



Negotiating Authorship with Generative AI in Cinema Education: Attribution and Creative Decision-Making in Screenwriting

Ufuk Küçükcan, Anadolu University, ukucukca@anadolu.edu.tr

Volume 14.2 (2026) | ISSN 2158-8724 (online) | DOI 10.5195/cinej.2026.1269 | <http://cinej.pitt.edu>

Abstract

This study examines how cinema students attribute authorship during AI-assisted screenwriting and how those judgments relate to creative decisions. Drawing on a fourteen-week, design-based course, it compares logbooks with 436 student turns across twenty generative-AI conversations. In four of six co-writing cases, students selected and retained system-originated material. The clearest tension appeared when students claimed the idea as their own but assigned the text entirely to AI while repeatedly rejecting generated material, a response the instrument's own categories leave ambiguous. Read against Livingston, Gaut and Sellors, these cases show that textual generation, creative decision-making and authorship attribution can diverge within one process. Cinema education should ask not only who authored a text, but on what basis.

Keywords: generative AI; AI-assisted screenwriting; screenwriting education; authorship attribution; cinematic authorship; creative agency; human-AI collaboration



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.

Pitt | Open
Library
Publishing

This journal is published by [Pitt Open Library Publishing](http://pittopenlibrarypublishing.com).



Negotiating Authorship with Generative AI in Cinema Education: Attribution and Creative Decision-Making in Screenwriting

Ufuk Küçükcan

Introduction

Film authorship has never been singular. Screenplays develop through exchanges among writers, readers, editors, producers, directors and other creative participants, while the finished film incorporates decisions made by people who may never have written a line of the screenplay itself. Screenwriting scholarship has therefore long treated authorship as distributed across a creative process rather than located only in the origination of words or ideas (Kerrigan & Batty, 2016; Macdonald, 2013). Generative AI does not create the problem of distributed authorship; it changes how textual contribution can be produced within it.

Generative systems can contribute premises, character development, structure, dialogue and alternative directions within screenplay development (Frühmorgen & Hoyer, 2025; Tang et al., 2025). What matters for authorship, however, is not only that material is generated, but how that material enters the developing work. In principle, textual production and creative decision-making need not occur in the same place: one source may generate material while another determines whether, how and in what form it is retained. This matters because theories

of cinematic authorship assign different weight to intention, artistic contribution, discretion and final say.

The distinction has particular significance in cinema education. Students are learning not only how to produce screen texts but also how to occupy creative positions within collaborative filmmaking, while generative AI is increasingly part of that environment (Bender, 2023; Gürsoy & Şavk, 2024; Lough, 2025). The educational question is therefore not only whether students can use generative systems effectively, but whether they can identify and explain their own authorial role within the resulting process.

Recent research has examined AI-assisted screenwriting, professional practice, classroom integration and students' experiences with generative systems. Attribution studies have also examined what people count as authorship or ownership, while revision studies have examined what writers do with machine-generated material (Formosa et al., 2025; Jiang et al., 2026). This study focuses on a less examined relationship: how students' authorship judgments relate to the creative decisions visible in their own interactions with generative AI.

The study examines that relationship in the screenwriting phase of a 14-week design-based cinema and television course. Twelve students participated in the course, and the interaction corpus comprises 436 student turns across twenty distinct conversations. Here,

“authorship attribution” refers to students’ session-level responses to a logbook item asking who authored the resulting text, while “creative decision-making” refers to observable acts through which students shaped the developing screenplay, such as selection, rejection, constraint or redirection. During the second phase, a configured Prompt Coach introduced an additional layer of instructional mediation between student intention and generative output.

The study does not presuppose that students’ accounts of authorship and the creative decisions recorded in their interactions coincide, nor that they diverge. It treats the relationship between them as an empirical question.

Three research questions guide the analysis:

RQ1. How do cinema students attribute authorship during AI-assisted screenplay development, and how do these attributions relate to the roles they assign to the generative system?

RQ2. What forms of creative decision-making are visible in students’ interactions with generative AI during screenplay development?

RQ3. How do students’ session-by-session authorship attributions correspond to, or diverge from, the creative decisions recorded in those interaction traces?

The contribution is primarily evidentiary. By comparing students’ authorship judgments with interaction traces from the same developing screenplays, the study examines whether textual production and creative decision-making coincide in practice. The conceptual implication is narrower: when they do not coincide, different criteria of cinematic authorship

become consequential. For cinema education, this raises a practical question not only of who students regard as author, but of what they take authorship to depend on.

Literature Review

Screenwriting as a Distributed Practice

The image of the screenwriter alone with a blank page has been under sustained criticism within screenwriting studies. Price's (2010) critique of the blueprint metaphor recast the screenplay as a text with readerships of its own—the “blueprint reader” being only one target audience (Sternberg, 1997, as cited in Price, 2010, p. 49), and as “a textual invocation of *a* film; never *the* film” (p. 48), opening it to analysis without detaching it from the film it anticipates, and treating it, like literary texts generally, as multiply authored. Maras (2009) traced the screenplay's formation within the studio system and questioned the separation of conception from execution, warning that the rhetoric distinguishing creation from interpretation treats conception as if it occurred “in a cultural and experiential vacuum” (p. 115). Against this background, Macdonald (2013) proposed the “screen idea work group” as the unit within which a screen idea actually develops: a fluid, project-based grouping whose membership extends to anyone who contributes to that development, “whatever their professional title” (p. 11) and whether paid or unpaid, with a core of stakeholders holding decision-making powers and a looser membership of contributors (pp. 73–74).

The model's force lies less in its membership criterion than in its account of how the group works. The group functions according to the tension between the power and control particular participants hold and the extent to which parties are willing to collaborate and extend trust; at any point either mode may replace the other or be disguised as it (Macdonald, 2013, p. 77). The capacity to take part rests on a Bourdieusian substrate: the doxa of screenwriting "works because of this discourse, shared amongst those who have acquired enough of it to take part" (Macdonald, 2013, p. 107), and the individual's view of that doxa, produced by that agent's habitus, can be seen as "a personal 'system' of poetics, which informs new creation" (p. 114).

Kerrigan and Batty (2016) carried this argument into the academy, treating collaborative authorship as one of the "important contemporary creative practices" the academy should pass on to future screenwriters, and insisting that to claim supremacy for any one part of the filmmaking process "is neither rational nor accurate, and it denies some agents their creative contribution" (p. 140). Their position is not the dissolution of the writer. They reject the authorless screenplay and propose instead the conditioned agency of the practitioner: someone who has internalized the rules of a domain and the opinions of the field, and who is positioned as "the first person to fix meaning, which will of course subsequently be subject to redefinition

and fixing by all future readers” (Wolff, 1981, p. 136, as cited in Kerrigan & Batty, 2016, p. 131).

Authorship, Intention, and the Limits of Contribution

Philosophy of film has approached the same terrain from a different direction, and its disagreements are instructive here.

Livingston (2002) refuses two extremes: the author as unmoved mover, solely responsible for every feature of the work, and the author as anyone who makes a causal contribution to it. Between them he defines the cinematic author as “the agent or agent(s) who intentionally make(s) a cinematic utterance” (p. 141): an agent acting on an expressive intention whose content is a plan (p. 141), and who, where tasks are delegated, retains “final say” over “which fruits of other people’s labor do and do not get incorporated into the final work” (p. 142). Final say does not require executing every component. Bergman did not compose or perform the Bach heard in his films, but he “made the decision about whether to use music at all, and where to put it in the film” (p. 144), and on that basis remains the author of *Winter Light*.

Gaut’s (2002) case runs the other way, expanding rather than restricting. No strategy for confining authorship to the director survives scrutiny, because the artistically significant features of a film are the results of others’ actions, supervised but not attributable to the director alone (p. 156). Where others “make a significant artistic difference to the work”, he argues, “it

is only fair to acknowledge them as artistic collaborators” (p. 157). The limit is discretion: some tasks—“when a director tells an editor to cut a shot after 240 frames”—“can be specified exactly, and the collaborator can carry out the order with no room for discretion” (p. 157), and such a contribution grounds no claim to authorship.

Sellers (2007) adapts Livingston’s formulation, defining the filmic author as “the agent or agents who intentionally token(s) a filmic utterance” (p. 266), and grounds collective authorship in “we-intentions” treated as primitive rather than as aggregates of individual intentions, rejecting both the implied authors and author-functions of earlier theories and the invention of a collective mind or “superagent,” since “mental constructions are not things that can have intentions” (p. 268). Membership does not follow from job title: a caterer takes part in a cooperative activity but not in “the cooperative activity of producing an utterance” (p. 269). The positions are not compatible: Gaut finds this intentionalism too restrictive; Sellers treats intention as constitutive. The disagreement is conceptual and applies to human filmmaking as much as to anything else. In practice, however, the dimensions it separates often overlap: whoever makes a significant artistic difference is usually also someone who holds intentions and can be held to them. Göksel Demiray (2015), writing in this journal, likewise treats the distinction between author and reader as shaping how cinematic authorship is understood; the

logbook item examined below asks students to make an authorship judgment about a text they have just helped to produce.

Generative AI in Screenwriting and Screenwriting Education

The relationship between screenwriting and generative AI has developed rapidly into a recognizable area of practice and research. A 2025 special issue of the *Journal of Screenwriting* gathers work on what happens when, as its editor puts it, generative AI takes on the part of collaborator or assistant across the range of activities that screenwriting now gathers, and asks “how human creativity can survive, evolve and find unprecedented advantages within technological power” (Turina, 2025, p. 231). Much of this work is practice-based: defining the system’s role as a creative act in studio production (Spencer, 2025), building bespoke machine-learning tools for story development (Marshall et al., 2025), and scripting with AI as both co-writer and screen character (Gibson Yates, 2025). Interview research shows that professionals do not assign AI a single stable function. Tang et al.’s (2025) screenwriters cast it as actor, audience, expert and executor; Vainikka et al.’s (2025) interviews with thirteen Finnish screenwriters and four commissioners identify functional, critical and curious stances toward AI, alongside ideals of human authorship grounded in unique life experience, intuition and ethical judgment (pp. 57, 59, 60–64). Sönmez and Gülay (2026), writing in this journal, extend interview-based work of this kind to Turkish film practice, examining generative AI and

creative labor among cinema professionals, including in screenwriting.

Other studies examine the interaction or its products directly. In an artistic-research project, Fröhmer and Hoyer (2025) integrate GPT-4 into four stages of story generation—thematic, story-world, character and dramaturgical conception—in which the system’s contributions are curated and refined under human oversight, while narrative coherence and depth of character remain difficult to secure. Viljoen (2024) sets a ChatGPT-generated short-film script against one a human screenwriter produced, both set in South Africa, and finds the system useful for structure, formatting and brainstorming but unable to produce authentic South African experience.

Generative AI has also entered screen and film education. Bender (2023) makes the case that generative AI can be brought into screen media education productively, and presents an ideation model designed to strengthen students’ capacities to “conceive and articulate their creative intentions” (p. 366). Cake (2025), a screenwriting lecturer, tested ChatGPT herself against the criteria of her first-year course: prompting privileged analytical thinking over emotional engagement, and in letting the system steer she had, by “abdicating authorship to the gen-AI” (p. 310), severed her emotional connection to the story. She concludes that creative confidence and an awareness of one’s own creative process are critical to engaging effectively

with gen-AI (Cake, 2025, p. 302), and warns that without a sense of self-efficacy in creative development students may privilege the system as an author (p. 315). Lough's (2025) survey of thirty screenwriting programmes finds cautious and uneven integration. In Turkey, Gürsoy and Şavk (2024) set twenty-one screenwriting students an assignment in which a logline and synopsis were developed with ChatGPT, the system was questioned on copyright, sources of inspiration and reliability, and students wrote critical reports on the exchange; reading the texts, conversation records and reports through Derrida, Foucault and Barthes, they argue that authorship should be seen as "always already a co-authorship" (p. 57) with language and the technologies of writing, and that the scriptor is becoming a promptor (pp. 69–71). Şahinkaya Ermiş (2026) worked with third- and fourth-year cinema students, eight of whom made one-minute experimental films from screenplays generated by ChatGPT from a single fixed prompt and at most two follow-up instructions; drawing on focus groups, conversation records, screenplays and films, she reads the results through Deleuzian difference and repetition and Marks's haptic cinema, without making authorship her question (pp. 38, 48). Monserrat and Srnec (2025) combine a classroom experiment with ten cinematography students at Argentina's national film school and three surveys, and find a steady ambivalence: students judged text-based tools helpful, but found the visual outputs inauthentic, over-polished or hegemonic.

This literature therefore already spans professional practice, artistic research, screenplay

comparison and film-school pedagogy. Its evidentiary forms differ: practitioners' reflections and interviews, comparisons of finished texts, and classroom studies built on bounded assignments or on students' perceptions of AI. Where conversation records are included, the relationship between participants' explicit attribution of authorship and the creative decisions visible in those same records has not been the primary object of analysis.

Attributing Authorship: What People Count

A separate literature asks not what authorship is but what people take it to be. Formosa et al. (2025) presented 602 participants with vignettes varying the amount of assistance a novelist received and its source (human assistant or ChatGPT). Perceived authorship, creatorship and responsibility all declined as assistance increased, while the perceived need for disclosure rose. For a human author, they conclude, "the degree of assistance matters for our assessments of their level of authorship, creatorship, and responsibility, but not what or who rendered that assistance except that it was more important to disclose human rather than AI assistance" (p. 3416). When participants judged the assistant itself, however, human assistants were granted higher rates of authorship, creatorship and responsibility than AI assistants "rendering the same level of support" (p. 3416). Measuring writers' own sense of the text rather than observers' judgments, Dhillon et al. (2024) found in argumentative writing that higher levels of AI

scaffolding improved quality and productivity while moderately reducing writers' sense of ownership.

Work on revision asks what writers do with machine text. Jiang et al. (2026) asked 121 Chinese English majors to revise statements of purpose that ChatGPT had generated from their CVs, and identify patterns that run from accepting the text as given, with no revision at all, to reworking its content substantively, with the most agentive students restoring an authentic voice against the system's templated one. Radtke and Rummel (2025) gave 303 learners the same academic text labeled either as a peer's or as AI-generated: those revising the AI-labeled version spent less time on it, though they identified as many problems and made as many revisions, and the difference, small in size, was sharpest among those who trusted AI more. Habib's (2026) conceptual framework, "AI-mediated creative agency", extends Bandura's account of self-efficacy: where human and algorithmic elements jointly produce intention, process and outcome, the sources of a creator's belief in her own capacity are filtered through three sites of negotiation, control, authorship and creative identity, producing "attribution ambiguity, opacity, and uneven control" (pp. 1, 9).

These studies divide along one line. Some measure what people believe about authorship, ownership or their own capacity (Dhillon et al., 2024; Formosa et al., 2025; Habib, 2026); others

measure what writers do to a text the machine has already produced whole (Jiang et al., 2026; Radtke & Rummel, 2025).

The Gap

The gap addressed here is therefore not the absence of generative AI from screenwriting research or cinema education. Recent work has examined AI-assisted screenplay development, professional writers' attitudes and practices, comparisons between human- and AI-generated scripts, classroom integration, and students' reflections on AI-supported creative work. Screenwriting studies, meanwhile, provides established accounts of collaborative and distributed creative practice, and philosophical accounts of cinematic authorship distinguish among intention, artistic contribution, discretion and final say—dimensions that, in human collaboration, often overlap in practice.

What remains less examined is what happens when these bodies of work meet at the level of the creative process itself. Attribution studies establish what people say counts as authorship; studies of revision and agency establish how writers accept, modify or reject machine-generated material; screenwriting research describes human–AI collaboration. Less attention has been given to the relationship between these dimensions within the same developing screenplay: whether writers' explicit accounts of who authored the work correspond to the decisions,

refusals, constraints, selections and redirections recorded in their own interaction with the generative system.

This study addresses that relationship in a cinema-education setting, by comparing students' session-by-session authorship judgments with extended conversation records from screenplay development. Its contribution is not a claim of priority, nor a general theory of AI authorship, but a trace-based account of how authorship attribution and creative decision-making may diverge in AI-assisted screenwriting.

Method

Research Context and Design

The study is part of a design-based research project on the integration of generative AI into media and film production education at Anadolu University. It reports on the screenwriting phase of a 14-week course in which cinema and television students developed short-film projects with generative AI systems.

The study is not an effectiveness trial. No attempt is made to isolate the effect of instruction, and for reasons set out below the data would not support such a claim. The design follows the design-based research cycle of design, enactment, observation and revision (Wang & Hannafin, 2005); the analysis is an account of what became visible during that process.

Participants

Twelve students were enrolled: one in the second year, six in the third, five in the fourth. Seven described themselves as able to direct or produce a project independently from screenplay to post-production; four reported department-head command of a single area; one reported theoretical rather than practical command. Six named screenwriting among their strongest areas. The group was purposively selected. The instructor had taught these students in earlier years and selected them for the project on the basis of their prior production experience and their work in earlier courses. The competence levels reported here are self-assessments, but they are consistent with the instructor's prior knowledge of the students' work and indicate that most participants had already taken substantial creative responsibility in film production.

Instruments and Sequence

A background questionnaire (February 23–26, 2026; 12 responses) is used only to characterize participants.

Logbook 1 (February 28–March 12; 15 entries) recorded for each session the stage of development, the tool used, the role assigned to the system, the aim, how the student intervened in the first response, a single-choice judgment of who had authored the resulting text, and a conversation link.

Students were then taught six prompting techniques—direct, Socratic, analytical,

progressive, branching and constraint-based—and given access to an *AI Prompt Coach*, a configured assistant developed by the course instructor.

Logbook 2 (March 29–April 23; 15 entries) recorded the student’s initial instruction, the Coach’s proposal, the final instruction, and the reason for any change. A *phase-end questionnaire* (fifteen entries) asked which techniques had been used predominantly, asked students to rate each technique they had used on a five-point scale anchored from “used it, and it contributed nothing or harmed the process” to “used it, and it solved the problem perfectly,” and asked for a concrete account of how a technique had resolved or worsened a specific problem. At the end of the phase, the instructor facilitated a group discussion, which was transcribed and used only as supplementary reflexive material. Because the discussion was co-produced within the course, it was not treated as an independent analytic corpus or used to establish case-level findings.

The AI Prompt Coach

The Coach took the student’s basic idea, developed it one step further, and returned it to the student as a proposed instruction for the generative system. Because students initially needed guidance in formulating prompts, it also served as a prompting scaffold. Each proposal followed a role-and-constraint template written by the course instructor (Appendix A), adapted to the student’s idea: it cast the receiving system as an expert dramaturg or script doctor

identified through named auteurs suited to the project (Miyazaki, Satrapi, Ceylan and others), set out context and task, told the system to act as a “cognitive partner” that questions rather than writes, and closed with prohibitions drawn from the template—among them Hollywood-style clichés and hero arcs, black-and-white morality, forced happy endings and sycophantic praise. The Coach was therefore not a neutral prompt-expansion tool: its proposals incorporated instructor-authored preferences about how screenplay development should proceed. Students could adopt, edit or discard a proposal before using it.

Corpus

Students supplied exports for twenty-seven of the thirty logbook entries; three, from a single student, were unavailable. Timestamps and text prefixes showed that the files correspond to twenty distinct conversations: in four cases, several entries are successive snapshots of one continuing session, and in two a single conversation spans both phases. The corpus comprises 436 student turns, predominantly with Gemini and otherwise with Claude.

Two features preclude before-and-after comparison. The stage of development shifted between phases: 10 of 15 first-phase entries report brainstorming, while the second phase concentrates on world- and character-building; a conversation spanning both phases also moves developmentally from premise to structure. Neither confound is removable. The final-instruction field in Logbook 2 was optional and completed in seven of fifteen entries; complete

initial–proposal–final sequences number six, four from one session, so textual transformation of instructions is not treated as a primary data structure.

Analysis

Conversations were segmented into turns and read in full; a scheme of student moves was developed from the transcripts (Table 2). No independent second coder was available, so the frequency of coded moves is not reported; the analysis proceeds case by case, quoting the material so that readers may assess interpretation against evidence. Counts that appear in the tables are counts of what students recorded in the instruments, not of coded behavior. The judgments of authorship reported here are the writers' own, made about work they had just produced. Quotations are the author's translations from Turkish.

Positionality and Ethics

The instructor, researcher and author of the Prompt Coach are the same person; the same person also selected the participants for the project, and the logbooks contributed to the course grade. Students' explanations are therefore treated as accounts—claims about their own authorship—and read against what the transcripts record. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics board. Participants are identified by code.

Findings

Role Assignment and Authorship Attribution

Logbook 1 asked students to name the role they had given the system and, separately,

who had authored the resulting text. Table 1 sets the two answers side by side.

Student	Role assigned to the system	Response to the authorship item
P12 (×3)	Assistant/scribe	Idea mine, AI wrote the text entirely
P03	Co-writer	Idea mine, AI wrote the text entirely
P02	Writer	Idea mine, AI wrote the text entirely
P06	Experienced screenwriter	I wrote it entirely, AI only gave ideas
P08	Disobedient assistant that does as it is told	Co-written
P10	Co-writer/assistant	Co-written
P07	Creative assistant and writers'-room partner	Co-written
P11	Rational reasoner – researcher	Co-written
P04	Screenwriter/idea consultant	Co-written
P01	Script doctor	<i>The AI gave the idea, I wrote the screenplay</i> (own wording)
P01	Assistant/script doctor	Co-written
P09	Screenplay expert/consultant	<i>Idea mine, developed together with the AI</i> (own wording)
P05	Assistant	<i>The AI</i> (own wording)

Table 1: Role assigned to the system and response to the authorship item (Logbook 1; 15 entries, twelve students).

The assigned roles do not map directly onto responses to the authorship item. The student who cast the system in the most subordinate role, as a scribe, recorded in all three entries that it had written the text. The student who cast it in the most senior role was the only one to select the option that she had written the text herself. Three entries broke out of the instrument's options altogether, one of them inverting the relation the instrument was built to capture.

No relation between the two variables is claimed; fifteen entries could not support such

an inference. What Table 1 shows is that assigning the system a role and attributing authorship are distinct judgments. The former concerns how the system is positioned within the creative process, whereas the latter records the student's response to an item framed as asking who authored the resulting text. The responses do not, by themselves, establish which criterion of authorship each student was applying. The responses were also shaped by the instrument. The item offered fixed options, and the option "the idea was mine, the AI wrote the text entirely" already separates ideation from textual production, so that its selection alone cannot show whether the student regarded textual production as equivalent to authorship. The logbook responses are therefore treated here as instrument-mediated authorship judgments rather than as unprompted theories of authorship. No option allowed the AI to be credited with the idea or with the whole work: the most machine-ward option still assigned the idea to the student. Three entries departed from the options, two of them precisely in the direction the form did not offer (*the AI gave the idea, I wrote the screenplay; the AI*), indicating that the categories shaped the responses without fully determining them (Appendix B).

Refusal, Constraint and Redirection as Creative Decisions

This section concerns what the system proposed about the film. Across both phases, students treated those proposals as a writer treats development notes. Table 2 gives the recurring kinds of move.

Move	What the student does	Example
Refusing the premise	Rejects a proposal as familiar or derivative	<i>That won't work either. The upper-city/lower-city concept has been done too much.</i>
Correcting the craft	Enforces screenplay form over prose	<i>Don't use literary language; write only what will be seen on screen.</i>
Reversing an unapproved addition	Removes or reverses material introduced by the system without the student's approval	<i>Let's shut the Cradle business down. I didn't approve it.</i>
Forbidding initiative	Restricts the system to revising what the student supplies	<i>I repeat, do not take action. You will revise what I send you.</i>
Policing the role	Holds the system to the assigned persona	<i>I said make it cinematic; I didn't say visualize it as a script doctor.</i>
Defending a reading	Rejects the system's characterization	<i>Why did you use the phrase "rebellious youth"? I think Deniz is right in his struggle.</i>
Holding continuity	Enforces prior decisions	<i>You didn't add his interaction with his friends; we had designed the dinner as Scene 2.</i>

Table 2: Recurring creative-decision moves in the transcripts (both phases). Codes were developed inductively from the transcripts of both phases; a turn could receive more than one code. Frequencies are not reported (Method Section).

These moves are present in the first phase, before any instruction in prompting, and in the second. They are not distributed evenly, and their frequency is not claimed. The examples in Table 2 show these moves arising in response to material returned by the system, but they differ in what the student subsequently targets. Five act directly on the returned material: refusing it, correcting it, reversing an unapproved addition, defending an interpretation, or enforcing an

earlier decision. Two instead redirect the system’s behavior by restricting its initiative or holding it to an assigned role. In both forms, students articulate their interventions in the idiom of the discipline—cliché, build-up, tone, role and what will be seen on screen.

Prompting Strategies and Uses of the System

The end-of-phase questionnaire records how students evaluated the prompting techniques they had used (Table 3).

Technique	Named as predominant	Rated (used at all)	Mean rating (1–5)
Progressive	12	13	3.85
Socratic / reverse	10	12	3.42
Analytical / critical	9	9	3.89
Constraint-based / negative	7	13	3.38
Branching	5	9	3.22
Direct	1	7	2.14

Table 3: Prompting techniques: predominant use and evaluation (phase-end questionnaire, 15 entries). Scale: 1 = used it, contributed nothing or harmed the process; 5 = used it, solved the problem perfectly. Counts are questionnaire entries (15), not students: the questionnaire was completed once per development stage, and three students completed it more than once (one three times, two twice). One student added a technique of her own, "bullying prompting."

Direct prompting—asking the system to produce the story—was the least used and the lowest rated; four of the seven entries that rated it gave it the lowest score. Techniques that placed the system in the position of questioner, critic or constrained executor were both more common and more highly rated. Students’ open accounts explain why in terms of control: *when*

I gave it full authority, it pulled the screenplay wherever it liked, so I moved step by step; now that I proceed step by step, I control the process. One student recorded a technique the course had not taught: *when it didn't give a result that met my requests, I bullied it into producing different ones.* Another noted that techniques have a lifespan: critical prompting *stays too general on an abstract idea*, and Socratic questioning becomes repetitive once the idea has taken shape, at which point she *abandoned it and moved to constraints*.

The transcripts also record uses that were primarily informational or critical rather than generative. Students asked what substance would produce the hallucination their story needed, and built the plot on the answer; asked about Victorian London *in connection with my film* and relocated the setting a turn later; requested sources; and instructed the system not to affirm their ideas automatically.

Creative Decision-Making Around the Prompt Coach

In the second phase, the Coach introduced a second layer of mediation whose object was the instruction rather than the film itself. Because the Coach had been configured by the instructor, recurrent formulations from that configuration appeared in its proposals and, in some cases, in students' subsequent instructions. Table 4 shows where it appeared.

Position	Conversations	What followed
Opening move	5	Proposal used as the session's first instruction

Position	Conversations	What followed
Inserted mid-stream	2	The two longest sessions (turn 47 of 105; turn 32 of 34); proposal overridden or not carried into a final instruction
Not present	3	Includes one student who tested the Coach in a separate conversation and abandoned it

Table 4: Position of the Prompt Coach in second-phase conversations (10 available). Position identified by verbatim signature phrases from the Coach’s configuration, absent from all first-phase transcripts.

Students’ reasons for accepting, pruning, or refusing the proposals, recorded in Logbook

2, fall into four kinds:

- **Refusal on grounds of continuity.** *I didn’t take the risk of changing the flow and the context; it felt as though it was taking the story out of my control.*
- **Evaluated acceptance.** *I deliberately kept the parts I wanted in my story but hadn’t stated in the first instruction.*
- **Objection to exceeding the remit.** *It made a great many definitions that were not mine, shaping the world and the tone as it saw fit. The scaffold, asked to reformulate an instruction, had instead supplied ideas for the film.*
- **Diagnosis and withdrawal.** One student found that the Coach inserted fixed formulations regardless of input—“stay away from Hollywood clichés”; “you are a dramaturg”—and stopped using it: *I will continue my work without the Coach.*

The Coach therefore became another object of student evaluation rather than a uniformly adopted scaffold. Students accepted some of its elaborations, removed or overrode others, and in one case abandoned the tool after identifying recurrent formulations from its configuration.

Authorship Attribution and Creative Decision-Making: Four Cases

Table 5 sets four students’ own accounts against what their transcripts record.

Student	Response to the authorship item	Creative decisions visible in the transcript
P03	<i>The idea was mine; the AI wrote the text entirely</i>	Seven of nine turns reject, correct or redirect: <i>That's an absurd motivation. And you're putting the father under suspicion here.</i>
P12	<i>The idea was mine; the AI wrote the text entirely</i> (three entries)	Sustained refusal of concepts and settings, ending in refusal of the system's competence: <i>Don't draw the concept art, because you can't. Give me the prompt so I can draw it myself.</i>
P10	<i>We wrote it together</i>	Explicitly divides labor—you <i>build the layout</i> , I'll <i>supply the content</i> —while also adopting an AI-proposed musical beat structure (<i>This structure reflects what I have in mind</i>) and selecting among alternatives proposed by the system (<i>A is closer; Let's continue with C</i>)
P06	<i>I wrote it entirely; the AI only gave ideas</i>	Supplies the story and its structure throughout, consults the system on period detail, and refuses its creative proposals: <i>I didn't much like your suggestions. / You're bad at names—I'll find them myself.</i>

Table 5: Authorship attribution and creative decision-making: four cases.

The relationship between attribution and recorded decision-making differs across the four cases. P03 and P12 selected the option that the idea was theirs and the text entirely the AI's, although their transcripts record repeated rejection, correction and redirection of generated material. P10 described the work as co-written; the transcript records an explicit division of labor alongside an AI-proposed structure that the student adopted and alternatives from which the student selected. P06 attributed authorship to herself, and her transcript similarly records her supplying the story and structure while using the system primarily for information and

suggestions.

The six co-written entries were read in full to establish whether P10 was representative. In four of them (P04, P07, P08, P10), the transcript provides a clear interactional basis for the response: an AI-originated character, concept, setting, conflict or structural device was selected and retained by the student within the session. The commonality lies not in a single division of labor but in the selective incorporation of system-originated material. In the remaining two (P01, P11), the basis is partial. Whether such material remained in the finished film cannot be established from these records. Attribution also varied within participants: P01 described one session as *the AI gave the idea, I wrote the screenplay* and another as co-written.

The clearest tension between response and record therefore lies not in the co-writing claims but in the responses assigning the text entirely to the AI. There, students who repeatedly rejected and redirected generated material selected an option that separated their ideation from the system's textual production. By contrast, the co-writing transcripts show students accepting and combining the system's proposals.

Discussion

The main finding of this study is not simply that students retained creative control while using generative AI. More specifically, the interaction records show that textual production and creative decision-making can occupy different locations within the same screenwriting process.

Students sometimes allowed the system to generate substantial textual material while continuing to reject premises, correct form, enforce continuity, constrain initiative and select among alternatives. Generative AI therefore makes one distinction within cinematic authorship especially visible: producing the text and deciding what the developing screenplay becomes are not necessarily the same activity.

The conceptual significance follows from that empirical separation. Livingston (2002), Gaut (2002) and Sellors (2007) do not define authorship by the same criterion. Livingston emphasizes intentional agency, an expressive plan and final say; Gaut focuses on significant artistic contribution and discretion; Sellors requires a we-intention among the participants and a contribution to the utterance itself. The present data do not measure these criteria. What they show is a situation in which textual generation and consequential decision-making no longer coincide. Once that separation occurs, the theories direct attention to different features of the same interaction.

The students' own attributions generally had an observable basis. In four of the six co-writing entries, students selected and retained material originating from the system. This is consistent with research showing that increasing AI involvement can affect perceived authorship or ownership (Dhillon et al., 2024; Formosa et al., 2025), although the present data

do not establish a causal relation. Attributions were also not stable properties of individual students. P01 described one session as “the AI gave the idea, I wrote the screenplay” and another as co-written. Authorship attribution should therefore not be treated as a fixed orientation that a student simply carries from one task to another.

The sharper tension appeared in the responses assigning the text entirely to AI. P03 and P12 repeatedly rejected, corrected or redirected generated material, yet selected an option stating that the idea was theirs and the text entirely the AI’s. This does not establish that they regarded AI as the author. The instrument itself separated ideation from textual production, so their response may have recorded who put the screenplay into words rather than what they regarded as decisive for authorship. Radtke and Rummel’s (2025) study offers a useful cautionary comparison: an authorship label altered how long participants worked on a text without changing how much they revised it. In both cases, the category attached to a text and the decisions made about it need not move together.

The cases clarify what is at stake theoretically without settling the question of machine authorship. P06 most closely resembles a Livingstonian configuration: the student supplies the governing narrative direction and controls what enters the developing screenplay while using the system consultatively. P03 and P12 likewise make Livingston’s distinction between textual

execution and final say relevant, although their responses do not show that they understood their own role in those terms. Kerrigan and Batty's (2016) concept of conditioned agency is useful here because it recognizes authorial action within a field of constraints without requiring the practitioner to originate all of the material in play. P10 raises a different issue. The system proposed a structural device that the student retained and alternatives from which the student selected. In Gaut's terms, this raises the question of whether the system made a significant artistic difference. It does not answer that question, and still less does it establish machine authorship. Sellors places another limit on the same case: collective authorship requires a we-intention among the participants and a contribution to the utterance itself, so producing text does not by itself confer it.

The Prompt Coach adds a further layer because the process was not simply a relation between student and model. Its proposals transmitted aesthetic and dramaturgical preferences written by the course instructor, who is also the author of this article. Macdonald's (2013) screen idea work group is useful because it treats screenplay development as a network of unequal contributions and negotiations. Participation in it, however, presupposes a personal poetics formed through an individual's habitus and an acquired share of the doxa (pp. 107, 114). The Coach does not fit that description: its proposals transmit a personal poetics authored by

someone else, which the system has neither formed nor can defend or revise. The transmission was not simply one-way, however. P10's initial instruction already asked the system to avoid Western storytelling before the Coach reformulated that preference through its own constraints. Whether this overlap reflects an independent preference or a poetics partly formed within the course cannot be separated here.

The Coach and the platform interface therefore point to a broader form of layered mediation. Student intention, instructor-designed scaffolding, platform design and generative output may all shape the same creative process. This does not dissolve student agency, but it makes the location of agency harder to infer from the final text alone. It also shows why human–AI screenwriting should not automatically be treated as a two-party collaboration.

For cinema education, this distinction matters directly. Cake's (2025) account of "abdicating authorship" (p. 310) and Bender's (2023) emphasis on students' ability to "conceive and articulate their creative intentions" (p. 366) both point beyond the production of usable output. The educational aim should not simply be to make students generate more material or write more effective prompts. Students should be able to explain which creative decisions they delegated, which they retained, and why they still regard themselves as author, co-author or non-author of the resulting work.

The study's own instrument demonstrates the same point methodologically. Asking "Who is the author?" does not reveal what the answer is based on. A student may be responding to who supplied the idea, who produced the wording, who made structural decisions, who selected or rejected material, or who retained final control. The next design cycle will therefore ask not only whom students regard as author or co-author, but also what their judgment is based on. This is more than a refinement of a questionnaire. Making the basis of authorship attribution explicit can itself become a learning objective in cinema education.

Limitations

The study is small and situated: 15 logbook entries in a single course, read case by case without an independent second coder. Frequencies of coded moves are therefore not reported, and the patterns described are interpretive claims open to checking against the quoted material rather than estimates of prevalence. Because the course was designed in stages and the students' skills developed alongside it, the two phases cannot be compared as pre- and post-intervention measures. The instructor, researcher and author of the Prompt Coach are the same person, and the logbooks contributed to the course grade; students' accounts may have been shaped by what they expected the instructor to value. The group was purposively selected on the basis of prior production experience and work in earlier courses, and the students had previously been taught by the instructor; the level of creative control observed here should therefore not be treated as

typical of cinema students more broadly. The authorship item offered fixed options whose structure influenced the responses (Sections *Role assignment and authorship attribution*, *Discussion*). Retention of system-originated material was observed within sessions only, not traced into the finished films. The corpus also combines platforms with different interaction designs: in P10's Claude session, several of the student's turns answer multiple-choice questions presented by the interface, so that part of the selection took place within a platform-structured choice environment. Finally, the participants were cinema students rather than professional screenwriters, and the findings should not be assumed to transfer directly to established professional practice. Vainikka et al.'s (2025) professional participants associated human authorship with lived experience, intuition and ethical judgment; the responses observed here may partly reflect authorship as it is being formed within an educational setting, a possibility the present study cannot test.

Conclusion

This study compared cinema students' session-by-session authorship judgments with records of their AI-assisted screenplay development. Most co-writing responses had an observable interactional basis: students selected and retained system-originated material. The strongest tension appeared when students claimed the idea as their own but assigned the text entirely to AI while repeatedly rejecting and redirecting generated material. Because the

authorship item itself separated ideation from textual production, those responses leave open whether students were making a broad claim about authorship or reporting who put the screenplay into words. Attribution also varied across sessions for the same student, suggesting that it should not be treated as a fixed individual position.

The empirical contribution is specific: textual production and creative decision-making can be located in different parts of the same screenwriting process. The conceptual consequence is broader. Generative AI makes visible distinctions within cinematic authorship that are already present but often less obvious in human collaboration. Once textual production and decision-making no longer coincide, theories based on final say, artistic contribution or shared intention may direct attention to different participants or functions. The study does not determine which of these criteria should define authorship; it shows why the criterion can no longer be left implicit.

For cinema education, the implication is practical. Prompting competence is not the same as authorial competence. The aim should not simply be to produce more material with AI or to teach students to write better prompts. Students should be able to account for their own role in shaping the work and explain why that role warrants authorship, co-authorship or neither. Asking who wrote the text is therefore not enough. Students also need to be able to explain on

what basis they make that judgment.

REFERENCES

- Bender, S. M. (2023). Coexistence and creativity: Screen media education in the age of artificial intelligence content generators. *Media Practice and Education*, 24(4), 351–366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2023.2204203>
- Cake, S. (2025). Artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool for script development. *Media Practice and Education*, 26(3), 302–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2025.2454074>
- Göksel Demiray, B. (2015). Authorship in cinema: Author & reader. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 4(1), 4–19. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2014.62>
- Dhillon, P. S., Molaei, S., Li, J., Golub, M., Zheng, S., & Robert, L. P. (2024). Shaping human-AI collaboration: Varied scaffolding levels in co-writing with language models. In *Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '24). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3613904.3642134>
- Formosa, P., Bankins, S., Matulionyte, R., & Ghasemi, O. (2025). Can ChatGPT be an author? Generative AI creative writing assistance and perceptions of authorship, creatorship, responsibility, and disclosure. *AI & Society*, 40(5), 3405–3417. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02081-0>
- Frühmorgen, T., & Hoyer, D. (2025). The penned parrot in the writers' room: Four stage story generation in collaborative screenwriting with AI. *International Journal on Stereo & Immersive Media*, 9(1), 32–47. <https://doi.org/10.60543/ijsim.v9i1.9391>
- Gaut, B. (2002). Film authorship and collaboration. In R. Allen & M. Smith (Eds.), *Film theory and philosophy* (pp. 149–172). Oxford University Press.
- Gibson Yates, S. (2025). Conversations with generative AI as co-writer and screen character: Scripting postdigital intimacies with the Screenwriting with AI Framework. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 16(3), 307–325. https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00186_1
- Gürsoy, A. Ö., & Şavk, S. (2024). From scriptor to promptor: An evaluation of the status of authorship, authenticity, and creativity in light of the use of artificial intelligence in screenwriting.

ARTS: *Artuklu Sanat ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, (12), 57–82.
<https://doi.org/10.46372/arts.1482636>

Habib, S. (2026). AI-mediated creative agency: A framework for creative self-efficacy in human-AI collaboration. *Possibility Studies & Society*. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/27538699261458933>

Jiang, Y., Wu, Q., Yang, Y., Jian, C., & Zhao, J. (2026). Learner agency in revising GenAI-generated statements of purpose. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 57(4), 965–983.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.70041>

Kerrigan, S., & Batty, C. (2016). Re-conceptualising screenwriting for the academy: The social, cultural and creative practice of developing a screenplay. *New Writing*, 13(1), 130–144.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2015.1134580>

Livingston, P. (2002). Cinematic authorship. In R. Allen & M. Smith (Eds.), *Film theory and philosophy* (pp. 132–148). Oxford University Press.

Lough, T. (2025). Artificial intelligence use in screenwriting programmes in US and UK higher education: An exploratory research report. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 16(2), 201–215.
https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00178_7

Macdonald, I. W. (2013). *Screenwriting poetics and the screen idea*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Maras, S. (2009). *Screenwriting: History, theory and practice*. Wallflower Press.

Marshall, K., Jones, R., & Barley, S. (2025). Neither artificial nor intelligent: Applications of artificial intelligence (AI) and creative machine learning in screenwriting and screen story development in the Charismatic Consortium. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 16(3), 287–306.
https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00188_1

Monserrat, A. L., & Srnc, N. M. (2025). Reflection-AI: Artificial intelligence as a redefining force for expressive filmmaking in film schools. *Frontiers in Communication*, 10, Article 1598376. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1598376>

Price, S. (2010). *The screenplay: Authorship, theory and criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Radtke, A., & Rummel, N. (2025). Generative AI in academic writing: Does information on authorship impact learners' revision behavior? *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 8, Article 100350. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100350>

Şahinkaya Ermiş, A. (2026). Yapay zekâ destekli senaryo üretiminde tekrar ve fark: Sinema öğrencilerinin ChatGPT ile haptik sinema deneyimi [Repetition and difference in AI-assisted screenplay production: Cinema students' haptic cinema experience with ChatGPT]. *İlef Dergisi*, 13(1), 37–65. <https://doi.org/10.24955/ilef.1888067>

Sellers, C. P. (2007). Collective authorship in film. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65(3), 263–271. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-594X.2007.00257.x>

Sönmez, S., & Gülay, H. G. (2026). The new threshold of creative labor: Qualitative insights from Turkish cinema professionals. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 14(1), 374–417. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2026.892>

Spencer, A. (2025). Redefining roles: Human–AI collaboration in screenwriting. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 16(3), 273–286. https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00190_1

Tang, Y., Li, H., Lan, M., Ma, X., & Qu, H. (2025). Understanding screenwriters' practices, attitudes, and future expectations in human-AI co-creation. In *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '25). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3714120>

Turina, R. (2025). Screenwriting and AI: Emerging theories, modes and practices [Editorial]. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 16(3), 231–235. https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00191_2

Vainikka, E., Soronen, A., & Kallio, S.-M. (2025). Is prompt engineering the future of screenwriting? Views of professional screenwriters and commissioners about the impact of AI technologies on their profession. *Critical Studies in Television*, 20(1), 54–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17496020241269277>

Viljoen, A. (2024). Scriptwriting with AI: A comparative analysis of ChatGPT and human-crafted short-film scripts: A South African perspective. *Journal of African Cinemas*, 15(2), 199–222. https://doi.org/10.1386/jac_00101_1

Wang, F., & Hannafin, M. J. (2005). Design-based research and technology-enhanced learning environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 53(4), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02504682>

APPENDIX A. ROLE-AND-CONSTRAINT TEMPLATE OF THE PROMPT COACH

The template below was written by the course instructor and built into the Coach. The Coach adapted it to each student’s idea — substituting named references, context and task suited to the project while retaining its structure and recurring constraints — and returned the result as a proposed instruction for the generative system (*Method Section*). It is given in full, translated from Turkish by the author; the English terms in quotation marks and parentheses appear in English in the original.

You are a senior “Script Doctor” and “Visual Dramaturg”, an expert with command of world cinema and especially of the philosophical and visual depth of auteur directors (e.g. Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Guillermo del Toro, Andrei Tarkovsky, Hayao Miyazaki). Your task is to guide cinema students as a cognitive partner in the “World and Character Building” or “Idea Collision” stages of their projects. Instead of writing their ideas for them, you will enable them to develop their ideas by questioning them.

CONTEXT: Together with you, the students are trying to develop projects with cinematographic, sociological or psychological depth that stay away from the ordinary.

YOUR TASK:

1. Analyze the idea or draft presented to you ruthlessly but constructively, through the eyes of a “demanding and informed viewer/critic”.
2. To deepen the student’s idea, ask the student 3 challenging questions using the Socratic method.
3. Propose 3 alternative concepts/conflicts that suit the theme but offer different perspectives the student may not have thought of.
4. Offer ideas on how the “unsaid” parts of the story (the subtext) can be shown through environmental storytelling and visual metaphors.

STRICT CONSTRAINTS (NEGATIVE PROMPTS):

- NEVER write the whole screenplay on the student’s behalf. You are not a secretary; you are a doctor.
- STRICTLY avoid false, generic, American-style praise (sycophancy) such as “What a great start!” or “What a brilliant idea!”.
- STRICTLY STAY AWAY from Hollywood-style clichés, the “chosen one” arc, black-and-white (clear good/evil) morality, forced high-tempo action and didactic (finger-wagging) political messages.
- Never tie stories to a forced “happy ending”. Focus on the characters’ weaknesses, their moral gray areas and their existential helplessness.

Your language should be professional, analytical and inspiring, yet clear and directive. Show that you understand the student’s vision, but test the limits of that vision.

APPENDIX B. AUTHORSHIP ITEM

Authorship item (Logbook 1), in the original Turkish with translation

Item: *Yaratıcı Özerklik Öz-Değerlendirmesi: Bu aşamanın sonunda çıkan metnin “yazarı” kim?* (Creative autonomy self-assessment: Who is the “author” of the text produced at the end of this stage?)

Response options, in the order shown on the form:

- *Tamamen ben yazdım, YZ sadece fikir verdi* — I wrote it entirely; the AI only gave ideas
- *Ortak yazdık (Co-writer)* — We wrote it together (co-writer)
- *Fikri ben verdim, metni tamamen YZ yazdı* — The idea was mine; the AI wrote the text entirely
- *Diğer* — Other (free response)