Editorial

From pen to prompt: Navigating AI in academic writing without plagiarism

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Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, DeepSeek has emerged as a powerful tool in academic writing. From polishing grammar and suggesting titles to summarizing literature and even aiding in structuring manuscripts, AI is revolutionizing how researchers approach scientific communication. However, this transformation is accompanied by pressing questions of ethics, authorship, and academic integrity.

The line between support and substitution is thin and often blurred. Can AI be used to draft sections of a manuscript? Should it be cited? Is using AI equivalent to ghost-writing or plagiarism? These questions are not rhetorical anymore; they demand clear and collective answers from the academic community.

At its best, AI acts like a language assistant, helping researchers articulate complex ideas more clearly, translate thoughts across linguistic barriers, or suggest alternative phrasing. However, one should keep in mind that AI when used indiscriminately to generate entire sections of text without intellectual input, it risks undermining the core principle of research that is 'original thought'. Plagiarism, even if not from another human but from a machine, remains a violation of academic ethics but as long as the core principle and concept is original, I feel there is no harm using AI as it is created for the very purpose of helping. As academicians it is our responsibility to use AI with responsibility.

How to Balance Innovation and Integrity

Transparency is the key

If AI tools are used, they should be disclosed, much like acknowledging the use of statistical software or editorial assistance. Leading journals have already begun requesting such disclosures in the methods or acknowledgments section.

Human authorship must dominate

AI can assist, but not replace, the scientific reasoning, hypothesis formulation, data interpretation, or critical discussion that constitutes authorship. AI should not be listed as an author, as it cannot take responsibility or defend the content.

Fact-checking is non-negotiable

AI give wrong outputs. Many times, when AI is unaware of concept it keeps on repeating wrong information apologising every time and repeating same information in other words. I have witnessed this many times. Any AI-generated suggestion must be rigorously validated. It is the responsibility of the author, not the AI, to ensure factual and scientific accuracy.

Avoid over-reliance

Writing is a skill and an extension of thinking. If we offload too much to AI, we risk detaching ourselves from the creative and analytical processes that define good science. I would say

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that the consistent reliance may lose your own scientific sense or creativity.

Follow journal guidelines

Considering AI use as inevitable and is also a wonderful tool publishers must consider framing guidelines for its use. Reputable publishers like Nature, Elsevier, and JAMA now offer policies on AI use in writing. Familiarizing oneself with these can help avoid unintentional ethical breaches.

Today, if you see around with open eyes, we shall realise that from pen to click of mouse, and from book to shows we stream, everything is completely infused by AI technology. The academic publishing world is still adjusting to the role of AI. Editorial policies are evolving, just as the technology is.

Rather than resist AI, we must learn to coexist with it. Educational institutions and scientific societies should take the lead in developing training modules, workshops, and ethical guidelines for AI usage in research writing, which many have started doing but need miles to go.

In conclusion, AI is an evolving framework, which is to be used as collaborator. We must not resist its existence and use. Let the AI be our assistant not the author, let it be the catalyst and not the creator.