German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group

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Writing With, Against, or for Machines? Generative AI and the Question of Authorship

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Whether in Japan or elsewhere, the creation of books has never been an individual endeavor. Most noticeable in the publishing process, where texts are written, edited, and proofread by multiple individuals, the plurality of authorship is evident, though often overlooked. Locating this plurality can be challenging enough in contexts such as literary translation, but the issue becomes even more complex when machines enter the equation.

The AI boom following the public release of ChatGPT in November 2022 sparked debates on the ethical use of generative tools and copyright issues. At the same time, however, it also prompted a reconsideration of the inherent fluidity of authorship as a concept in both arts and literature. In my presentation, I examine how authorship is negotiated in contemporary Japanese literature in the context of AI. I focus on several case studies—from *The Day a Computer Writes a Novel* (2016) by the Kimagure jinkō chinō no sakka desunoyo project to *Sympathy Tower Tokyo* (2024) by Rie Qudan. I argue that each of them demonstrates how the notion of who (and what) can be an "author" has been gradually expanding over the past decade. Writing with AI tools does not simply mean *using* them; it also requires adapting to their constraints and possibilities. Unlike other writing assistants, such tools can suggest ideas, provide feedback, or even completely rewrite a text—activities that warrant acknowledgment as a co-author or at least as an editor. And yet they are never truly autonomous, as they require human guidance at every stage of the process. By analyzing what form this (co)-authorship takes in my case studies, I address the question posed in my title: "Does writing with AI mean writing with, against, or, ultimately, for machines?"

Kateryna Shabelnyk is a first-year PhD student at Nagoya University. Her dissertation project examines the impact of text-generative AI tools on contemporary Japanese literature, focusing on literary prizes. She is particularly interested in how recent developments in AI complicate the categories of authorship, originality, and creativity. Presently, she is working under the interdisciplinary TokAI BOOST fellowship.