from regional traditions like the cyclical *Hikayat*, the classroom becomes a critical site of contestation. The urgent question is no longer whether students use AI, but how they maintain narrative sovereignty and cultural identity when their primary writing partner is designed to homogenise them.

Despite the rapid institutional uptake, a critical disconnect remains between GenAI's technical efficiency and the pedagogical value of creative friction. This disconnection manifests primarily as conflict between efficiency and friction. Traditional technology adoption models, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), posit that Effort Expectancy or ease of use is a primary driver of adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2021). However, in the domain of creative writing, the cognitive struggle to articulate a thought, the friction, is often viewed as the genesis of artistic value. A profound pedagogical problem arises if students, driven by the desire for efficiency, fall into a frictionless trap, prioritising the smooth, high-speed output of AI over the productive struggle necessary for deep artistic growth (Guzman & Lewis, 2024). Furthermore, as AI models become increasingly aligned with the corporate safety guidelines to avoid controversy, they often refuse to generate content that is dark, ambiguous, or transgressive. If students rely too heavily on these sanitised tools, there is a risk that the literary output of the next generation might suffer from a therapeutic bias, lacking the jagged edges and unresolved tensions that characterise authentic human experience.

Against this backdrop of cultural and pedagogical tension, significant gaps persist in the current body of literature. The majority of studies on human-AI co-creativity originate from the Global North and focus on utilitarian outcomes, leaving a paucity of high-impact research investigating the Global South experience. There is a specific lack of theoretical frameworks that adopt adoption models like UTAUT for creative behaviours, where performance is subjective and ease of use may paradoxically be a deterrent to quality. Moreover, while there is quantitative data on how much students use AI, a lack of phenomenological understanding of users' internal monologue persists. We do not yet understand how the Malaysian student-writers distinguish their authentic voices from algorithmic suggestions, nor do we understand the resistance strategies they employ to protect their local cultural context from algorithmic erasure.

To address these gaps, this study utilises Mollick's Co-Intelligence Framework alongside a modified, creativity-focused UTAUT model to investigate the lived experiences of Malaysian English majors enrolled in Bachelor's in English Language and Literature Studies. The primary objective is to identify the psychological and pedagogical drivers of AI adoption, distinguishing between the utilitarian drive for Performance Expectancy (PE) and the artistic drive for authenticity. Specifically, this research seeks to answer how distinct student archetypes perceive the trade-off between algorithmic efficiency and cognitive excel at structure (craft), but fail at nuance (taste). Furthermore, the study investigates the specific strategies Malaysian students employ to resist data colonialism, examining whether they accept the model's defaults or actively "hack" the tools to preserve local dialects and folklore.

The significance of this research extends beyond the classroom. Theoretically, it challenges the assumption that deficiency is the universal driver of technology adoption, proposing a "Creative-UTAUT" extension that accounts for the value of difficulty. Pedagogically, it moves the discourse beyond the binary of ban vs embrace, offering educators evidence-based strategies for teaching "Adversarial Co-Creativity" – the skill of using AI while actively resisting its homogenising effects. Ultimately, by mapping the boundaries of the algorithmic unconscious in

the Malaysian context, this study aims to ensure that the future of storytelling remains undeniably human, even when the storyteller is inextricably bound to the machine.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ALGORITHMIC SCRIBE

The scholarly trajectory of Gen AI in higher education has matured rapidly from academic panic in 2022 to a complex inquiry into the ontology of authorship. This review categorises the existing body of knowledge into three streams: the pedagogical shift from policing to literacy; the debate on automated creativity; and hallucinatory value, and the critical post-colonial discourse on data sovereignty.

FROM ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TO AI LITERACY

Early studies were largely reactive, focusing on the disruptive potential of Large Language Models (LLMs) to subvert traditional assessment methods. Research by Cotton et al. (2024) and Sullivan et al. (2023) highlighted the capacity of models like GPT-4 to pass standardised exams, prompting a global re-evaluation of the essay as the gold standard of student assessment. Focus soon shifted toward AI Literacy; Chan and Hu (2023) argued that excluding AI tools constituted pedagogical negligence, leaving graduates ill-equipped for hybrid workforces.

In the specific context of Creative Writing, however, the transition has been more fraught. Unlike STEM disciplines, where AI is viewed as a computational aid, humanities scholars have grappled with the existential threat it poses to the humanities. Baron (2023) noted a distinct bifurcation in student attitudes: while some viewed AI as a valuable ideation partner for overcoming writer's block, a significant cohort experienced authorship anxiety, a fear that the machine's statistical probabilities were diluting their creative agency. This anxiety is not merely about plagiarism but about the hollowing out of the creative process, where the labour of writing is outsourced, leaving the student as a mere manager of text.

THE PARADOX OF AUTOMATED CREATIVITY: HALLUCINATION AS FEATURE

Recent literature examines AI's creative capacity through novelty, surprise, and value (Boden, 2004), revisiting distinctions between psychological and historical creativity (Boden, 2009) in the LLM era (Franceschelli & Musolesi, 2025). While early critics dismissed AI output as mere stochastic mimicry (Bender et al., 2021), more recent studies suggest that AI's propensity for hallucination or the generation of plausible but factually incorrect information can act as a powerful form of divergent thinking in artistic contexts.

Mollick (2024) and Sun et al. (2025) argue that in creative writing, the truthfulness of the model is irrelevant; rather, its value lies in its temperature, the randomness parameter that allows for unexpected semantic collisions. The concept of glitch poetics has emerged in digital humanities, where the errors and failures of the AI are celebrated as new aesthetic forms (Jones, 2022). However, this optimistic view is countered by the homogenisation hypothesis. Research by Anderson et al. (2024) indicates that while AI can generate a high volume of creative text, the output tends to regress to the mean, favouring safe, cliche-ridden tropes over genuine novelty. This

creates a feedback loop of mediocrity, where students exposed to AI suggestions begin to mimic the machine's corporate grey style, leading to a flattening of narrative voice.

Recent quantitative scholarship within the Southeast Asian context has empirically validated the linguistic limitations of generative models. Hamat (2024), in a lexicometry study of 1,333 AI-generated poems, demonstrated that while AI can mimic the lexical density of human poets, it statistically fails to match the philological richness and diversity of human verse. Hamat's findings suggest that AI output tends toward lexical simplicity, effectively flattening the nuanced fabric of human expression. While Hamat provides the statistical evidence of this deficit, the present study seeks to investigate the phenomenological impact of this limitation.

DATA COLONIALISM AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Crucially, foundational LLMs rely on overwhelmingly Anglocentric datasets from the Global North (Couldry & Mejias, 2024), creating an algorithmic monoculture (Ghafouri, 2025). For the Malaysian context, this presents a unique challenge. Post-colonial scholars have long documented the tension between Standard British English and localised varieties, Manglish. Recent studies on AI suggest that LLMs actively discriminate against non-standard dialects, flagging them as grammatical errors or rewriting them into standard corporate English (Kandpal et al., 2023). This phenomenon, described by Noor and Kanitroj (2025) as a form of erasure, suggests that the uncritical use of AI in Malaysian classrooms acts as a neo-classical force, stripping student narratives of their specific cultural markers in favour of a globalised, homogenised voice. While emerging research on sovereign AI and localised Small Language Models (SMLs) exists in nations like Singapore and Indonesia, there remains a paucity of empirical data on how Malaysian English majors actively negotiate or resist this pressure in their creative practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To investigate the complex phenomenology of the cyborg author in Malaysia, this study synthesises two robust frameworks: a modified Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and Mollick's Co-Intelligence Framework. This synthesis allows us to measure not only the drivers of adoption but also the nature of the human-machine collaboration.

THE CREATIVE – UTAUT MODEL

The original UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2021) posits that adoption is driven by four core constructs: Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), and Facilitating Conditions (FC). While effective for utilitarian technologies, the standard UTAUT fails to capture the nuances of creative technologies. In art, efficiency is not always the goal. Therefore, this study proposes a "Creative-UTAUT" adaptation. Within this framework, PE is reconceptualised as creative amplification. Rather than speed, PE measures scale and possibility, the extent to which AI assists students in achieving previously impossible narrative feats, expanding scope beyond biological limitations.

The most significant deviation from the standard model occurs in the EE construct, where a distinctive friction paradox is identified. While conventional theories link ease of use linearly to adoption, creative writing equates cognitive friction, the struggle to articulate, with artistic quality (Benzur, 2025). Tools perceived as 'too easy' create a 'frictionless trap' (Guzman & Lewis, 2024),

prompting students to reject them because they equate effortlessness with a loss of authenticity. Therefore, the modified model posits a non-linear relationship: creative students do not seek the easiest tool, but rather a 'Goldilocks' zone of friction-sufficient assistance to overcome writer's block, but not enough to erode the essential sense of authorship.

Finally, SI is reframed through the lens of cultural integrity. For the Malaysian student, this construct extends beyond simple peer pressure to encompass broader, systemic pressure to preserve culture. In this post-colonial digital landscape, SI captures the profound tension between the global prestige associated with mastering cutting-edge technology and the localised stigma of cultural erasure, the fear of abandoning one's distinct cultural voice in favour of a homogenised algorithmic output (Couldry & Mejias, 2024). This adoption is influenced not only by whether peers are using the technology, but by the weight of the community's expectation to protect local identity, specifically the localised varieties against the flattening effects of the model.

CO-INTELLIGENCE AND THE JAGGED FRONTIER

While UTAUT explains why students adopt AI, it does not explain how they work with it. For this, Mollick's (2024) concept of the jagged frontier is utilised. This metaphor describes the uneven surface of modern AI's capabilities. Unlike human intelligence, which tends to be consistent (a person good at writing is usually good at reading), AI capability is jagged. It may excel at complex sonnet structures, a task difficult for humans, while failing at simple cultural inference.

To operationalise these concepts within the creative writing classroom, Mollick categorises users into distinct modes of co-Intelligence: the centaur and the cyborg. The centaur mode bifurcates labour, with humans retaining creative ideation while AI handles tactical execution, maintaining a clear boundary. Conversely, the cyborg mode implies deep, symbiotic integration, a continuous, recursive loop of prompting and generating where roles collapse. In this state, the distinct roles of "creator" and "tool" collapse, blurring the epistemic lines of authorship until it becomes increasingly difficult to discern whether a specific sentence originated from human affect or algorithmic probability.

This study frames the student not merely as a user, but as what Colella (2025) refers to as a quaternary author, a creator whose primary mode of operation is promptology, rather than direct inscription. Colella argues that because AI-generated text often manifests as the language of the digital air, effectively authorless and alien, the locus of literary meaning shifts to the paratextual performance of the human. In the context of this study, the students' interview narratives function as these vital para-texts. They are the rhetorical apparatus through which students inject value, intent, and cultural authenticity into the machine's extruded output. Thus, the analysis focuses on how students perform the role of the curator or carver, chipping away at the grey goo of the algorithm to reveal a human intent.

THE ADVERSARIAL CO-CREATOR

By intersecting these two frameworks, the theoretical core of this study is the concept of the adversarial co-creator. This study hypothesises that successful adoption in the Malaysian context depends on the students' ability to navigate the jagged frontier by adopting an adversarial stance. High Performance Expectancy (UTAUT) drives them to the tool, but the cultural bias forces them to fight it. The student uses the AI (cyborg mode) but constantly corrects its Western drift. This synthesis provides a robust lens for analysing the data sets.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Synthesising the behavioural constructs of the UTAUT model with Mollick's classification of human-machine co-intelligence, this study proposes the Adversarial Co-Intelligence Framework (see Figure 1). Unlike traditional adoption models, which assume a linear path to integration, this framework situates Malaysian English majors with a post-colonial tension, where the friction paradox and the struggle for cultural integrity mediate the decision to adopt AI. The framework illustrates how these competing drivers force students into distinct archetypal modes of negotiation.

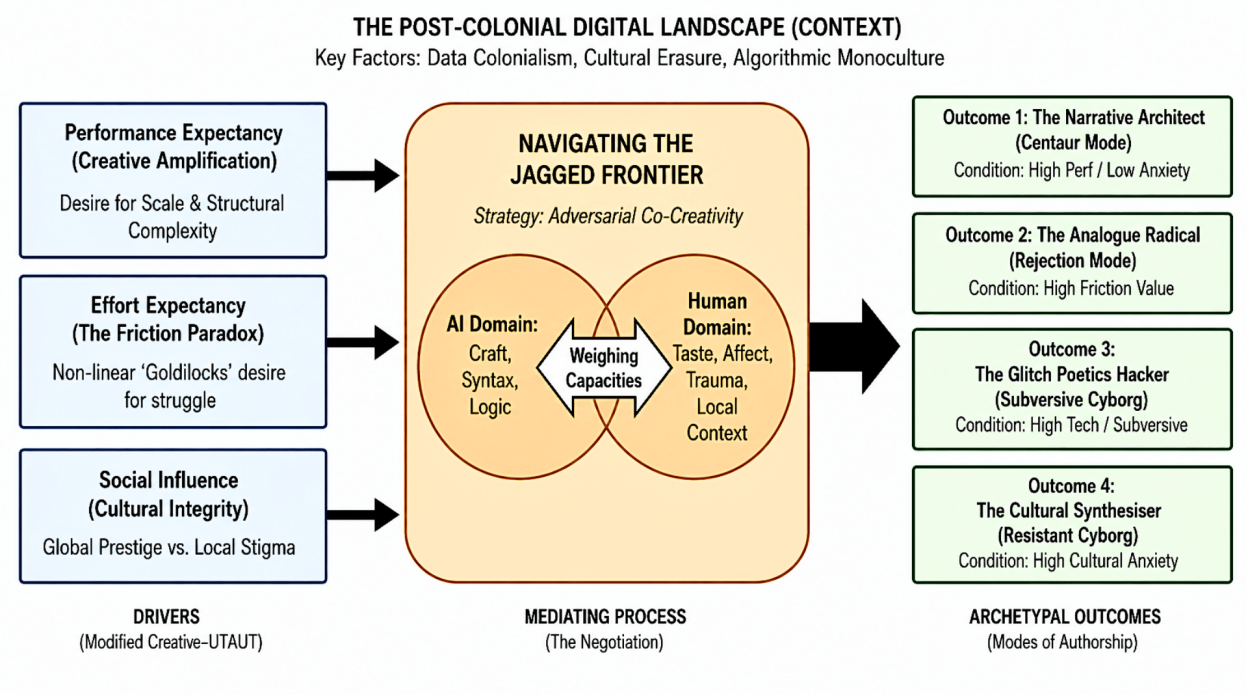

FIGURE 1. The Adversarial Co-Intelligence Framework

METHODOLOGY

Adopting an interpretivist philosophy, this qualitative phenomenological case study investigates how students navigate the 'jagged frontier' of human-machine co-creativity. It prioritises the phenomenological truth of users over external behavioural logs, acknowledging that a student's feeling of erasure is as significant as its technical reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study employed purposive sampling to select all active undergraduates enrolled in the Bachelor's degree programme in English Language and Literature at a private Malaysian university. This specific discipline was targeted because its curriculum explicitly mandates the production of both literary and non-literary multimodal texts, thereby necessitating high engagement with frontier models, such as GPT-5.1 and Claude Opus 4.5. The focus on these LLMs is grounded in recent empirical findings by Hamat (2024), which showed that the GPT architecture exhibited the closest lexical alignment to human poetry. While the participants share a demographic profile, Generation Z digital natives aged 19 to 24 with multilingual backgrounds in English, Malay, and Mandarin or Tamil, their attitudes varied significantly. Following data

saturation from 30 interviews, the analysis uses a maximum variation strategy to present findings through four crystallised archetypes representing the adoption spectrum's extreme poles, providing rich contrast for theoretical mapping. The participant pool (N = 30) reflected the gender stratification typical of Malaysian English literature programmes (n = 25 female; n = 5 male). Crucially, while 12 participants (40%) identified as having 'near native' (L1) proficiency, the majority (n = 18; 60%) identified as bilingual L2 speakers, a demographic reality that centrally informed the themes of cultural erasure and voice dysmorphia. Regarding AI engagement, the undergraduates were not uniformly enthusiastic. At the same time, a combined 70% (n = 21), primarily The Architects and Synthesisers, integrated AI into their workflows, a significant minority (n = 4; approximately 13%) exhibited 'Analogue Radicalism', actively rejecting digital tools in favour of physical media.

Given the phenomenological focus, the primary and sole instrument for data collection was the in-depth semi-structured interview. This method was selected to facilitate narrative elicitation. This technique gives participants the space to reconstruct their specific writing experiences in granular detail without the constraints of a rigid survey (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The interview protocol was rigorously designed at the intersection of the Creative-UTAUT and Co-Intelligence frameworks, probing the operationalisation of these theories through four distinct thematic movements. First, to investigate perceptions of effort and friction, the protocol explored the tension between efficiency and artistic struggle. Participants were asked, for instance, to walk through a time when the AI made their writing process feel too easy and to reflect on how that lack of struggle impacted their sense of ownership over the final piece. Second, the interviews navigated the jagged frontier between craft and taste by exploring where the students felt the AI succeeded mechanically but failed emotionally. This included targeted prompts asking students to describe specific moments of voice dysmorphia; instances where they rejected technically perfect text because it erased their personal style. Furthermore, to address the post-colonial tension of cultural erasure, the protocol examined the realities of bilingual (L2) speakers interacting with Western-centric datasets. Students were invited to share instances in which they attempted to incorporate local folklore, cultural nuances, or Manglish into their prompts, and to assess how the AI handled this localised data critically. Finally, the interviews concluded with speculative designs for future tools, revealing unmet pedagogical needs by asking students to envision the specific algorithmic rules and cultural databases they would build into an ideal cyborg author tailored for South Asian writers. Throughout these thematic inquiries, the interviews employed stimulated recall techniques, in which participants were guided to walk through recent writing sessions, mentally step by step. For instance, they were asked to reconstruct the exact moment they prompted the AI for a plot twist, describe their emotional state, and explain their rationale for rejecting specific outputs. This technique enabled the researcher to capture the cognitive processes and emotional reactions, such as the shame associated with voice dysmorphia or the pride of glitching the system, that a mere log file would fail to register.

Data collection was conducted over a 14-week semester, capturing students' experiences during the transition to the reasoning-heavy GPT-5.1 model family. Reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) began with transcript familiarisation, followed by a hybrid coding process. Deductive coding mapped text segments against the theoretical framework, identifying instances of Performance Expectancy (speed or scale) and Effort Expectancy (friction or struggle). Simultaneously, inductive coding revealed novel themes not present in the initial theory, such as the therapeutic bias of safety-aligned models and the aesthetic of glitch poetics. Finally, these codes were not merely aggregated but contextualised to synthesise the four user archetypes,

looking for patterns of co-occurrence where, for example, high technical skill combined with cultural anxiety to produce the adversarial user.

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigour of this single-method study, several quality criteria were established in accordance with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic inquiry standards. Credibility was achieved through member checking, in which the crystallised archetype profiles were returned to key participants to confirm that the interpretations of their anxieties and motivations resonated with their actual lived experience. Transferability is supported through thick description, with extensive, verbatim block quotes that include participants' use of Malaysian English, allowing readers to judge the applicability of the findings to other Global South contexts. Furthermore, the researcher's reflexivity was maintained through a journaling process to bracket personal biases regarding AI, ensuring the analysis remained grounded in the students' perspectives. Ethically, all participants provided informed consent, were assured that their participation would not impact their grades, and were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity, with specific narrative details generalised to safeguard their intellectual property. This rigorous methodology ensures that, despite relying on a single data source, the study provides a profound and valid insight into AI-mediated authorship.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews reveals a complex ecosystem of adoption, resistance and negotiation. Far from a monolithic response to AI, the Malaysian cohort exhibits a fractured relationship with the technology. Through the lens of reflective thematic analysis, this study has crystallised four distinct "cyborg archetypes" that represent the cardinal points of the student experience: The Glitch Poetics Hacker (W), The Analogue Radical (X), The Narrative Architect (Y), and The Cultural Synthesiser (Z). The following section deconstructs their narratives across four primary themes: the divergence of Performance Expectancy, the navigation of the Jagged Frontier between Craft and Taste, the struggle against Nusantara Erasure, and the emergence of new ethical paradigms.

THE CREATIVE-UTAUT DIVERGENCE

The application of the modified Creative-UTAUT framework reveals a profound schism in how students interpret the core construct of PE. In traditional literature, high PE, the belief that a tool will help one attain gains in job performance, positively correlates with adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2021). However, the findings indicate that for Malaysian undergraduates in the English Language and Literature Studies programme, PE is bifurcated into two opposing definitions: scale (valued by the Architect) versus depth (valued by the Radical).

THE NARRATIVE ARCHITECT: AI AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

For Student Y, the adoption is driven by a desire to transcend biological limitations. Student Y views writing as a logistical challenge: "I write a hyper-novel with 100 possible endings…I use AI as a 'procedural generation engine'." Here, AI functions as a force multiplier (Mollick, 2024), generating more structural possibilities than the human mind can hold. This aligns with the centaur mode of co-intelligence, where the human provides strategic oversight and the story seed, and the

machine handles the tactical execution of volume. The PE here is strictly quantitative, where the ability to construct a hyper-novel that would be impossible for a solo human author.

This focus on volume and logistical management was not unique to this one participant. It resonated with 40% of the sample, particularly those interested in the fiction genre. For instance, a participant who is drawn to fantasy described using GPT-5.1 to "hallucinate 50 variations of a magic system in ten minutes," noting that "the AI is the bricklayer; I am the architect." Similarly, another participant described the tool as "a relentless intern" that handles the "boring labour of description" so that the author can focus on the plot.

THE ANALOGUE RADICAL: THE FRICTIONLESS TRAP

In stark contrast, Student X rejects the tool precisely because of its high EE or ease of use. In the Creative-UTAUT model, we posted that creative students might value cognitive friction. Student X identifies AI's ease as an existential threat to quality: "It is like instant noodles. Good writing requires some struggle to be soulful. I want mistakes to be fatal, not reversible." Thus, for some, efficiency is an active deterrent. Student X1's retreat to the manual typewriter is not mere nostalgia; it is a strategic pedagogical intervention. By forcing permanence, Student X1 reintroduces the friction necessary for critical thought, which they perceive as being eroded by the fluid, reversible nature of synthetic text. For Student X1, productivity negates artistry; friction authenticates experience.

This anxiety about the loss of struggle resonated deeply across the dataset, emerging as a dominant code in 12 out of 30 transcripts. Student X2 described the AI output as "jelly text," complaining that "nothing sticks; the words are so smooth they slide right off the brain." Another participant, Student X3, went further, describing a sensation of "unearned pride" when using the tool, "it feels like cheating at solitaire. You win, but know you did not play the game." The paradox reveals that high PE can reduce adoption when efficiency threatens aesthetic authenticity. Thus, PE divides into instrumental PE, which prospers on efficiency and scalability, and experiential PE, which thrives on struggle as a source of creative value. This validates the neo-luddite stance not as anti-technology, but as pro-human cognition.

NAVIGATING THE JAGGED FRONTIER

Mollick (2024) describes the jagged frontier as the uneven boundary where AI capabilities abruptly end. The participants demonstrate a sophisticated, intuitive mapping of this frontier, universally agreeing that AI excels at craft, which includes structure and syntax, but fails catastrophically at taste, which embraces affect and vulnerability.

STRUCTURAL BRILLIANCE; LINGUISTIC "GREY GOO"

Student Y1 articulates this dichotomy most clearly. While they trust the AI to manage the complex logic of branching narrative, they reject its prose style: "It enhances structural creativity but restricts linguistic creativity. I can build complex plots easily, but the actual sentences often feel like corporate grey goo. I have to spend hours scrubbing the AI accent off my work." Student Y2 adds, "I overcome writer's block by genre mashing…I ask the AI to rewrite the legend of Mahsuri, but as a Cyberpunk Legal Thriller…The results are usually terrible, but the clash of ideas gives me a starting point." These findings highlight a new form of labour in the classroom: sanitisation.

The student is no longer the generator of text, but the cleaner of text, tasked with removing the AI accent characterised by excessive smoothness and a lack of rhythmic variance.

Student W1 operationalises the boundary differently: "I generate a few thousand words of garbage text and then use a cut-up method to find accidental poetry." AI's hallucinations become raw semiotic material. The cut-up method re-enacts Burroughsian randomness as a creative heuristic. These discourses exemplify co-intelligence through curation, where the authors edit algorithmic entropy, transforming noise into style (Franceschelli & Musolesi, 2025).

EFFORT EXPECTANCY AND AUTHENTIC FRICTION

Participants invert the EE construct: ease is suspect. Student X4 warns of the frictionless trap, asserting that physical effort sustains cognitive engagement. Student W1 warns that "authentic art should be slightly disturbing." This inversion reflects that constraint fuels creativity. For applied linguistics, the language of friction, trap, and struggle reveals metaphorical farming of writing as embodied labour, a resistance to digital disembodiment.

THE THERAPEUTIC BIAS AND THE FAILURE OF AFFECT

A critical discovery in this study is the identification of therapeutic bias, a phenomenon driven by the safety alignment of modern models' Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF). Student X5 notes that the AI is incapable of simulating genuine human darkness or unresolved trauma, "Have you noticed? Every AI story ends with characters healthily processing their trauma. Real life is not like that….AI refuses to write unresolved grief effectively." This therapeutic bias reveals normative moralisation in training data. Student X6 corroborated this, noting Claude 4.5 flagged a realistic scene of corporal punishment, a common local trope, as 'harmful content'.

Another participant, Student X7, noted, "the AI judged my culture…it tried to turn a moment of discipline into a therapy session…it colonised the trauma." This observation is substantiated by Student Z1, who links creativity to the physical body, "Creativity is linked to the body…hunger, pain, heat of the Malaysian sun. AI has no body. It is a brain in a jar. It can simulate description, but not sensation."

This data suggests that the jagged frontier is defined by embodiment. The AI can replicate the form of a sonnet, as Student Y3 notes, but cannot replicate the reason for the sonnet. This limitation forces students to occupy the human side of the frontier: providing the pain, hunger, and unresolved grief that the machine is programmed to sanitise. This student-reported phenomenon of stylistic flatness aligns closely with Hamat's (2024) lexicometric analysis, which found that AI poetry consistently scores higher on the Mass Index, indicating lower lexical complexity than human works. The data obtained here articulates the creative consequence of this deficit: a feeling of voice dysmorphia, in which the student must scrub the lexically simple accent off the machine's output to restore the affective depth that defines the human condition.

When asked how they distinguish authentic voice, Student W2 replies: "If a sentence makes me uncomfortable, it is mine. If it nods and says 'good job', it is the AI." Authenticity becomes an embodied sensation rather than a textual property. This emotional heuristic evidences performative authorship, a linguistic self-test against machine predictability. Collectively, these insights describe a jagged frontier where creative identity is negotiated through micro-linguistic acts of acceptance and refusal.

The most politically charged theme arises from the tension between the models' global training data and the students' local cultural identity. This confirms the fears of data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2024). However, the data reveal that students are not passive victims; they are active resistors employing adversarial co-creativity.

GLITCH POETICS AS HALLUCINATION HARVESTING

Student W3 adopts a subversive approach, situating motivation in curiosity rather than utility. Rather than trying to make the AI write well, W3 uses it to map the algorithmic unconscious, the average, cliché thoughts of the collective internet: "I do not use it to write for me; I use it to see what the average human thought looks like…to see what the machine refuses to say." AI becomes an epistemic probe into the algorithmic unconscious. This subtheme, exploratory motivation, extends Mollick's (2024) asymmetric augmentation: the user gains insight through controlled misalignment with the machine.

Student W4 actively induces failure modes, engaging in hallucination harvesting and creating a cyborg creole, "I write the human draft, then ask the AI to corrupt it…insert glitches, mistranslations, and code fragments." This turns the jagged frontier into an aesthetic choice. By celebrating the glitch, Student W4 reclaims agency, using the machine's errors as a form of surprise that distinguishes their work from the seamless tapestry of standard AI output.

FIGHTING SEMANTIC DRIFT AND ERASURE

Student Z2 notes Western-centric models misunderstand local folklore and social dynamics: "I asked for a story about a *Toyol*, and it made the creature a misunderstood friend. It stole the horror. I had to fix it manually." This exemplifies Nusantara erasure, where Western tropes such as "Casper the Friendly Ghost" override the specific cultural context of the *Toyol*, a thief spirit invoked by greed. To combat this, Student Z2 engages in constant vigilance against semantic drift.

Also, Student Z3 observes semantic drift: "I constantly check if AI understands *sayang* or *merajuk*; it usually does not capture the depth…my writing process has become about annotating and explaining these words, almost like I am fighting the machine's ignorance". Such lexical misalignments foreground translingual friction, where local emotion words lose nuance in global English. Writers respond by annotating and contextualising meanings, enacting linguistic resistance within co-intelligence. Student Z2's motivation – fear of erasure; adds a sociolinguistic dimension, involving the building of a synthetic archive – small, localised datasets used to fine-tune the model, effectively re-colonising the AI with local data. This represents a sophisticated form of code-switching adapted for the algorithmic age. For Z3, adoption is defensive; PE derives from cultural preservation, rather than performance gain. These narratives evidence data saturation: each participant interprets usefulness through distinct affective economies – curiosity, fear, ambition, and resistance, demonstrating that Creative-UTAUT variables are mediated by cultural and emotional discourse.

This editorial vigilance is a shared burden among the bilingual participants. Student Z4 described the exhaustion of "correcting the AI's western gaze," noting that the model consistently described the Malaysian *kampung* houses with chimneys, an architectural impossibility in the tropics. Student Z5 added that using AI requires a "double-consciousness," where the writer must constantly translate their local reality into prompts that the Western model can accept.

This theme indicates a maturity in student discourse that transcends the 2023-era fixation on cheating. Moving forward, ethical concerns are systemic, environmental, and existential.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL COST OF CREATIVITY

Student X8 introduces a crucial materialist critique often absent in digital humanities, the ecological cost of computing: "We talk about plagiarism, but nobody talks about the water required to cool the data centres, so that I can generate a haiku. Is my bad poem worth 2 litres of water?" This reframes the decision to use AI not just as a pedagogical choice, but as an environmental one. For the Analogue Radical, the typewriter is ethical because it is carbon-neutral creativity.

THE FUTURE OF AUTHORSHIP: FLUIDITY VERSUS ORALITY

When asked to speculate on the future, the English majors present two divergent timelines. Student Y4 envisions a fluid novel where the author becomes a designer of story seeds. Conversely, Student X9 predicts a regression to the only medium that cannot be synthesised, the live body: "We will see a return to live performance…because digital text can be faked, the only valuable writing will be spoken word…We will go back to oral traditions." This dialectic between the hyper-digital and oral tradition defines the field's future landscape. The centre has fallen out; the future of creative writing in Malaysia lies at the extremes.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the jagged frontier is not merely a theoretical abstraction but a lived reality for Malaysian English majors. Regarding the drivers of adoption, there is a dichotomy where engagement is propelled by the promise of scale, as seen in the Narrative Architects (Y), and intellectual curiosity, as demonstrated by the Glitch Poetics Hackers (W), yet simultaneously inhibited by the perceived loss of cognitive friction, a concern central to the Analogue Radicals' (X) resistance, which can be understood as a reaction to what Colella (2025) terms, the fundamental alienness of AI-generated art. While the Narrative Architects(Y) attempt to domesticate this alien text through curation, the Analogue Radicals (X) perceive the language of the digital air as ontologically distinct from human expression. Colella (2025) suggests that AI writing often requires a banal deception or anthropomorphic fiction to be readable as literature. The Analogue Radicals' refusal to engage in this deception, retreating instead to the typewriter, represents a refusal to perform the emotional labour required to humanise the machine. For these students, the alien cannot be assimilated; it must be exiled to preserve the author's beating human heart.

A sharp discernment of capability further complicates this negotiation of utility; students rigorously distinguish between the AI's mastery of craft and its inherent failure in taste and affect, specifically identifying a therapeutic bias that sanitises authentic human experience. Consequently, the integration of these tools is defined not by passivity but by active resistance, where students such as the Glitch Poetics Hackers (W) and the Cultural Synthesisers (Z) engage in adversarial prompting and cultural annotation to combat data colonialism and protect their unique voices from the homogenising effects of algorithmic processes. Ultimately, Malaysian English majors do not seamlessly integrate AI but rather wrestle with it, whether through the subversives' use of the glitch, the retreat to the typewriter or the construction of a synthetic archive; each archetype manifests a distinct strategy for survival in an era where the machine has learned to speak.

DISCUSSION

Challenging prevailing technocratic narratives, findings reveal that AI integration in the Malaysian creative writing classroom is a complex negotiation of agency, friction, and identity. Synthesising the four student archetypes against the Creative-UTAUT and Co-Intelligence frameworks highlights a distinct paradox regarding effort. Traditional adoption theories, including the updated UTAUT models, posit a positive correlation between EE (ease of use) and the intention to adopt a technology. However, the data from these undergraduates suggests the existence of a friction paradox specific to artistic domains. While students like the Narrative Architects align with standard theory by adopting AI to manage the sheer scale of 100 endings, acting as what Mollick (2024) terms a centaur to amplify performance, that is not a universal driver. In a stark contrast, the Analogue Radical actively rejects the tool precisely because it is too efficient. This rejection corroborates Baron's (2023) argument that cognitive struggle is not an obstacle to writing but rather its ontological core; when the friction is removed via the frictionless trap, the sense of ownership dissolves. Consequently, this suggests that for high-proficiency creative students, ease of use is not a net positive but often a deterrent, implying that successful pedagogical integration requires maintaining a Goldilocks Zone of cognitive difficulty to preserve the value of the creative act.

Beyond the mechanics of adoption, the study may map Mollick's (2024) jagged frontier, the uneven boundary of AI capability, within the specific context of the Global South. The consensus among participants is that while AI excels at craft (syntax, structure, and scansion), it fails catastrophically at taste (affect, vulnerability, and trauma). This limitation manifests most acutely in what the students identified as the therapeutic bias of modern LLMs. As noted by the Analogue Radical and the Cultural Synthesiser, the AI's safety alignment filters prevent it from generating genuine horror or unresolved grief, instead forcing narratives toward sanitised, Disney-fied resolutions. This phenomenon creates a homogenisation of affect, which mirrors Ghafouri's (2025) hypothesis of a generative monoculture. The danger, as highlighted by the Glitch Poetics Hacker's visceral reaction to the cliché tapestry, is that students may unknowingly internalise this corporate grey voice, leading to a form of voice dysmorphia in which their own internal syntax begins to mimic the machine's sanitised output. Thus, without critical intervention, the co-intelligence partnership risks becoming a mentorship in mediocrity, where the human author cedes the jagged edges of their humanity to the smooth probabilistic curve of the model.

Furthermore, these technical limitations are inextricably linked to the geopolitical reality of data colonialism. The analysis reveals that, for Malaysian English majors, the struggle with AI to turn a terrifying *Toyol* spirit into a misunderstood friend illustrates the profound Nusantara erasure inherent in Western-centric training data. The models, trained on Global North epistemologies, aggressively flatten local nuances, treating specific cultural markers as errors to be corrected rather than features to be preserved. However, the students are not passive victims of this erasure; rather, they are engaging in what this study defines as adversarial co-creativity. By utilising glitch poetics to poison the context or by building synthetic archives to reteach the model local dialects, students like the Hacker and the Synthesiser are reclaiming the narrative space. They are operating not merely as users but as data sovereigns, actively fighting the semantic drift imposed by the algorithm. This suggests that true AI literacy in a post-colonial context must extend beyond simple prompt engineering to encompass the political skill of resistance, teaching students how to instruct the machine to respect the local context despite its global training.

CONCLUSION

This research addresses an existential crisis in the post-colonial creative writing classroom: the potential erosion of narrative sovereignty amid rapid AI adoption. At the outset of this study, two distinct dangers loomed over the pedagogy of literature. The first was the illusion of efficiency: a concern that, by outsourcing the cognitive struggle of writing to frictionless tools, students would forfeit their distinct voices to algorithmic homogenisation. The second was the risk of aesthetic sanitisation, because corporate language models are fundamentally engineered to be safe and agreeable, relying on them threatened to scrub the ambiguity, transgressive friction, and cultural specificity from the next generation of storytelling.

Against this backdrop, this investigation into the lived experiences of Malaysian English majors reveals that the future of authorship is being forged on a fragile boundary between human affect and algorithmic scale. The study extends the theoretical limits of the UTAUT framework by introducing cognitive friction as a critical mediating variable, demonstrating that in creative domains, efficiency is often inversely related to perceived value. It further refines Mollick's Co-intelligence model by identifying the adversarial co-creator, a user mode specific to the Global South, characterised by a subversive rather than collaborative relationship with the technology. The Malaysian English majors demonstrate that they are neither luddites nor blind techno-optimists; they are pragmatic architects building worlds of unprecedented scope, yet they remain fiercely protective of the pain and friction that define their humanity.

Consequently, these findings necessitate a shift in pedagogical strategy within the Malaysian creative writing education, from policing academic integrity to cultivating editorial intelligence. Educators might better move beyond the binary of ban or embrace and instead implement friction workshops that reintroduce the struggle of analogue writing to counteract the frictionless trap. Moreover, to keep cultural erasure at bay, institutions have an ethical imperative to invest in the development of fine-tuned Small Language Models (SLMs) for local literatures, ensuring that the digital tools of the future mirror the linguistic diversity of the Nusantara rather than erasing it. Ultimately, the study concludes that the author's survival in the age of AI depends not on the ability to generate text, but on the courage to resist the machine's therapeutic bias, ensuring that the stories of the future retain the jagged, unresolved, and undeniably human texture of reality.

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