

Book Review of Generative AI in Writing Education: Policy and Pedagogical Implications by Dylan Medina (2025) Routledge

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What does it mean to teach writing when the very act of composing can now be simulated, accelerated, or even “outsourced” to machines? Dylan Medina’s (2025) *Generative AI in Writing Education: Policy and Pedagogical Implications* provides a truly comprehensive and reflective response to this critical question. Spanning six chapters, Medina bridges computer science, rhetoric, and applied linguistics in constructing a theoretically grounded and pedagogically actionable vision for integrating generative AI (GenAI) into writing instruction. Positioning his analysis within these debates, Medina situates contemporary anxieties about GenAI within a longer historical trajectory of technological change in writing literacy practices. The author argues that many institutional responses to GenAI are shaped less by the technology itself than by long-standing dependencies on writing as a mechanism of evaluation, authorship, and disciplinary gatekeeping. Rather than framing GenAI as an existential threat to academic writing, the book advocates for a more informed and theoretically meaningful engagement with AI tools and emphasizes the importance of understanding their computational foundations alongside their pedagogical and sociolinguistic implications.

Although Medina’s book has already attracted scholarly attention, recent discussions have tended to emphasize its pedagogical relevance and practical implications for classroom instruction. For instance, Zhan and Lu’s (2025) review of the same volume in the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* provides a clear and informative overview of Medina’s treatment of AI literacy and the architecture of large language models (LLMs). Building on this contribution, the present review offers a complementary perspective by providing a more explicitly critical and comparative evaluation. In particular, it places additional emphasis on how Medina’s framework can be read in relation to second language (L2) writing, multilingual pedagogy, and assessment. While these areas are acknowledged in prior discussions, the current analysis further explores their implications within the broader discourses of applied linguistics, AI literacy, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum policy (Jiang & Hyland, 2025; Ngo & Hastie, 2025), with particular attention to writing teacher education, ethical governance, and GenAI readiness in multilingual settings.

Therefore, this review will synthesize the thematic development across the six chapters of the book, highlighting how Medina moves from historical and pedagogical debates about GenAI in writing education to increasingly detailed discussions of computational logic, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and rhetorical theory. It then critically evaluates the coherence of the book’s arguments, its methodological and theoretical contributions, and its limitations, before concluding with reflections on future research directions for Writing Studies in the context of rapidly evolving GenAI technologies.

Rather than discussing six independent chapters, Medina's book can be more productively understood through three interrelated thematic strands across these chapters:

1. the institutional and pedagogical debates surrounding GenAI in writing education,
2. the computational and linguistic foundations of LLMs, and
3. the pedagogical, ethical, and research implications of GenAI-supported writing.

Thus, the book progressively moves the reader from contextual framing to technical explanation and finally to pedagogical and research-oriented implications.

As a contextual framing for the discussion that follows, the opening and closing sections of the book (Chapter 1 and Chapter 6) situate the emergence of GenAI within broader institutional and pedagogical debates about writing in higher education. Specifically, Chapter 1 reframes the moral panic surrounding ChatGPT's release in late 2023 as part of a recurring historical cycle of "technology panics". The author positions GenAI within long-standing anxieties about critical issues in writing, including plagiarism, authorship, and the role of writing in higher education (Ngo & Hastie, 2025). It highlights the author's argument that such fears ultimately reveal deeper institutional dependencies on writing as a mechanism of evaluation and academic gatekeeping. Instead of treating GenAI as an existential threat, Medina calls for educators and scholars to rethink writing pedagogy through meaningful engagement rather than prohibition, by advocating for assessment of academic assignments that foregrounds knowledge production, collaboration, and process-based learning. Drawing on ideas offered by Cress and Kimmerle (2023) and Dobrin (2023), the author proposes integrating GenAI into iterative drafting and feedback practices in ways that promote reflective learning rather than bypassing intellectual effort. The book's concluding chapter returns to these broader pedagogical concerns introduced at the outset, thereby reinforcing this contextual framing by emphasizing GenAI as both a disruptive challenge and a potential learning tool whose educational value relies on informed integration grounded in a clear understanding of its technological foundations.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 advocate the second thematic strand around computational and linguistic foundations which are necessary for understanding GenAI tools. Here, Medina introduces core concepts from computer science, such as computational thinking, decomposition, and abstraction, to illustrate how GenAI emerged through iterative developments in problem-solving traditions rather than sudden technological breakthroughs. The author explains how engineers are involved in dividing complex linguistic challenges into modular subproblems that can be addressed through computational architectures, while also cautioning that such abstraction can obscure important ethical and operational dimensions from end users. Then, he extends the discussion to the historical evolution of NLP, tracing the transition from rule-based systems to machine-learning approaches. He attempts to prove that early interactive fiction engines, and template-based generators, are limited as they heavily rely on predetermined linguistic rules. By contrast, NLP approaches and innovations, such as the Term Frequency Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) allow LLMs to encode semantic relationships across massive datasets. Medina's explanation of attention mechanisms, neural networks, tokenization, and vectorization demystifies how contemporary GenAI agents simulate language by offering probabilistic pattern recognition rather than genuine comprehension or intentionality.

Building on this technical foundation, the author highlights the third thematic strand of the book in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. These chapters emphasize the rhetorical, pedagogical, and ethical implications of GenAI for Writing Studies education. Medina situates LLMs within Writing Studies theory and argues that transformer-based architectures increasingly encode recognizable linguistic and rhetorical patterns, but warns that this should not be mistaken for collaborators with human agency. For instance, drawing on Rhetorical Genre Studies, the author demonstrates that GenAI can reproduce recognizable genre conventions because such patterns appear in the large data on which it has been trained. Yet, the system cannot participate in situated rhetorical action or respond to the contingent dynamics shaping authentic writing practices. By using comparative prompting with ChatGPT and Gemini, Medina demonstrates that while LLMs are capable of generating conventional prompts, lesson plans, and rubrics, they often struggle to respond meaningfully to rhetorical exigencies. The discussion

is also centered around broader pedagogical and sociolinguistic implications. In other words, Medina highlights concerns surrounding intellectual property, academic integrity, and ethical implications of training on data derived from publicly accessible language. The author also offers an important critique from a translingual perspective, which implies that widespread reliance on GenAI may reinforce monolingual norms—particularly “Metropolitan English”—thus undermining linguistic diversity and marginalizing alternative rhetorical practices.

Chapter 6 concludes the book by highlighting the disruptive potential of GenAI in Writing Studies education and emphasizing its dual nature: while uncritical reliance on GenAI may undermine student learning and voice, thoughtful integration can enhance learning and support pedagogical innovation. Therefore, understanding the technical foundations of GenAI, particularly transformer-based LLMs, is essential for accurately evaluating its capabilities and limits. As educators and policymakers shape its role in academic contexts, there remain new and innovative opportunities for research to thoughtfully integrate GenAI into educational theory and practice, especially within Writing Studies. Therefore, Medina calls for expanding empirical research into GenAI-mediated discourse patterns, writer agency in human–GenAI collaboration, and the broader sociolinguistic consequences of LLM integration in writing classrooms.

Medina’s book is distinguished by its intellectual rigor and clarity of exposition. While many GenAI publications oscillate between uncritical optimism and alarmist caution, *Generative AI in Writing Education* maintains a balanced and analytically grounded scholarly stance. Medina’s strength lies in his ability to weave together the technical, rhetorical, and ethical dimensions of AI into a coherent interdisciplinary argument while maintaining pedagogical nuance. His writing is notably accessible to educators without programming backgrounds, yet conceptually sophisticated enough to inform research in Composition, Digital Rhetoric, and Applied Linguistics. This dual accessibility renders the book as an introduction for instructors using GenAI for the first time and as a conceptual framework for scholars seeking to theorize GenAI-mediated writing practices. It invites Writing Studies scholars, administrators, and policymakers to engage critically yet constructively with the technological realities reshaping literacy in the twenty-first century.

However, a minor limitation of the book is its limited engagement with empirical data. While Medina’s conceptual depth is commendable, the arguments are primarily theoretical and illustrative rather than grounded in systematic classroom-based evidence. Future research could therefore enrich his claims through empirical research on GenAI-mediated composing processes, student–GenAI interaction, and the development of writer identity in GenAI-supported learning environments. Nonetheless, the book’s theoretical scaffolding provides an important foundation for such investigations and offers conceptual tools that researchers in Writing Studies and Applied Linguistics can build upon when examining the pedagogical consequences of generative AI.

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