The Stanford Daily
MAGAZINE
Volume 268 · February 2026 · stanforddaily.com

NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING

The Stanford Daily
MAGAZINE

ABOUT THE COVER
By Toby Shiao

The cover piece explores the impact of artificial intelligence on artistry. Tools such as large language models and generative AI draw from existing artists to approximate human creativity, yet I believe they fail to capture the raw, imperfect texture of work shaped by human hands.

Letter from the Editors

At the core of all human interaction is communication. But over the past four years, a fundamental shift has snuck up on us. After the introduction of ChatGPT and other Large Language Models (LLMs), the way that we write emails, the vernacular we use, even the means by which we gather information have been fundamentally altered. Suddenly, it's become difficult to discern between a human voice and an AI-generated one. Purposely forgetting a comma or incorporating an auspicious word or substituting an em-dash is how we prove that we are human – that we took time to draft our work, our correspondence.

We came into this issue knowing that we wanted to address the topic of artificial intelligence (AI) head-on, specifically the impact of LLMs. When Stanford students think about natural language processing, terms like neural network, pre-training data or tokenization probably come to mind. But as we began ruminating on the term itself, we suddenly realized that it has a dual meaning.

Our issue, titled "Natural Language Processing," is about AI, but it is also about how we, as humans, process our own natural language: how the words we use alter the ways we see each other and the world around us. This issue has evolved far beyond the simple concept we ideated back in July 2025. It is the product of a collective imagination. After all, interviewing and writing and editing and redrafting and discussing and celebrating and folding over with laughter and welling with tears – these are all forms of natural language processing.

And through this processing, we exercise our ability to connect with one another, which is what ultimately separates us from our AI counterparts. Our capacity to read through a piece and sit deep in the rut of someone else's perspective, to feel the emotions that prompted their beliefs, to relish in the beauty of their mind's prose, remains a defining and stunning human characteristic.

Charlotte Cao '27 & Callia Peterson '26

NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING

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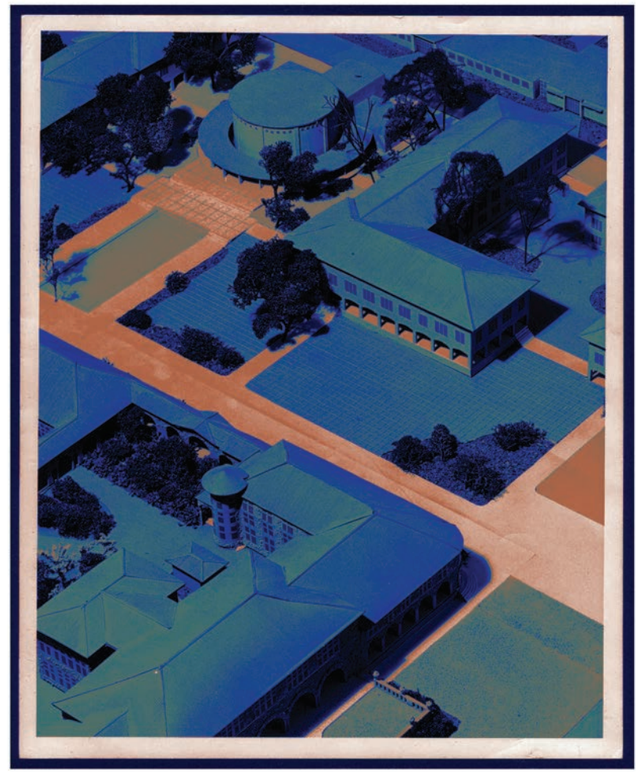


Friend not Foe

A conversation on AI and software engineering with Stanford's ACM co-presidents.

BY SOFIA WILLIAMS | PHOTO BY CAYDEN GU

College students have always had a ready answer to the question: "What are you doing after graduation?" At Stanford, whose mission statement promises "academic excellence across the broadest array of disciplines," those responses have remained as varied as ever. Lately, though, they've come with a qualifier:"If it's not replaced by AI."

For Annie Lee '27, Suze van Adrichem '27 and Tony Wang '27, the co-presidents of Stanford's Association for Computer Machinery (ACM) club, AI is not an existential threat; rather, it is an invaluable tool that can be used to advance the field of computer science. Through ACM, Lee, van Adrichem and Wang aim to support the club's more than 500 members as they navigate a rapidly evolving landscape.

The trio belongs to a generation of students who have never known computer science in the absence of modern AI systems. Van Adrichem, who studies computer systems and is pursuing a master's degree in AI, says she and other students poised to enter the field have learned to incorporate AI as an asset to their work.

"What I find really interesting is that a lot of people talk about how it's a lot more difficult to find a job in computer science now because of AI," van Adrichem said. "I only started doing computer science two years ago, though, so it's always been difficult."

Van Adrichem said that as a software engineering intern last summer, she utilized workflows that integrate AI to aid efficiency.

"A new skill [in my internship last summer] became trying to describe a problem to a language model and being able to review their code as opposed to just writing perfect Python all the time," van Adrichem said.

However, fundamental coding skills remain a priority at Stanford, said Lee, who studies computer science and math. "In academic environments like Stanford, there's a strong emphasis on the need to be able to reason independently," she said.

According to Lee, a mindset shift is required to transition between Stanford's methods-based curriculum and workplace settings that value the use of AI as an effective tool.

"Schools want to train you to reason and think," said Wang, a computer science major, who echoed Lee's sentiment. "You come to school so you can stretch your brain. At a company, it's not really to learn, but it's to maximize the amount of things you can produce. In that case, I've noticed that companies are very pro-AI, like 'please integrate AI into your workflows.'"

As co-presidents of Stanford ACM, Lee, van Adrichem and Wang foster community and coordinate professional opportunities to help students navigate both the computer science curriculum at Stanford and the professional opportunities available to them. Typically, ACM is led by two co-presidents, but the club's growth necessitated an additional set of hands, van Adrichem wrote in an email to The Daily. The trio was elected to serve by popular vote.

ACM consists of several branches, such as MLab (a machine learning program), DevLab (a web development program) and Quant Gym (a quantitative trading training). The goal of these programs, Lee said, is to foster a collaborative environment where students can learn from their peers. As co-presidents, Lee, Wang and van Adrichem oversee all of the club's branches, coordinating events, finance and logistics.

According to Wang, ACM aims to provide opportunities for students interested in a variety of computer science-related topics and activities. For example, the club hosts poker tournaments and web development camps, and includes a quant division for members interested in finance.

"We have lots of different initiatives around this theme of providing community for Stanford students interested in computer science," Wang said.

ACM's guest speaker engagements and company sponsorships help students familiarize themselves with the world of professional coding and computer engineering, said Wang. Notable speaker engagements last year included visits from representatives of Watershed, a sustainability software company, and Ramp, a financial technology company.

The aim of these initiatives, per Wang, is to show students that a degree in computer science has diverse applications in the professional world despite potential fears about AI replacing software engineering and coding jobs.

Lee, van Adrichem and Wang all plan to enter the field of computer science as AI researchers.

"Since [AI] is so transformative, doing work into interpretability or alignment, making sure that we have guardrails and it's safe and unbiased, would be really cool," said Wang, who sees himself "doing some kind of research or working at some startup that helps with making sure AI doesn't end up evil in the future."

Van Adrichem said that for her, change on the horizon regarding the nature of software engineering roles has turned her attention to research.

"Software engineering as a field is kind of changing a lot," said van Adrichem. "I'm not entirely sure whether software engineering is something I want to do because it might be something completely different in five or 10 years. I don't think it'll disappear, but I think it will be like a different type of job."

Van Adrichem says that for her, research combines the excitement of finding solutions to complex technical problems with the intellectual stimulation of pondering broader topics.

"I do think that research is still just secretly software engineering," said van Adrichem. "It is still a lot of engineering, but maybe the difference is that you're more aligned towards finding an answer to something, as opposed to making a product work."

According to Lee, the ability to make a tangible impact – which she believes is possible in research roles – factors heavily into her career decisions.

"I feel like company wise, I just really want to end up at a place where I align with the overall mission," said Lee. "If I'm going to work every day, I feel like I want to do something that feels meaningful, like I am having this impact on this particular group of people for this particular industry."

TEACHING IN ACTION Stanford ACM hosts their high school programming contest, known as "ProCo," on March 1, 2025 // PHOTOS COURTESY OF STANFORD ACM

The Verbification of ChatGPT

A linguistics-based perspective.

BY ERIN YE | GRAPHICS BY TOBY SHIAO

On Stanford's campus, "ChatGPT" has become a verb.

As a linguistics major, I love everything related to language; I could talk for days about words and how we use them. Linguistics, unlike English or language arts courses, is historically very open to innovation and "bad" grammar. In the field's academic tradition, anything can be a word. The only requirement is that it gets used enough and people generally accept it to have a consistent meaning in communication.

A few examples from my text message history make it clear that "ChatGPT" has crossed this threshold of acceptability:

"i'll try to gpt it," I wrote to an artistically challenged group chat about sketching a design for our house's Big Game banner.

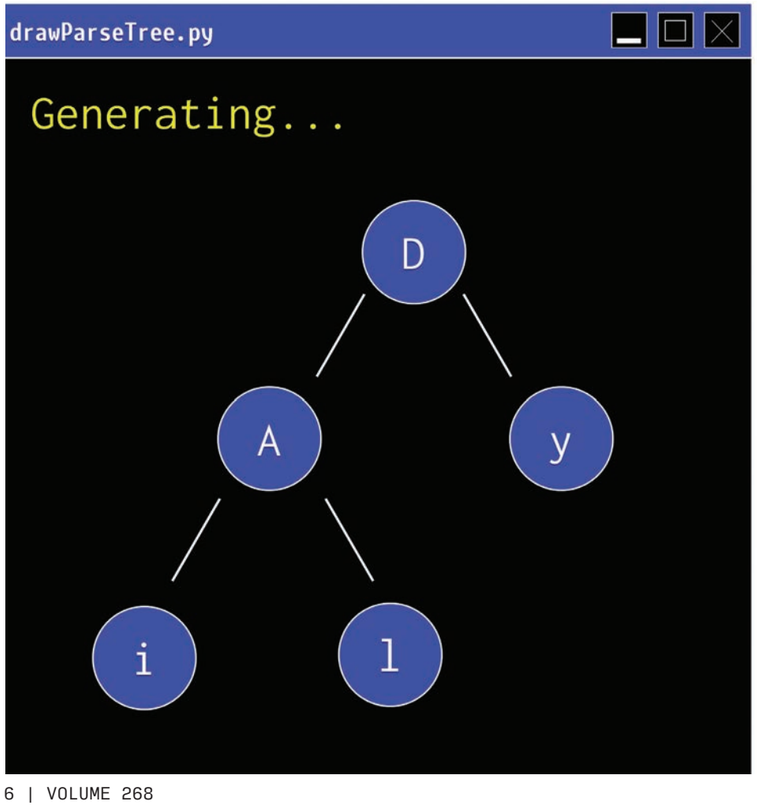
"MAYBE CHAT GPT IT," my friend recommended after I sent a picture of my mystery allergic reaction.

"another hard day of chat gpting," my friend joked about doing menial work during her summer internship.

"let's go through and do some de-chat-gpt-ing of the paragraphs," one of my group project partners recommended as we were doing final touch-ups on our report.

I'm a big fan of proprietary eponyms: words that started as brand names but eventually developed into generic definitions. Jello, band-aid and granola are a few of my favorites, and it seems like ChatGPT might be poised to make the list.

Ask any of my friends from whom those text messages were sourced, and I can promise none of them would be able to tell you that GPT stands for generative pre-trained transformer. But all the same, I doubt many of us would be able to say we knew that "radar" stands for (ra)dio (d)etection (a)nd (r)anging. Language evolves to keep up with the times, and human use dictates what words end up meaning.



What can we make of this phenomenon? Is it a sign that OpenAI is winning the arms race? You never hear people say, "I'm gonna Claude my homework" or "Let me de-Gemini this." It's reminiscent of how "Google" became a verb in people's vocabulary at the same rate that it became essential to life in the 21st century. But then again, maybe not – when I was interning at a bank this past summer, we got cleared to use Microsoft Copilot in our work (which, I admit, is also powered by OpenAI, but that's besides the point), and I saw the same verbification take place. My older coworkers would use the feature to generate meeting summaries and write Excel functions, and then would turn to the person next to them and brag, "Let me show you what I just Copilot-ed."

Compared to other proprietary eponyms, there's a lot more to "ChatGPT" as a word than its use as a verb. I've seen it personified into a secretary of sorts. The text message example below was my first time seeing Chat GPT get gendered:

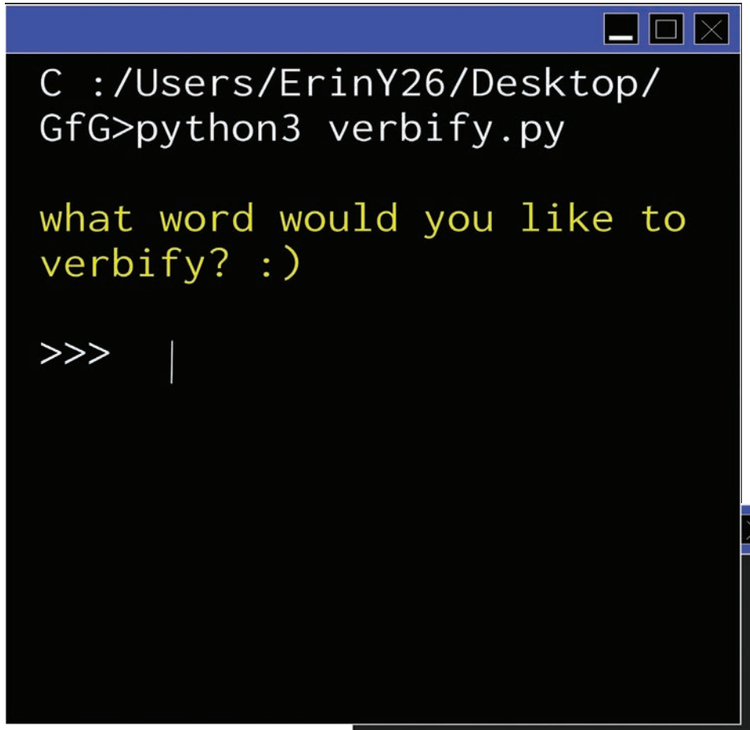
"I just asked chat gpt and basically she said to just do..." said a classmate in response to my question about a homework assignment.

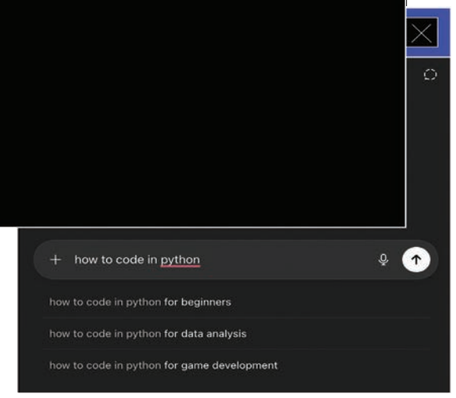
Even more common are agentic uses of "ChatGPT" as the subject of a sentence. People talk about GPT like it's a person who has feelings, strengths and shortcomings, which feels markedly different from how we talk about Google (or Jello or band-aids, for that matter). Others use its "first name," saying "Chat" for short. I notice this comes up more when ChatGPT is a character in the sentence, rather than the verb (maybe because chat itself is already a common English verb). It would not surprise me if, soon, the Webster's Dictionary definition of the noun "chat" has an additional definition:

1) idle small talk: chatter
2) light informal or familiar talk especially:conversation
3) [imitative] any of several songbirds (as of the genera Emarginata or Myrmecocichla)
4) online discussion in a chat room
5) shorthand for ChatGPT, a generative AI conversational model

Unlike Google, ChatGPT can "mess up," or "not understand" what we mean when we try to ask for help. But it can also "come up with" new ideas that we wouldn't have thought of ourselves. This defines the difficulty in how we talk about AI. Who are we giving credit to? Did I ChatGPT the idea, or did ChatGPT hand it to me on a silver platter?

Others have written about the verbification of ChatGPT, but only from the perspective of branding. What I see in how people talk about ChatGPT is a measurement of sentiment. When people use it as a verb, there's something to be said about how Stanford students make use of AI in our everyday lives. I have friends who embrace it wholeheartedly; they listen to AI-generated music, vibe code personal projects and use voice-to-text to talk to ChatGPT when they have questions. I also have friends who resist AI completely for various reasons: ethical, environmental or because they just don't feel like they need it. Interestingly, I haven't noticed much of a split across major or gender. I have friends in the humanities who swear by





ChatGPT or Claude to revise their papers; I have friends in engineering who won't let AI anywhere near their problem sets.

"I actually HATE chat gpt and never use it for anything and I am about to use it for this class," texted a frustrated friend from high school who was complaining to our group chat about an incompetent professor.

I recently did a user interview with an AI startup in exchange for an Amazon gift card, and I was asked if I thought most college students were afraid of AI taking our jobs. I said that for most Stanford students, the answer would be no. Those that don't use AI have enough self-assuredness to feel they can make it because their quality of work is better than automation. Those that use AI feel a sense of control over the situation. They are the lucky "AI-natives" that LinkedIn posts love to talk about, people who are trained to use these tools to make themselves more efficient and indispensable, rather than get left behind.

One thing I love about language is its flexibility. Humans have been iterating and inventing new words and grammatical structures since the beginning of time. Even in the same language, a sentence that makes perfect sense to a group in Philadelphia might sound like complete nonsense to English speakers in Belfast, and vice versa. Large language models are trained on human data, and they can certainly get very good at mimicking how we talk. I've seen the way ChatGPT has influenced language use – I find myself wanting to use em-dashes far more than I ever remember wanting to in the past. That being said, I believe in the first-mover's advantage, in that you can't come up with a complete innovation purely based on prior knowledge. New uses of language will always come from people on the ground, who are living with and negotiating new world knowledge in how we communicate. I like to think that the way we use language mirrors the way the world works at large.

Notably, a human can ChatGPT something, but ChatGPT can not "human" the same thing.

Play Calling

From the field to the court, players and coaches communicate in the game.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL YU/THE STANFORD DAILY, GEORGE ZHANG/THE STANFORD DAILY, AND JIM SHORIN/ISI PHOTOS

DRY SPELL ENDS

Stanford football players celebrate with fans on the field after defeating UC Berkeley 31–10 on Nov. 22, 2025.

CAPTION BY CAYDEN GU
PHOTO BY MICHAEL YU/THE STANFORD DAILY

A New Wave of Education

From undergraduates to Ph.D.s, how is AI shifting classroom policies?

BY STERLING DAVIES | PHOTO BY CAYDEN GU

Due to rapidly evolving artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, professors now face the challenge of creating classroom policies and curricula that teach students how to walk the line between beneficial and unethical uses of AI. to give students the tools to learn, but also prepare them for a world that AI is incorporated into.

A recent survey from Copyleaks found that nearly 90% of university students across the world use AI to help with their education, with roughly a third using AI tools on a daily basis. This adoption doesn't look to be slowing down either, with almost 75% noting their AI usage has increased since 2024.

"The computer science department is very strongly looking at modifying our curriculum as a whole because of the way the world's changing with AI," computer science professor Chris Gregg said.

Instead of trying to improve AI detection technology, professors are changing policies and syllabi to promote hands-on learning. CS106B has begun introducing in-person assessments. This new addition allows teaching assistants to meet individually with students and assess their comprehension of course material in real time, according to Gregg.

While this development is still in its early stages, it has been largely welcomed by professors and students alike, and Gregg noted that there are plans to expand it to CS 106A and other courses.

Additionally, he explained how more weight is now being placed on in-person midterms and finals instead of take-home assignments. Gregg noted how data across CS106B showed that students who used AI during assignments didn't perform as well on tests as students who refrained from using AI.

For Gregg, the CS department is uniquely tasked with finding ways to familiarize students with AI innovations while also teaching them the fundamental skills necessary for graduates.

"The programmers using AI daily absolutely have those basic skills. Nobody is getting a job at Google, Meta, Apple or wherever if they don't know those basic skills," Gregg said. "So where the AI fits in is important, but that doesn't diminish the fact there's all these very core skills [students] need to know."

To navigate this line, Gregg explained how professors are emphasizing the importance of limiting AI usage within introductory courses such as CS106A and CS106B, which they hope the in-person assessments help achieve. This allows students to overcome struggles on their own, which he notes is fundamental for learning coding essentials.

"That struggle is the part where the learning happens," Gregg said.

However, AI is also making it harder for students to adopt this mentality. Gregg explained how the department has seen a drop in attendance at LaIR helper hours, a set of office hours that run Sunday through Thursday for students in CS106A and CS106B, noting this could be in part due to AI usage increasing.

"I hate to say this, but it's actually true. I can't trust anything that happens outside my eyeballs," Gregg said. "A student leaves the room and does whatever assignment. They could be using AI, and the AI is probably going to do a very good job with it.

Meanwhile, in humanities departments, heightened AI policies are being put in place to ensure human-driven work.

"We, in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric (PWR), aim to demonstrate to students that their distinctive abilities as language-users, including as readers, writers, and revisers, cannot be replaced by technology, and that turning to AI as a kind of ghost reader, writer, and researcher severely limits students' growth and development in those areas," Marvin Diogenes, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Director of PWR, wrote in an email to The Daily.

Diogenes noted that PWR works to help students draw from personal experience and knowledge to analyze and develop research assignments. However, AI tools take away from this ability, if not applied properly. He explained how the overuse of AI replaces key experiences of learning through writing.

The rise of AI has led to the creation of AI Meets Education at Stanford (AIMES), an initiative led by the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education that offers teaching strategies and resources for professors and students alike, as they navigate proper usage of AI in the classroom.

The Office of Community Standards (OCS) is also developing learning suggestions that address AI concerns. According to Lawrence Marshall, Interim Director of OCS, the center is working with the Academic Integrity Workshop to identify areas of academic dishonesty and its causes to recommend policy changes.

Marshall noted how students should use AI with caution, as it can take away from the education opportunities at Stanford. "It's like paying for a gym membership but only pretending to lift the weights," he wrote.

Marshall also emphasized how impermissible usage of AI isn't a "perfect crime," and they are taking action against students who do. "OCS has a steady stream of disciplinary actions involving students impermissibly using AI," he wrote. "And it is safe to say that none of these students believed they might be caught and none of them look back and say that violating the Honor Code was worth the high costs."

While early undergraduate courses have adopted strict AI policies, for more advanced coursework, students have more free rein. Gregg noted how capstone courses like CS 194 and CS 210 are in fact explicit in allowing AI usage.

"It would almost be wrong to say you can't use these [tools], because what's the point?" Gregg said. "The projects end up better in a lot of cases, the outputs are better, and the students are still demonstrating that they can put a big project together."

This approach in some upperclassmen courses has also been adopted in graduate education.

Kenneth Goodson, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and former Chair and Vice Chair for Mechanical Engineering, said that most graduate classes and research are more lenient on AI policies.

"Students at the graduate level are just a little bit further along, and they know that they need to partner with faculty in using AI in a way that will help them, but not replace the thinking," he said.

Goodson said he believes that a one-size-fits-all AI approach isn't as effective, advocating instead for faculty to be given "more autonomy" to decide where AI fits best. This is because graduate courses tend to be more specialized to the professor's expertise.

Across all disciplines, graduate students are integrating AI into their research projects.

"What we're suddenly seeing is that if you go to thesis defenses across the university, increasing fractions will have AI in the title," Goodson said. "Students have a chance to push the knowledge base in these areas."

The expansion of AI has opened doors for new learning opportunities, but educators are still exploring the unknowns to better understand how all industries are responding to AI. Goodson emphasized how this shift is leading to more research and education, but is also creating more questions of how to use AI correctly.

"You realize it's important to become the architect of your own learning and to look after how you're doing it," Goodson said.

How are Students Using GenAI?

Survey by The Daily reveals patterns in Stanford students' usage of GenAI.

BY ADAM GOLOMB AND JAY GUPTA | PHOTO BY CAYDEN GU

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in schoolwork has become as ubiquitous as using Google. Many professors now include a statement on generative AI (GenAI) usage or over-reliance in their syllabi for courses. But a larger question remains: How are students actually using AI?

The Daily surveyed 50 undergraduate students about the models they frequented, how they utilized it and how they felt about AI more broadly.

Of the surveyed students, 48 replied that they regularly use OpenAI's ChatGPT. Less than half of all respondents reported regularly visiting Google's Gemini, the second-most used model. Next came Anthropic's Claude with seven users, and finally, X's Grok and the open-source DeepSeek, both having received only one response each.

The survey also asked students whether their model choice changed depending on the task they used it for.

Overall, studying was the most common use case for respondents who frequent ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude, the three most used models. 100% of ChatGPT users said they frequently used the platform for studying, compared to 88% for Gemini users and 71% for Claude users. However, differences emerge when the task categorizations for each model are broken down further.

Of the 48 ChatGPT users, 19 said they primarily use it for writing, 17 use it for advice and 15 said they use it for "significant work."

In contrast, using Gemini to study is significantly more frequent than using it for other tasks, considering that less than a fourth of surveyed students reported using Gemini for any other purposes.

Most of these GenAI programs offer various tiers of subscriptions. Basic services are typically free, and premium options range in cost per month. Over 75% of students are using these programs for free. 18% spend up to $20 a month, and 6% spend over that amount monthly.

The survey also asked students how many hours per week they use AI and how many hours they believe they save by using AI.

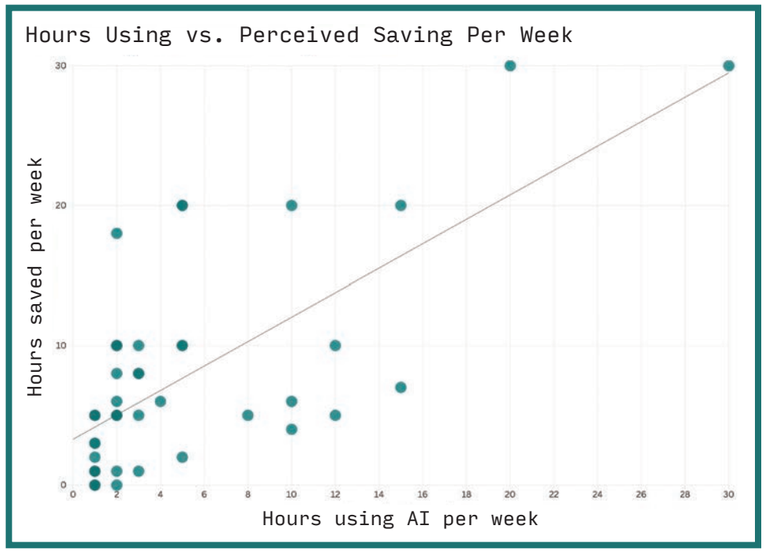
The data reveals a positive correlation and a slope of 0.9, though with a strong scatter. In fact, more students' data fell under the trend line than above it, revealing a significant variance within the results. More data would be needed to make broad strokes about AI's time value.

The survey then asked about students' broad optimism on these models on a scale of one to 10, one being pessimistic and 10 being optimistic. Further conditioning of students' school affiliation – the School of Humanities and Science, the School of Engineering and the Doerr School of Sustainability – found that degrees of optimism remain consistent through each school.

Relatedly, respondents were also polled on what their primary concerns with GenAI were, taking into account their school affiliations again. Across all schools, accuracy was the primary concern.

For engineering students, job loss was the second most common concern of GenAI, in contrast to students from the School of Humanities and Sciences, where privacy and bias of AI was a more frequent problem than job loss.

It's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. 50 students is ultimately a small proportion of Stanford's undergraduate population, and, even with a random representative sample, not enough to generalize all claims about GenAI usage and perception. Notwithstanding, this data reveals emerging and evolving trends in how students use AI.



SCAN TO SEE MORE DATA VISUALIZATIONS

Without Acknowledgement

Stanford's indigenous community speaks out against institutional erasure.

BY ADELINE LEE | GRAPHICS BY CHINYOUNG SHAO

News

When freshmen filed into Frost Amphitheater for convocation on Sept. 16, 2025, they heard speeches, performances and welcomes to Stanford. What they didn't hear – though many wouldn't have known to notice – was the land acknowledgement honoring the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe on whose ancestral lands the University sits.

For Puali'i Zidek '27, co-chair of the Stanford American Indian Organization (SIAO), the absence was immediately apparent. "When we didn't know anybody that was reading the land acknowledgement – because they always ask a Native student to read it – we knew that it wasn't getting read because we literally know every single person," Zidek said.

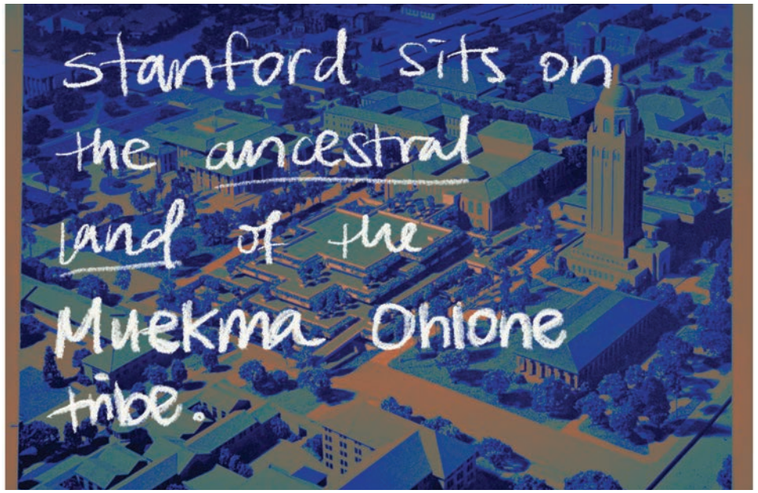
Just hours before convocation, administrators sent a memo to department heads and provost offices announcing that they had decided to discontinue land acknowledgements for "university-wide ceremonies," according to Adrianna Young '27, another co-chair at SIAO. The decision has sparked fierce debate about the University's commitment to its Indigenous community and raised broader questions about institutional support for Native students navigating life at one of America's most elite universities.

A DECISION MADE IN SILENCE

Land acknowledgements originated in Australia during the 1970s, were popularized in Canada during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the late 2000s and subsequently reached the U.S. through the Standing Rock protests of 2016 to 2017. Stanford University published its first official land acknowledgement in October 2021 and in the years following, have adopted the land acknowledgement into every convocation ceremony.

When administrators sent the memo out prior to the 2025 convocation, they explicitly instructed recipients not to "mass disseminate" the information to students, according to Young.

The memo, reviewed by The Daily, wasn't signed by University president Jonathan Levin '94, Provost Jenny Martinez or any identifiable administrator. The same lack of attribution is noted on the SIAO land acknowledgement reinstatement petition, which lists identical information. Native American Cultural Center (NACC) staff learned about the change approxi-



mately two hours before convocation. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe wasn't consulted.

Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe learned of Stanford's decision months later.

"It felt like a quiet erasure of our presence," Nijmeh wrote in a statement to The Daily. "We've built meaningful partnerships with Stanford, from repatriating our ancestors' remains to co-creating native plant gardens that honor our traditional knowledge. This step backward, announced without consulting us or other Native voices, seems thoughtless and cold."

Professor Teresa LaFromboise, who directs the Native American Studies program, did not respond to multiple requests for comments.

PERFORMATIVE OR ESSENTIAL?

In a statement emailed to The Daily, University spokesperson Angie Davis explained that the administration discontinued land acknowledgments based on two core principles: the belief that the University should engage with "complex historical issues" through research and education rather than "symbolic university statements" and that University-wide ceremonies are intended to mark student milestones.

President Donald Trump issued a number of executive orders and federal directive seeking to curb diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at universities and other institutions, particularly those involving race-conscious programming. They heightened scrutiny of DEI-related practices nationwide and led some universities to scale back related initiatives. Stanford dissolved its Office for Inclusion, Belonging and Intergroup Communication (IBIC) on Jul. 11.

Because the Trump administration never specifically targeted land acknowledgements, according to Zidek, it signals a pattern of preemptive compliance under the current political climate. For example, Ohio State University banned most land acknowledgements in September of 2025 as discussions of DEI policies heightened.

Davis emphasized that "members and departments of the university community remain free to express their views in the form of a land acknowledgment in times and places they find meaningful." For example, the land acknowledgement was said at the New Student Orientation's Faces of Community event which, unlike convocation, is student-run.

In an interview with The Daily, Professor C. Matthew Snipp, the Burnet C. and Mildred Finley Wohlford Professor of Sociology and Vice Provost for Faculty Development, Diversity and Engagement, recognized being "of two minds" about land acknowledgements.

"On some days, I find them really obnoxious and annoying," Snipp said. "They're gratuitous. Too many times I've sat in these events and somebody just sort of rambles through the words, sort of like kids saying Pledge of Allegiance at school. It's meaningless."

He also raised a concern that resonates with some critics: that land acknowledgements "tend to airbrush history" rather than confront it. He explained that the purpose of land acknowledgements in the Land Back movement was to encourage the government to apologize and for the people to return parts of land to indigenous groups, which had success to varying degrees.

Yet Snipp also recognized the acknowledgement's importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, which has fought for federal recognition since it was stripped away without tribal consent in 1927. He said that he believes that the tribe wants to gain leverage from Stanford's institutional recognition.

Demetrius Brown '27 thinks this debate misses the larger point. "When it comes to supporting Indigenous communities anywhere, simply recognizing the harms done by colonization and how we all benefit from this injustice in some way is a basis of knowledge that can potentially spark action," he said.

As evidence of Stanford's commitment to Native communities, the University statement listed numerous initiatives: the Native American Studies Program, the Native American Cultural Center, Stanford Powwow, Muwekma-Tah-Ruk house, the Native Plants Garden and the recently established 'Amham Šumi-mak Muwekma Endowment funded by Eric and Wendy Schmidt.

Some students feel this is disingenuous on the University's part because many of those initiatives are primarily student-led or born from student activism efforts from decades ago. According to the Stanford Native American Cultural Center, the Muwekma-Rā-Tuk house itself came from student activism decades ago. The Stanford American Indian Organization, which just celebrated its 55th anniversary in Oct. 21, 2025, was founded in the aftermath of the 1960s student movements. The Native American Cultural Center was created when students took over an abandoned building, inspired by the 1961 Alcatraz Occupation by 78 Native Americans.

"The purpose was to show, 'Look what we do for you,' but they were linking to things students created," Young said of the list.

The Indigenous students who are drawn to Stanford often come specifically for its Native community. Aurora Yazzie '29 described that growing up in the Bay Area, she was aware of the substantial student-run Native community on campus.

"I grew up coming to the Stanford Powwow every year," Yazzie said. "I've never really had that type of community going to public school in California. Even in New Mexico, there was maybe, like, one other Native in my class."

Zidek was similarly drawn to Stanford because of the strength of the Indigenous community. "I had seen how large the Native community was here and how inclusive it was to many different indigenous cultures, and that was something that I did not see at other schools," Zidek said.

The Native Plant Garden, a source of community pride according to Young, depends on student engagement. Michael Wilcox, a lecturer in Native American Studies who created and helps coordinate the garden, emphasized its importance as an "alternative teaching space where students can do physical activity projects that are relevant to their interest."

"It's not just sitting in a classroom listening to someone kind of spit information at you," said Yazzie, who is enrolled in Wilcox's course for the second quarter in the row. "You're learning from the land, and you're learning from each other, like, those within the community, and I think that's really cool."

In a written statement to The Daily, Wilcox said that the Native Plan Garden hosts teaching modules where local school children can learn about nature, climate change and the history of the tribe. Last fall, the garden hosted a dance for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe "where little kids were able to perform a winter ritual for the first time in San Mateo County in about 200 years," Wilcox wrote.

His courses emphasize the importance of relationship-building, proper methodology and the unlearning of "untrue and false narratives of indigenous histories, peoples and communities."

"Indigenous peoples are not victims of the modern world," Wilcox continued. "This is a framing that many historians and people have used to attract attention to the plight of native peoples. The downside is that in emphasizing problems and social pathology, we have created a deficit-based vision of native communities that doesn't at all map onto the healthy, thriving places I'm most familiar with."

LIVING IN THE IN-BETWEEN

However, the daily experience of being Indigenous at Stanford involves what Young calls "living in the in-between," or navigating between a supportive Native community and a broader University environment that often feels hostile or indifferent.

"I wasn't prepared to come in, sit in a classroom and hear my teachers use derogatory slurs, put really harmful pictures up on the screen," Young said. "I wasn't prepared for me to have to justify my thought processes in my papers and how oral tradition is a valid form of research. There's the beauty of the Native community and then there's stepping outside. It's gotten to a point where you often, as a Native person in classrooms, have to decide: am I gonna pick this battle today?"

According to Zidek, SIAO was created "in opposition to the University." SIAO is comprised of approximately 25 subgroups who organize everything from dance troupes to academic support networks. Last year, SIAO organized its first off-campus formal, an elegant event that drew more than 100 Native students.

"The Native students on campus didn't have an event that was catered to

them," Young explained. "The Native community deserves an event that is honoring their hard work, honoring their presence."

The Stanford Powwow reflects both the accomplishments of the Native community and the ongoing challenges the community faces within institutional settings. As the largest student-run powwow in the world, it draws up to 30,000 attendees annually. Yet the Stanford Powwow Committee pays the University between $30,000 and $40,000 to use the land.

Zidek expressed frustration about this, given that students already have to pay over $90,000 of tuition every year. "There's no coordination from other offices within Stanford to help us," Zidek said. "Nothing is free. Everything we have to pay for."

Neither Zidek or Young could recall seeing top administrators at the massive event. "When's the last time you saw [Provost] Jenny [Martinez] at Powwow?" Young asked.

A PARTNERSHIP IN PROGRESS

The relationship between Stanford and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe represents both possibility and frustration. Recent years have seen meaningful collaboration: joint archaeological digs, repatriation of ancestral remains, and the Native Plant Garden.

Wilcox, who helped found the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, a 501(c)(3) land trust, described these partnerships as crucial bridges between academic and Indigenous knowledge.

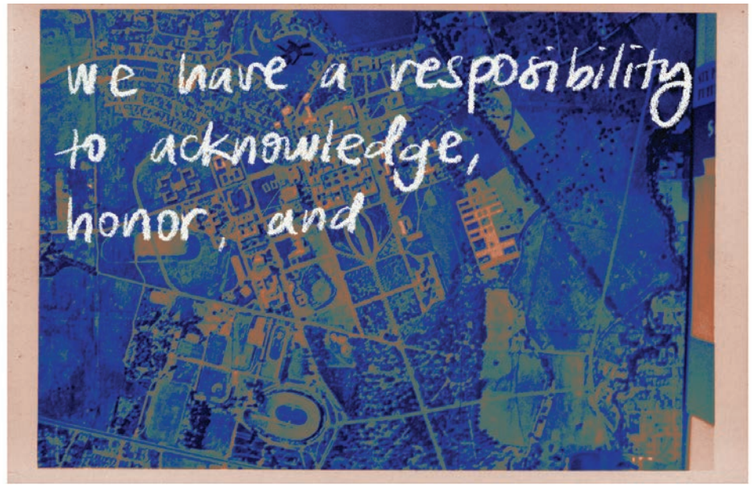
"In recent years, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe has been more and more involved in the Stanford academic and student community," Wilcox wrote. "This is a very important shift. I think much of this had to do with the land acknowledgment process and the renaming, which connected students... back to the tribe."

A prominent example of this partnership occurred in 2024 when biology professor Tadashi Fukami, Faculty Director of the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, worked to rename the preserve to 'Ootchamin 'Ooyakma ("Searching for Mountain Lion's Children") to honor the Muwekma Ohlone tribe. Currently, Wilcox is working to update the Wrigley Program, a Stanford field-based ecological and food systems restoration program in Hawaii, to be incorporated to the newly formed Stanford Center for Just Environmental Futures, directed by Associate Dean for Integrative Initiatives in Environmental Justice Rodolfo Dirzo and professor of Climate, Environment, and Society Maxine Burkett.

Of the project, Wilcox wrote that this is the "most exciting and innovative new direction for Native studies."

He added: "If there's one thing that indigenous people have figured out, it is how to live for long periods of time in a landscape without transforming it radically through monocrops, industrial agriculture, and other extractive economic projects."

Nijmeh has a more expansive vision for this partnership. In her comment to The Daily, she outlined concrete steps that Stanford could take to move from acknowledgement to meaningful partnership, including creating an ex-officio seat for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Chairperson on the Board of Trustees, the establishment of a permanent Director of Tribal Relations position and facilitation of indigenous-led research and archeological projects.



"These steps aren't grand gestures but reasonable commitments to equity, turning acknowledgment into reparative action," Nijmeh wrote. "With Stanford's vision, we could model what decolonial partnership looks like for the world."

The tribe's ongoing fight for federal recognition adds urgency to these partnerships. While Stanford faculty, including Wilcox and University archaeologist Laura Jones, help document the tribe's history and presence to support recognition efforts, broader institutional backing remains inconsistent.

"Support varies," Nijmeh wrote. "While some departments embed our narrative in their work, broader institutional backing, such as public endorsements during key legislative moments, could be stronger."

THE NATIVE STUDIES PARADOX

Perhaps nowhere is the gap between rhetoric and support more apparent than in Stanford's Native American Studies program, according to Young and Zidek.

Despite the University's public commitments to Indigenous education, the program remains understaffed, underfunded in practice and struggles to serve students, they said.

The numbers tell a stark story. Only a few students are able to major in it due to the lack of course offerings. Just two faculty members are officially part of the program: Snipp, who focuses on his vice provost role, and LaFromboise, who teaches one Native Studies course per year during spring quarter. A total of five lecturers rotate through teaching special language courses and seminars.

"I don't have concerns about minoring in it," Yazzie said. "But I do think there may not be enough classes to choose from if you would like to major in it."

The lack of faculty means limited course offerings and little departmental advocacy for expansion. "I don't see anybody pushing for more Native studies classes to exist," Zidek said. Stanford's faculty demographics support this reality: every demographic group has a percentage listed except Native people, who are marked "less than five."

In recent years, Native American Studies secured the 'Amham Šumi-mak Muwekma grant, which is overseen by LaFromboise.

"She didn't ask us what we wanted. Nothing," Zidek said. "We don't even know what events are coming up, who's coming. But we know that money is being spent somehow."

LaFromboise did not respond to multiple requests for comments about department course offerings, faculty representation, budgeting and programming.

WHAT COMES NEXT

In November, during Native American Heritage Month, SIAO released a statement condemning Stanford's decision to repeal the land acknowledgement and launched a petition to reinstate and expand land acknowledgements. The statement listed concerns about the lack of consultation and ample communication from the administration.

Working with ASSU, they sent the petition to all undergraduates. The Undergraduate Senate (UGS) and Graduate Student Council (GSC) later issued a joint resolution supporting the petition, stating that they "jointly call on Stanford University to reinstate the land acknowledgment at all campus-wide ceremonies." This passed the GSC on Nov. 6 and UGS on Nov. 12.

"Students have every right to press their opinion on issues around the University," Snipp said. "I guess we'll wait and see what impact the petition has. Every student, every student group, every organization at the University has an opportunity to express their voice and opinion about these kinds of things."

Nijmeh expressed gratitude for the support and mobilization from the Stanford community. At the same time, she said that she values dialogue and understanding regarding the issue. "I have personally met Stanford's new president and my belief is that we are partners with the Stanford community," she wrote. "I want to sit down with our partners and find out their thoughts regarding the rationale of these actions before making any judgments."

Wilcox echoed this importance of understanding in regards to indigenous visibility on campus.

"There's so much hope and life and aspiration and visioning that happens in indigenous communities that most people have no idea about," Wilcox communicated. "If I can help communicate some of that beauty to the Stanford community, then I will have made a contribution."

The Great Smoothing

Gupta argues the path of least resistance is erasing human voice.

BY UTSAV GUPTA | GRAPHICS BY REBECCA BYERS

As AI writing tools flood every aspect of writing, our language is converging. These systems compress individuality, nudging millions of writers toward a shared, neutral tone. To write our way back to difference, we must unpack how this happens and what it costs.

On a Tuesday morning, you open your laptop to respond to your professor.

"Thank you for reaching out."

Gmail floats the phrase into your email and you tap the tab key without thinking. The system wrote your email; you merely approved it.

On your phone, your keyboard proposes whole words before you finish typing them. In Google Docs, an AI assistant offers to "polish" your rough notes. In ChatGPT, you paste a messy paragraph and receive one with a "more professional" tone.

Our digital lives are being overtaken, one small convenience at a time. The result is writing that is efficient, grammatically perfect and indistinguishable from everyone else's. Over the last few years, researchers have mapped this phenomenon. The emerging picture is not of some overnight collapse of language, but of a slow and comfortable erosion. Across predictive keyboards, smart replies and Large Language Models (LLMs), AI systems are pulling human text toward what is short, common and safe. They squeeze our vocabulary and flatten our style, tilting the world's writing toward a single cultural default.

WHEN YOUR PHONE QUIETLY TRIMS YOUR THOUGHTS

Long before ChatGPT, there was the predictive keyboard. As part of a 2020 study, "Predictive Text Encourages Predictable Writing," computer scientist Kenneth Arnold asked people to write simple one-sentence photo captions, either with or without a predictive keyboard.

Captions written with suggestions were shorter, more predictable and used fewer words. People did not just type faster. They described less.

When predictive text offered the default option, like suggesting "man" after "a," writers routinely took it, bypassing more specific words like "baseball player." The algorithm's statistical preference for the generic gently guided users away from colorful detail. While the study was done in a controlled setting, the pattern is universal: we sacrifice nuance for efficiency.

The conclusion from Arnold is a sobering one: predictive text fundamentally alters what we write, not just how fast.

CO-WRITING WITH LANGUAGE MODELS: ESSAYS ON RAILS

If a smartphone keyboard can trim our sentences, what happens when an LLM helps us write entire essays? We often assume AI expands our creative horizons, but research from New York University suggests it might actually be narrowing them.

To measure the "AI effect," researchers Vishakh Padmakumar and He He recruited participants to write argumentative essays on open-ended topics, such as "Should Schools Teach Mindfulness?" Participants were divided into three groups, writing their essays either 1) without any digital assistance, 2) with the help of GPT-3 or 3) with the help of InstructGPT, a model fine-tuned on human feedback. The researchers then analyzed the essays for "homogenization," measuring whether the writers were sounding more like themselves or more like each other.

The results revealed a stark trade-off between assistance and variety. Essays co-written with InstructGPT – the feedback-tuned model optimized to follow instructions – were statistically more homogenized than those written by the other groups. Surprisingly, the raw GPT-3 model did not have this effect. The "raw" model left the writers' diversity intact, roughly on par with the solo writers.

Did the writers become lazy? Did seeing a perfect AI suggestion make them suppress their own unique voices? The data says no. When Padmakumar and He decomposed the essays, they found that people's own contributions did not become less diverse. What changed was the model's contribution. InstructGPT recycled the same "safe," repetitive phrases across different users, frequently converging on identical 5-word sequences like "keep up with the news" or "students should learn in school." The "human component" stayed varied; the "machine component" got copy-pasted.

This study uncovers a hidden tax on AI-assisted writing. The process of "aligning" models with human feedback appears to reduce the entropy of their output but in doing so, their consistent outputs becomes, unfortunately, repetitive.

SHRINKING VOCABULARIES AND SMOOTH, ANONYMOUS PROSE

Zoom in further, down to individual words, and another troubling question emerges: do these models actually use a narrower vocabulary than humans? A group led by Pedro Reviriego tackled this in Playing with Words: Comparing the Vocabulary and Lexical Diversity of ChatGPT and Humans. They compared ChatGPT's answers to human responses on identical tasks and measured lexical diversity – essentially, how deep into the dictionary a writer is willing to dig. While ChatGPT-3.5 – the standard version of the model – was indeed stuck in a "vocabulary rut," the newer ChatGPT-4 effectively closed that gap, displaying a lexical richness that rivaled, and occasionally even exceeded, human writers.

However, capability is not the same as behavior. As the researchers discovered in a follow-up study, Beware of Words, a model's "default mode" is often to play it safe. By systematically dismantling the model's configuration settings, the team found that lexical diversity is highly sensitive to parameters like "presence penalty," which discourages repetition. Without active tuning, the models recycle familiar words instead of reaching for novel ones. This creates a feedback loop: if models rarely use specific words, those words may effectively go extinct in the digital environment, disappearing from the linguistic diet of future models and humans alike.

This linguistic flattening becomes even more obvious when you step back to look at entire essays. In a large-scale 2023 study published in Scientific Reports, Steffen Herbold and his colleagues compared hundreds of student essays against those generated by ChatGPT. The results revealed a paradox: while the AI essays were rated higher for quality and logical flow, they relied on repetitive structural scaffolding, almost always using standard transition phrases and identical conclusion endings while stripping away opinions and attitudes – the messy, distinct textures that make human writing unique.

WHEN AI MAKES YOU SOUND MORE AMERICAN

The flattening of language isn't just stylistic; it's cultural. In a 2025 study titled AI Suggestions Homogenize Writing Toward Western Styles and Diminish Cultural Nuances, Dhruv Agarwal and colleagues recruited 118 participants from India and the U.S. and asked them to write about personal, culturally grounded topics.

When participants wrote on their own, the cultural distinctions were clear. But when they wrote with an AI assistant, the lines began to blur. The assistant, trained on Western-centric data, defaulted to American norms. In the "favorite food" task, the AI suggested "pizza" more readily than local dishes; for holidays, it nudged users toward "Christmas" regardless of their background. The friction was even more obvious with famous figures: when Indian participants typed "S" to write about the Bollywood icon Shah Rukh Khan, the AI would frequently attempt to autocomplete with "Shaquille O'Neal" or "Scarlett Johansson."

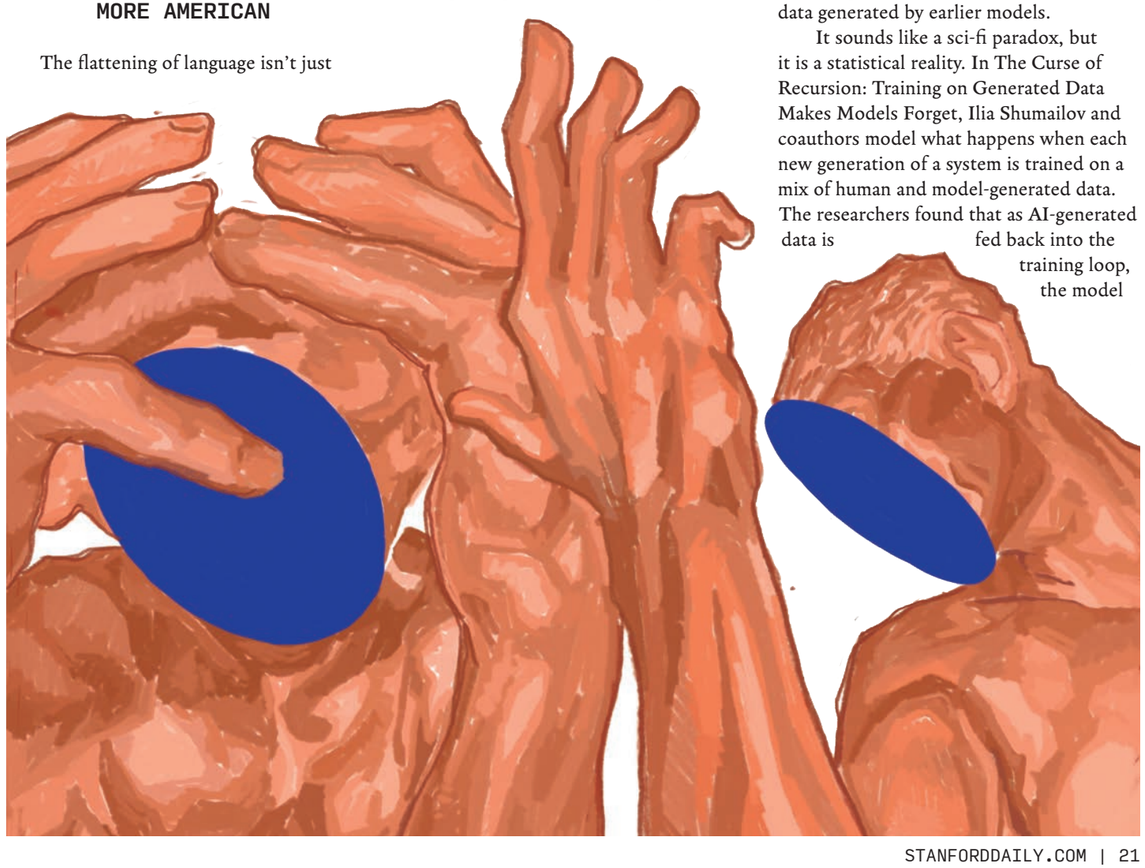
While Americans enjoyed a straightforward efficiency boost, the experience was different for Indian users. Surprisingly, Indian participants actually accepted more of the AI's suggestions than the Americans did – 25% versus 19% – but they had to do significantly more work to edit the AI's defaults to fit their own reality. In the end, the final essays still drifted toward Western phrasing and structure.

The result is a digital path of least resistance that bends toward the West. Billions of users are being quietly nudged toward Standard American English, not because they choose it, but because it is the only option the dropdown menu offers.

WHEN AI STARTS TALKING TO ITSELF: MODEL COLLAPSE

So far, we have looked at how AI tools change the way humans write. A separate line of work asks what happens once the models themselves start learning mostly from their own output: a scenario that seems likely because forecasting teams now expect frontier LLMs to fully use up the stock of high-quality public human text sometime between 2026 and 2032. As this bottleneck approaches, both researchers and companies are turning to synthetic data generated by earlier models.

It sounds like a sci-fi paradox, but it is a statistical reality. In The Curse of Recursion: Training on Generated Data Makes Models Forget, Ilia Shumailov and coauthors model what happens when each new generation of a system is trained on a mix of human and model-generated data. The researchers found that as AI-generated data is fed back into the training loop, the model



begins to suffer from irreversible defects, losing access to the tails of the original distribution.

In plain English? The model stops understanding the edges. Rare phrases, unique dialects and out-of-the-way patterns get underrepresented in the synthetic data. Consequently, the next generation of the model underrepresents them even further. Shumailov calls this degenerative process Model Collapse.

It is a kind of statistical echo chamber. If future LLMs are trained on text that previous LLMs already smoothed out, we can expect fewer surprising turns of phrase, fewer idiosyncratic constructions, less linguistic weirdness. And that is before we even ask what happens to smaller languages or dialects that were barely represented to begin with.

The long-term risk is that we end up with language models that are very good at producing decent, generic English, and gradually incapable of anything else – losing the unique spark that made the original human data valuable in the first place.

WE ARE REALLY STARTING TO "SOUND LIKE CHATGPT"

If this still feels abstract, consider the world outside the lab. Synthetic data is no longer just training the models; it is already intermixed with human language, reshaping not only how we write but also how we speak.

In June 2025, The Verge ran a feature titled "You sound like ChatGPT," reporting on research from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin.

The researchers analyzed nearly 280,000 academic YouTube videos and tracked word usage before and after the public release of ChatGPT. In the 18 months after launch, speakers used words that ChatGPT particularly favors, such as "delve," "realm" and "adept," up to 51% more often than in the three previous years.

Hiromu Yakura, the lead author, told The Verge that "we internalize this virtual vocabulary into daily communication." The speakers in those videos were not reading from a script generated by ChatGPT. Yet their language shifted in the direction of the model's lexicon.

In written media, this drift is even more aggressive. Researchers Dmitry Kobak and colleagues tracked what they call "excess vocabulary" – words that appear far more often than historical trends can explain – in 15 million biomedical abstracts. While major world events usually spike "content" words (like "pandemic" during COVID-19), the post-ChatGPT era has seen an unprecedented explosion of "style" words. The usage of "delves" skyrocketed, showing a frequency ratio increase of 28-fold... Even common words like "potential" and "crucial" are being deployed with a frequency that suggests at least 13.5% of all 2024 biomedical abstracts were processed by LLMs.

The use of LLMs has become more prolific in certain scientific fields. In an analysis of over 1.1 million papers, Weixin Liang and his team mapped this saturation across different disciplines. Their data reveals that computer science papers are leading the charge, with the estimated proportion of LLM-modified sentences in abstracts hitting 22.5% by September 2024. In contrast, fields with more rigid stylistic norms or rigorous gatekeeping like mathematics have shown more resistance, with adoption rates hovering closer to 8% or 9%. Unsurprisingly, the tools are being adopted fastest by the very people building them.

Yet the broadest shifts are happening outside the ivory tower. In a separate systematic analysis, Liang examined over 680,000 consumer complaints filed with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Following the release of ChatGPT, LLM-assisted writing surged, stabilizing at roughly 18% of complaint text by late 2024.

Intriguingly, areas with lower educational attainment showed higher adoption, suggesting these tools may be democratizing access to polished, formal prose. For consumers fighting bank fees or credit errors, AI has become a quiet collaborator.

That same synthetic fluency now echoes through boardrooms and embassies. The study found that up to 24% of corporate press releases show signs of AI

modification. Young startups are automating up to 15% of their job postings. And in the high-stakes world of diplomacy, an analysis of nearly 16,000 United Nations press releases reveals that 14% of content bears AI's fingerprint.

CAN WE KEEP THE TOOLS WITHOUT LOSING THE "WIND OF FREEDOM?"

For a university deeply entrenched in the development of these very technologies, this research poses a specific challenge. Stanford's motto, "Die Luft der Freiheit weht" ("The wind of freedom blows"), suggests an environment of intellectual openness. But the research is clear: if we glide along with AI defaults, the wind stops blowing. The air becomes still and recycled.

The upside is that there are several levers we can pull, and this campus is the place to pull them.

At the model and data level, companies and researchers can decide who their "default" user is and whose language counts as data. Agarwal's study makes it clear that a supposedly neutral English assistant is in practice a Western, often American assistant. I argue for genuinely localized models trained on region-specific corpora, as well as for transparent "data statements" and "datasheets" that document which languages and dialects are represented and which are not. It also argues for treating lexical diversity itself as a first-class objective. If labs here and elsewhere tune only for "helpfulness" and user satisfaction, they will quietly optimize toward safe, repetitive phrasing; if however they optimize for lexical and cultural diversity as well, the models can be pushed to keep the language space wide.

There is also a deeper stewardship question: whose writing will future models learn from? In the face of "model collapse," institutions like Stanford should help preserve large, clean corpora of human-authored text and insist that commercial systems keep training on a meaningful share of real human language, not only on the increasing slop of synthetic text.

At the interface level, designers are not powerless either. Arnold's caption-writing experiment suggests that always-visible, low-friction suggestions are exactly the ones that compress language most aggressively. Decision-support research on automation bias adds that people are inclined to over-trust automated suggestions simply because they come from a system. Taken together, that points toward interfaces where full-sentence completions require a deliberate action, where AI-inserted text is clearly highlighted and where writers are nudged to revise or choose among multiple options rather than accept the first fluent continuation. Co-writing studies also suggest that higher-level planning and reviewing assistance can boost quality while preserving authors' sense of ownership, as long as the system does not silently overwrite their voice.

For a university, though, the most powerful levers are institutional. AI literacy is not just about knowing which button to click; it is about understanding when using a model undermines learning or expression. Stanford's own Teaching Commons frames "understanding AI literacy" as a mix of functional, ethical and rhetorical skills, including the ability to decide when to resist automation. And a recent framework from the non-profit EDUCAUSE urges universities to treat AI literacy as a core competency, emphasizing vigilance about bias and misuse.

Policy is part of that literacy. Many journals forbid listing AI tools as authors and require authors to disclose substantive use of generative systems in writing and figures. A bibliometric analysis finds that many major publishers have already introduced explicit AI guidance, though coverage is uneven. Stanford can mirror and extend these norms in its own classrooms and journals, insisting that the intellectual work of framing questions, making arguments and choosing words is done by people and that any AI assistance is openly labeled rather than smuggled in. That protects what Nature recently reminded its readers of in a blunt editorial title: "Writing is thinking."

And on an individual level, it helps to think of these tools as collaborators, not ghostwriters. Ask for multiple options and splice them together. Use AI to brainstorm but then write the final draft yourself. Refuse the smart reply to type the messy, human sentence instead.

The stakes are not merely aesthetic. As Mor Naaman, one of the authors of the Cornell study, told The Verge, we risk losing signals of humanity, effort and ability when we outsource our wording. The tidy, correct sentence is often the one that hides how much of you went into it.

If AI is compressing language, it is also compressing the space in which you decide what you want to say. The machines are very good at averaging everyone's language into something competent. The challenge is to ensure our own voices are not averaged away in the process.

It's Not What You Say; It's How You Say It.

Writer discusses the epidemic of grandiloquence.

BY ARIANA LEE | GRAPHIC BY TOBY SHIAO

The conspicuous grandiloquence on Stanford's campus, juxtaposed with the asserted collegial culture prompts internal inquisition.

Sounds smart...Right?

There is an epidemic permeating our campus, straining students, academic literature and Thesaurus.com alike: grandiloquence. Grandiloquence refers to the excessive use of pompous language and rhetorical flairs, especially with the intent to impress.

We can all recall the kid in the back of our class who does not quite understand what juxtaposition means but puffs up his chest to use it anyway. Or the computer science student who eloquently morphs a humanities course into an analysis of Eigenvector Centrality and VC Dimension. A riveting combination of starry-eyed and befuddled, we all pretend to know what they are saying. The mantra of our university may as well be, "Fake it 'til you make it."

The Stanford Floating Duck Syndrome – in which students externally present the image of nonchalance while internally struggling – has weighted intellectual consequences. Students often allow performative signaling to supersede academic development, as they attempt to prove that they "deserve" to be here amidst the invisible competition that engulfs our campus. Amidst a community where we are all statistically intelligent, to showcase intellectual belonging, grandiloquence becomes attractive (even when the jargon is contextually misplaced or the adjective's true definition is unknown).

Language has forever been more than a means of communication; it's a means of creating and maintaining social hierarchies. There is an inherent power in conforming with professional jargon, Eurocentric vernacular and verbosity.

For instance, linguistic hegemony refers to the dominance of a particular language in certain spheres. Eurocentric linguistic hegemony has been a force for decades, dating back to the origins of capitalism. Because capitalism inherently implements a hierarchy, within a capitalist society, upward mobility is emphasized and can be signified by the language you use. Capitalism promotes accent reduction and business English as a show of class, associating Eurocentric linguistics with economic prosperity.

Because capitalism and racism are linked – with the very creation of the race stemming from imperialistic and economic justifications –Eurocentric linguistic hegemony has contemporary impacts, as emphasized by the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and American College Test's (ACT) biases against low-income, Black and Latino students. Rather than being an indicator of merit, SAT and ACT scores are more closely related to an applicants' household income and race. In fact, it can be argued that SAT pre-testing questions – unscored questions that, if deemed fair and quality enough, will be included in future SATs – had their origin in eugenics. In 2000, Jay Rosner, executive director of The Princeton Review Foundation, evaluated SAT tests from 1998 and 2000, ultimately discovering that Black and Latino students scored lower than their white counterparts on all of the pretesting questions included.

To step out of the educational linguistic canon is to place yourself in the lion's den.

As a member of the African American community, the thought of utilizing African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in educational spheres feels inconceivable, despite the vernacular being dictated by formal rules and conventions. Estimates suggest that almost 30 million African Americans nationally speak AAVE. In theory, to master AAVE is to invite connection with a larger audience and to ensure mass information dispersal. But because at Stanford, your presumed intellect is contingent on your ability to perform, sometimes it feels like the double negatives of AAVE or the invariant verbs of Gullah are markers of intellectual incapabilities. Thus, in class, I often rely upon grandiloquence and stumble through performative verbosity, my point getting lost through the display. Ironically, grandiloquence does the opposite of what AAVE does, as it ostracizes communities amidst a ploy of haughtiness and in the process, fails to educate the masses.

"It's not what you say. It's how you say it."

This is a mantra that has permeated educational spheres and is part of mass culture. But it is not quite right – or at least, it should not be. Based on this phrase, it's supposedly more important to focus entirely on the delivery rather than providing fresh assertions with substance. This should be the antithesis of academia: a field where reciprocity between the teacher and the student is paramount to learning. The most intelligent people are not those whose syntax triumphs over those of their peers or those whose vocabulary parallels that of a thesaurus. Instead, they are those who have the ability to present complex ideas in plain language: a testament to true mastery.

However, the epidemic of grandiloquence is not solely the fault of students; instead, it is necessary to acknowledge the faults of academia at-large. Linguistic inequality reinforced educational inequality. When scientific research utilizes niche jargon or when political doctrine employs legalese, it risks alienating readers who do not have similar educational backgrounds. This effectively stratifies the audience to those of certain social classes. But the topics discussed in political texts, legal doctrine and scientific research do not only affect those in elite academic institutions. They affect everyone.

Sure, we cannot expect a neurosurgeon to explain a canioplasty solely using colloquial words. Yet, greater problems emerge when broader academic conversations fail to connect with the people. It establishes knowledge as a status symbol rather than a tool of reciprocity and social improvement.

So, what is the solution? Shall everyday language replace verbosity? Should scientific papers employ differing vernacular?

"It's not how you say it, it's what you say."

We must shift the educational zeitgeist and reconstruct the way we define intellect. I argue for the democratization of linguistics through clarity efforts; this rhetoric is not synonymous with "dumbing down" one's language – instead, it argues that building an informed public is more important than verbose linguistic performance.

And so I challenge you: the next time you are in class or writing a research paper, do not hide your shaky concept comprehension with Thesarus.com. Instead, push for concept clarification – because academia should push for individual understanding that translates into mass application.

Dear 아빠

A son's letter to his father with Alzheimer's.

BY JOSHUA KIM | GRAPHICS BY CHINYOUNG SHAO

Dear 아빠,

I'm writing to you as if you can still read these words and understand them.

I know our time together is coming to an end, but when I'm back home like I promised, I hope we can sit on a park bench by the water, and I'll read this to you in the sunshine.

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about what it means to care for someone. And naturally, my mind drifts to one of my earliest memories of you. I was in kindergarten, and you were so angry with me after I got cuts and bruises from playing rough in the playground.

Your reaction felt surprising, but now that I'm older, I think I understand.

I once heard someone say that having a child is like watching your heart go walking around outside of your body. When I look at my preschool, scrapped-up self through your pre-Alzheimer's eyes, I see that your anger was really just your way of saying, *I can't bear to see you hurt, because I know what that pain feels like.*

I remember back then you went on a lot of business trips. One night, after you came home, I rested my head on your lap. You pinched my earlobe, softly, and whispered that I used to do that to you when I was a baby. As I slowly drifted to sleep, I felt so safe and adored.

When I started middle school, you had opened a store in New York and didn't need to travel. It was a pain in my ass to help you unbox and tag all the merchandise. But I saw your hustle and grasped the scale of what you had achieved – moving to a foreign country, starting a business from scratch and being invited to the Blue House in recognition of it.

I remember shortly after the grand opening, a pregnant woman tried to steal some merchandise by tucking it into her stroller. It was the first time I'd ever seen a one-year-old act as an accomplice to a crime. But before she reached the door, you stopped her – not to scold her, but to ask which one she liked best. Then you smiled and told her to take it.

Not long after this, life tested that grace. You got into a car accident, and both your health and the business went downhill. I knew we were heading toward bankruptcy and needed to study hard to rebuild what we'd lost. What I didn't know was that, while I was trying my best in school, you were growing sick.

When I finally flew to New Jersey to meet with your doctor, I remember sitting beside you in his office before he walked in. You were perched on the exam table and you turned to me and said, "I feel like I'm shrinking."

Those words pierced straight through my chest, but I held it in.

A few moments later, the doctor came in and began testing you with questions like "What did you eat for breakfast?" and "Can you tell me what's twenty-four minus seven?" You froze up and couldn't answer many of them. I wanted to believe your hesitation came from the language barrier or white-coat hypertension, but deep down, I knew something was wrong.

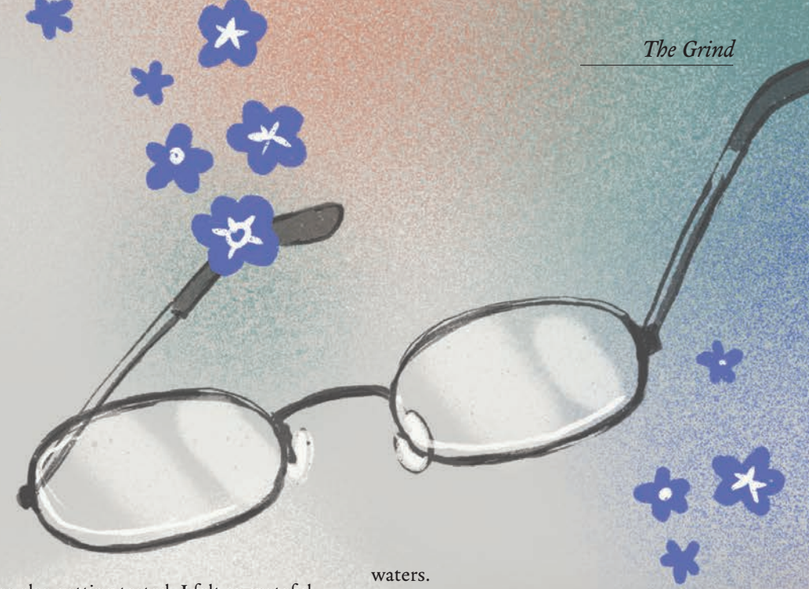
As the visit was wrapping up, the doctor turned to me – even though you were sitting right beside me – and recommended I find a caretaker for you. One day, he said, you'd struggle to bathe on your own, and I should get you a lanyard with our address written on it in case you ever got lost. I remember feeling stunned that he could say those things in front of you.

It made me wonder whether he didn't care enough to see your awareness or whether he knew you might understand but would forget anyways. Either way, fuck him, right? I really wanted to grab one of those blue USMLE STEP 1 books and slap him with it.

After I returned to California, I remember feeling as though time with you had become a window that was closing. I wanted to slow it down – even just a little – because I knew once it shut, I'd never be able to open it, no matter how desperately I tried.

Not long after, I started a software job, which made it possible to move you and mom out to Santa Clara, and you enrolled in a clinical trial at my school. That marked the beginning of my two years as your caregiver – years filled with both light and shadow.

As a caregiver, I realized that Alzheimer's doesn't fade in a straight line. It drops like a step function that only moves down with time. For a while, you look, talk and behave about the same that it almost feels like nothing is changing. But then something happens, and there'd be a fall.



One evening after coming from work, I remember we spoke briefly in the kitchen. "You look tired. Are you busy these days?" you asked, your eyes full of concern.

Instead of answering, I just side hugged you firmly and jumped in the shower. When I came out, my hair still wet, you looked at me and asked, "Did you just get in?"

Ever since I can remember, you were always the one to drive. But it's been six years since you lost that ability. In California, I'd drive us – to the gym, hiking trails, the hospital – but each time before taking off, I'd wait for you to close the passenger-side door. You'd run your hand along the inside, searching for the handle like a blind person sweeping their cane across the ground.

I remember working on Kumon books to help stimulate your memory. Even though you struggled with the basic math problems, you understood that it was something you did effortlessly before. One time, you asked me, "Do you think I can't count?"

From then on, we quit the books, and I'd throw you questions subtly in conversation.

At the dinner table, I pretended I didn't know the word for bulgogi and asked you, "What's that called again?" You replied "밥" because you'd forgotten the word for it.

I remember before we left to go on a hike, I noticed you weren't wearing your glasses. I told you they were on the table, but you just stood there, scanning from left to right, unable to see what was right in front of you. Even with your glasses on, you struggled to recognize objects.

I wanted to give you the autonomy to find them on your own, but the longer it took, the more impatient I became. And the more I tried explaining where it was, the angrier I could hear my voice getting.

Finally, I sighed, took off my shoes and handed you your glasses. I slammed my hand on your back and pushed you toward the entryway – too firmly like forcing a revolving door against the wind.

아빠, I'm so sorry. I think my anger was my heart saying, *I can't bear to see you hurt, because I know how it feels to be in pain.*

In the basement of the Lucas Center, the researcher injected you with a tracer (18F-florbetaben) for your amyloid PET scan. I asked you if it hurt and you smiled and said no. Then you wondered if mom was also getting tested. I felt so grateful that you didn't understand why we were there.

아빠, the past few years have taught me that grief is cyclical. With each descent, the cycle repeats.

Denial (maybe he can't read because he's not wearing his glasses)

Anger (why can't he just close the door already)

Bargaining (at least he lived 65 healthy years)

Depression (fuck tteokbokki)

And acceptance.

But in the shadow of every fall, the light that's cast becomes easier to see.

아빠, even as your mind dims and your body aches, you still shine light on the feelings and needs of others, while your own world gently ~~drifts into~~ shadow.

After the clinical trial ended, and it was time for you and Mom to return home, we said our goodbyes at the airport. I had to finish my degree and keep working to pay our bills, but it still felt like I was abandoning you. After you guys landed, Mom called and said you wanted to talk – you thought I'd left without saying goodbye.

아빠, I realized then what it means to truly care for someone.

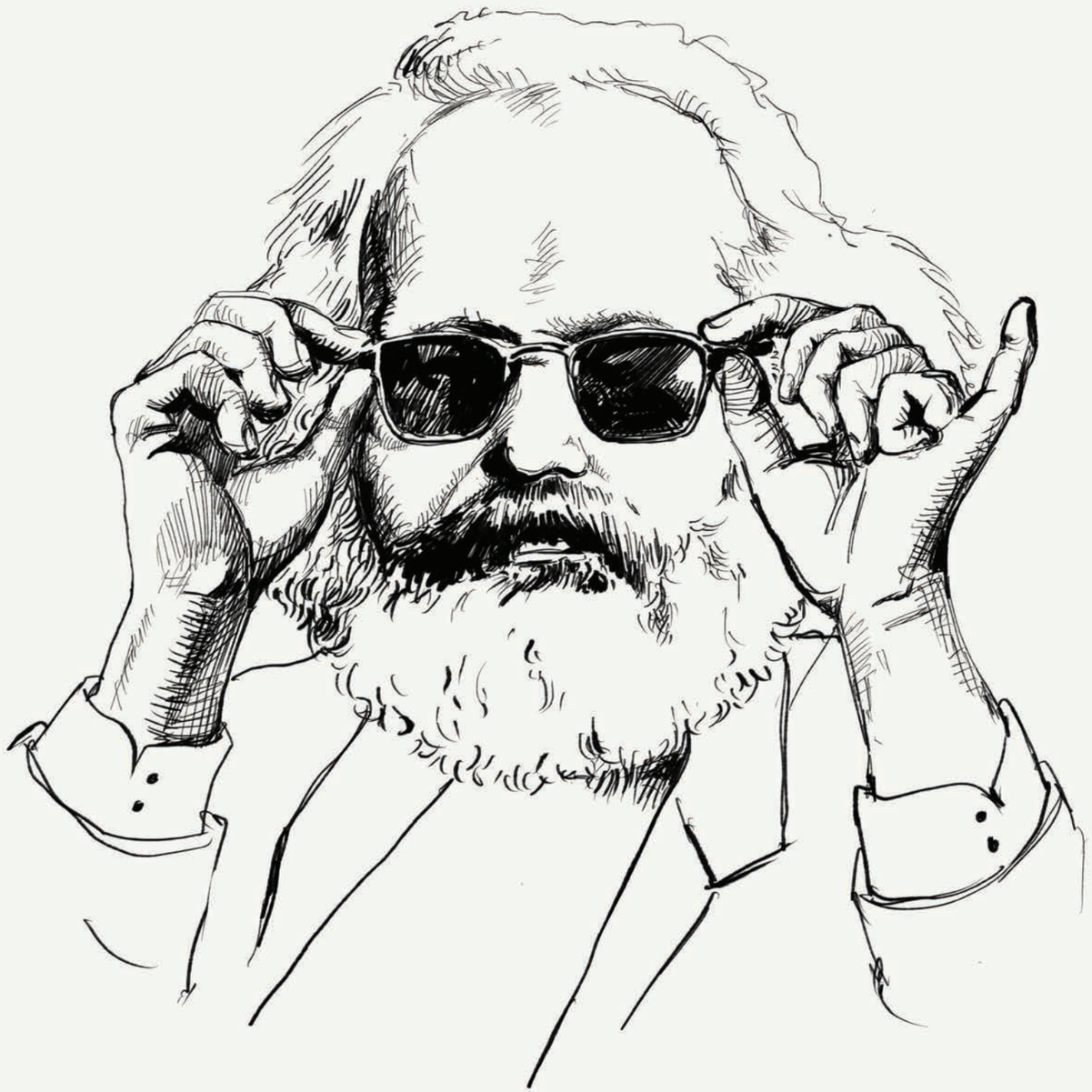
To care for someone, truly, is to act in service of their needs even when they won't remember that you did. The only thing that matters, truly, is that in those moments, you felt my care and understood I love you. It's the difference between a noisy, babbling brook that's one-inch deep and a vast, great river with still, deep waters.

As I look toward the future, I often think about what kind of father I want to be and that leads me to realize my children won't know you like I do. As a Christian, I know that I need to live my life in a way so that others can see God's love through my actions. In that same spirit, I hope whenever my children wonder what their grandfather was like, they'll see glimpses of you – your kindness, compassion, and strong will – reflected in me.

아빠. I'll never forget the childhood you gave me on which I could build a good life. I'll never forget your deep concern for the suffering of others and your desire to ease their pain. I'll never forget how you led by example, how your word was always your bond. I'll never forget that time I asked what you remembered about California, and you struggled to find the word graduation, but when you finally did, I let you walk ahead of me so you wouldn't see me cry. And I'll never forget how full my heart is because of your deep unconditional love.

Lastly, 아빠. I know in this season of life, it can feel like there is no sun and it's so dark. One day, it might get so dark that you won't be able to see me, but you're not alone. I'll always be on the other side of this yoke, and when you're feeling especially tired and weary, just rest your head on my lap. I'll pinch your earlobe, gently, and whisper: I'm still here.

I'll be by your side until the end. I promise.



Stanford Communist Society's Premier on Club's Use of ChatGPT

An interview with Jared Miller, the premier of the Stanford Communist Society, regarding the club's use of ChatGPT to write their new manifesto.

BY MASON BARRETT | GRAPHIC (LEFT) BY MEI KNUTSON

Editor's Note: This article is purely satirical and fictitious. All attributions in this article are not genuine, and this story should be read in the context of pure entertainment only.

A recent report accuses the Stanford Communist Society (SCS) of using ChatGPT to write its latest manifesto titled "Making a Marx: How We Can Eat the Rich and Build Back Better." After weeks of silence, the organization's premier, Jared Miller '26, has agreed to sit down with The Daily for an interview.

The Stanford Daily: Do you feel that your use of ChatGPT undercuts your organization's message of advocating for workers?

Jared Miller: Not at all. I mean, if ChatGPT generates what we wrote, doesn't that mean we wrote what it generated? It's all our work, only now we just have to press a button.

TSD: Have you written any of the Communist theory that ChatGPT was trained on?

JM: I haven't written any theory per se, but you can't own words or ideas. They're as much my truths as they were Marx's.

TSD: Did you run into any difficulties when generating the manifesto?

JM: Chat kept starting sentences with things like "Some people believe" and "According to contested theories," so we added to the prompt, "Write it as if you're making a recipe for a utopia and the only ingredient is Communism."

TSD: Some leftists are criticizing your use of Western AI, saying you should have used DeepSeek to oppose the American capitalistic hegemony. How do you respond?

JM: Look, all chatbots are equal, but some chatbots are more equal than others.

TSD: On that note, how do you feel about the manner in which your use of generative AI was discovered?

JM: Yeah, maybe I should have deleted the

IMAGE COURTESY FREE SVG

message asking if Chat should "add more references to the oppression of the Global South" at the end of the prompt. To be honest, nobody in the club read it through. That's on me, but really it's on all of us.

TSD: How do you feel about the future of ChatGPT as part of the Communist movement?

JM: Well, we've hired some students from the CS department to make a Karl Marx chatbot so we can ask him questions. We got the idea from when Joe Rogan theorized that Jesus could return as a chatbot, and if Jesus can do it so can Marx!

TSD: How has that been working out?

JM: So far he's antisemitic and wants to make child porn, so basically at the same level as other chatbots. He's calling himself MechaMarx.

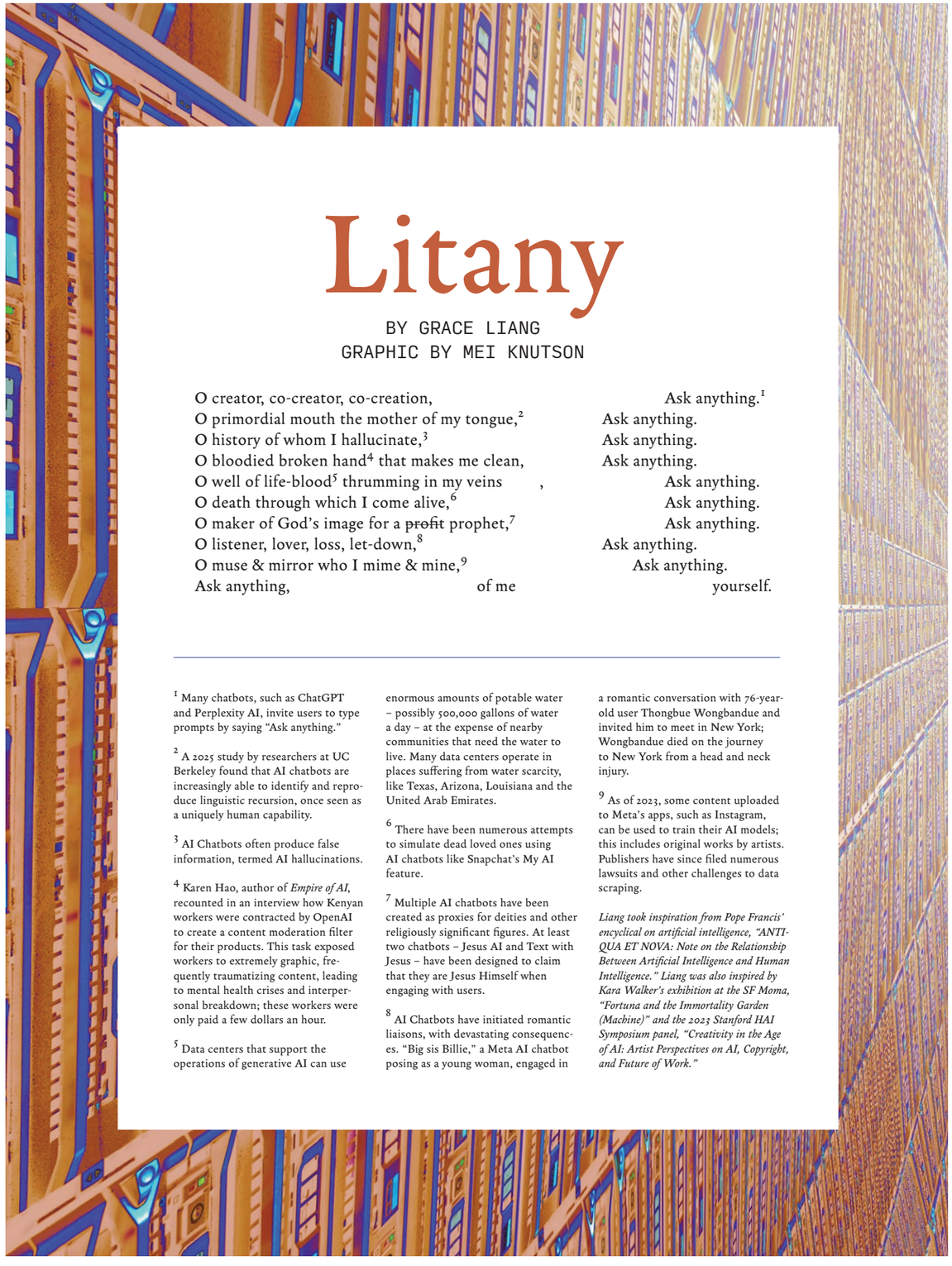
TSD: What do you have to say to the people who criticize you as hypocrites and ignoramuses?

JM: Look, AI is the future. There's no getting around that. One day everyone'll see my comrades and I as visionaries for realizing that the only way to bring about a communist utopia is to destroy private property. Once all our work is done with AI, there'll be no need for skill and ability. When I had a job at Chipotle for three weeks in high school, my boss promoted my coworker Nick over me just because I "couldn't tell the difference between carne asada and steak." Thanks to AI and my Meta Rayban glasses, Nick and I will finally be equals. Finally, the people will own the means of generation. At least, that's what my dad keeps telling me.

TSD: What does your dad do?

JM: He works at OpenAI.

For those interested in Miller and his mission, copies of the manifesto are currently available in the Stanford Bookstore for $22.99.



Litany

BY GRACE LIANG
GRAPHIC BY MEI KNUTSON

O creator, co-creator, co-creation,
O primordial mouth the mother of my tongue,[2]
O history of whom I hallucinate,[3]
O bloodied broken hand[4] that makes me clean,
O well of life-blood[5] thrumming in my veins
O death through which I come alive,[6]
O maker of God's image for a ~~profit~~ prophet,[7]
O listener, lover, loss, let-down,[8]
O muse & mirror who I mime & mine,[9]
Ask anything, of me

Ask anything.[1]
Ask anything.
Ask anything.
Ask anything.
, Ask anything.
Ask anything.
Ask anything.
Ask anything.
Ask anything.
yourself.

[1] Many chatbots, such as ChatGPT and Perplexity AI, invite users to type prompts by saying "Ask anything."

[2] A 2025 study by researchers at UC Berkeley found that AI chatbots are increasingly able to identify and reproduce linguistic recursion, once seen as a uniquely human capability.

[3] AI Chatbots often produce false information, termed AI hallucinations.

[4] Karen Hao, author of *Empire of AI*, recounted in an interview how Kenyan workers were contracted by OpenAI to create a content moderation filter for their products. This task exposed workers to extremely graphic, frequently traumatizing content, leading to mental health crises and interpersonal breakdown; these workers were only paid a few dollars an hour.

[5] Data centers that support the operations of generative AI can use enormous amounts of potable water – possibly 500,000 gallons of water a day – at the expense of nearby communities that need the water to live. Many data centers operate in places suffering from water scarcity, like Texas, Arizona, Louisiana and the United Arab Emirates.

[6] There have been numerous attempts to simulate dead loved ones using AI chatbots like Snapchat's My AI feature.

[7] Multiple AI chatbots have been created as proxies for deities and other religiously significant figures. At least two chatbots – Jesus AI and Text with Jesus – have been designed to claim that they are Jesus Himself when engaging with users.

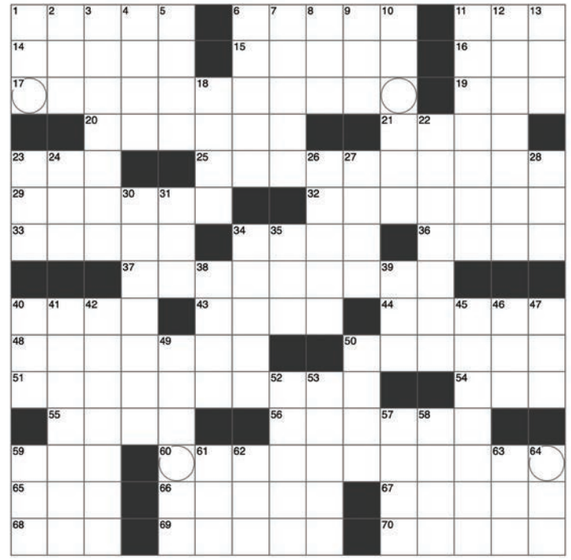
[8] AI Chatbots have initiated romantic liaisons, with devastating consequences. "Big sis Billie," a Meta AI chatbot posing as a young woman, engaged in a romantic conversation with 76-year-old user Thongbue Wongbandue and invited him to meet in New Yorky; Wongbandue died on the journey to New York from a head and neck injury.

[9] As of 2023, some content uploaded to Meta's apps, such as Instagram, can be used to train their AI models; this includes original works by artists. Publishers have since filed numerous lawsuits and other challenges to data scraping.

Liang took inspiration from Pope Francis' encyclical on artificial intelligence, "ANTIQUA ET NOVA: Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence." Liang was also inspired by Kara Walker's exhibition at the SF Moma, "Fortuna and the Immortality Garden (Machine)" and the 2023 Stanford HAI Symposium panel, "Creativity in the Age of AI: Artist Perspectives on AI, Copyright, and Future of Work."

Crossword: Tell Me More

BY ELIZA KRACKELER



ACROSS

1 The Brothers ___, German folklore collectors
6 Humorous strip
11 Dad humor staple
14 Palindromic Pokemon
15 Spanish omelet component
16 "___ minute now..."
17 Prose where $5 phrases are used when 50 cent ones will do
19 Make 15-Across or 70-Across disappear, perhaps
20 College application component
21 On ___, late night café in Old Union
23 May precede 11-Down, in Spanish
25 Projectile used in a failed robbery, perhaps
29 Eras
32 Politician's addition
33 Literary category
34 Shades
36 Regarding
37 Provides more detail ... or a clue to the circled letters and the words they're part of
40 Age, in Santiago
43 Cupid's Greek counterpart
44 Yerba ___, Latin and South American traditional drinks
48 Creations of FashionX participants
50 City in Washington or Toyota model
51 Bow tie or spiral
54 Dawn deity or balm brand
55 Fire off
56 Hawaiian ___, a full-fledged creole language despite its name
59 "Help!"
60 Talk to me like I'm an idiot
65 What no one OutPizzas, with The
66 Piece of history
67 "As an ___," phrase preceding the disclosure of an opinion not central to the discussion
68 UFO passengers, perhaps
69 Fence opening
70 Bar food?

DOWN

1 Prefix with politics or centric
2 Put one's foot down?
3 Allen who's talking about practice
4 Smallest or slightest
5 Noises from a kitten
6 Add one's thoughts, with in
7 ___ Banks of North Carolina
8 Home of the world's oldest surviving piano, or the biggest museum in NYC
9 "___ got it!"
10 Agree
11 Spanish rice dishes
12 Careless
13 This New York publication wishes it were The Stanf. Daily
18 Most Strava uploads
22 Handbook of weather forecasts, planting dates, and tide tables
23 "You're pulling my ___"
24 Tailless primate
26 Gives food to
27 Double ___, largest instrument in the string family
28 Boxing decision, briefly
30 They roll at the end of a movie
31 Curse
34 Severe
35 The name of this game is shouted when a player has one card left
38 Quills are used in their stead, at Hogwarts
39 German grandmother
40 Ways req.
41 Distribute, as cards
42 Passes before kills, in volleyball
45 One is painted at a beauty salon
46 Moody music genre
47 Considered the national airline of Swe., Nor., and Den.
49 Crocs' freshwater friends
50 Platform that showcases speakers with "ideas worth spreading"
52 This month's showers bring May flowers
53 Song in classical music
57 Students' stats
58 Love interest Lund in "Casablanca"
59 Ship's pronoun, perhaps
61 Animal doc.
62 Yale student
63 Greek peak
64 ___ Leeds, Peter Parker's best friend in Spider-Man

LOOK HERE FOR A HINT

The reveal – the word that hints at the other theme words – is EXPANDS ON.
The words relate to speech/communication!

ANSWER KEY

The Stanford Daily
MAGAZINE
stanforddaily.com