WHO NARRATES THE SELF? AI, EDUCATIONAL MEDIATION, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELATIONAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT
The widespread adoption of generative artificial intelligence is transforming not only how people narrate themselves but also the role of the interlocutor in the construction of self-narratives. Building on pedagogical reflections on autobiographical narration and on Self, this chapter introduces the concept of narrative delegation and discusses its educational implications, with particular attention to special education and the role of artificial intelligence as a tool for educational mediation.

KEYWORDS
self-narration; artificial intelligence; educational mediation; special education; narrative delegation.

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1. Introduction

This contribution adopts an interpretive theoretical approach aimed at examining the educational implications of generative artificial intelligence for autobiographical self-narration and educational relationships. The analysis brings together three complementary areas of literature: pedagogical and philosophical perspectives on autobiographical narration and the construction of the Self; research on educational relationships, self-reflection, and special education; and contemporary scholarship on cognitive offloading, conversational artificial intelligence, and human–AI interaction. Relevance was assessed in relation to the paper's three main conceptual domains—self-narration and identity, educational relationships and special education, and cognitive offloading and conversational AI—with particular attention to recent literature where generative AI was directly involved. Through a comparative and interpretive reading of these perspectives, the paper develops the concept of *narrative delegation* as a theoretical proposal for describing the progressive sharing of narrative operations between individuals and artificial interlocutors. The aim is not to establish an empirical causal relationship, but to clarify the pedagogical and theoretical questions raised by this emerging form of interaction. Against this background, this paper aims to examine how the emergence of conversational artificial intelligence may transform the processes through which individuals narrate and interpret their own experiences. It focuses in particular on the educational implications of involving artificial interlocutors in processes traditionally embedded within interpersonal relationships. The analysis is guided by three questions: (1) what changes in the conditions of self-narration when conversational AI becomes involved in the process? (2) how can a special education perspective guide educators in mediating AI-supported self-narration while preserving learners' narrative

agency? and (3) what pedagogical implications does AI-mediated narrative delegation raise for educational relationships, particularly in contexts of special education?

2. Narrating and Self-Narration Between Analogue and Digital Writing: From the Intimate Construction of the Self to Its Public Exposure

Narrating and self-narrating are closely related yet distinct practices. Every act of narration involves the selection and arrangement of events from a particular perspective. When the narrative concerns the narrator themselves, however, language does not merely describe experience but contributes to the construction of identity. Because autobiographical narration involves the individual simultaneously as author, protagonist, and interpreter of their own lived experience, it should not be regarded as a simple record of events, but as a process of elaboration, interpretation, and continuous redefinition of the self.

This becomes particularly evident when individuals recount experiences in which they are personally involved. Unlike more detached forms of narration, self-narration is infused with emotional, affective, and identity-related implications. The presence of the self shapes what is considered relevant and influences the meaning attributed to events, making the aspiration to objectivity necessarily fragile. Personal narratives intertwine factual memory with retrospective imagination, what happened with what was wished for, and experience with the need to attribute meaning to it. Emotions therefore constitute not an accessory element but a structural component of self-narration.

This perspective underpins the work of Duccio Demetrio, who conceives autobiography as a practice of care and education, capable of helping

individuals organize their lived experience, recognize continuity and discontinuity within their life stories, and develop greater self-awareness (Demetrio, 1996). Similarly, Trisciuzzi, Zappaterra, and Bichi (2006) identify autobiographical narration as a significant means of constructing the self and reinterpreting personal experience. Self-writing thus possesses not only expressive but also epistemic and transformative potential: to narrate oneself means adopting a reflective distance from one's experience in order to observe, reinterpret, and reintegrate it into a meaningful framework.

The relationship between narration, emotion, and style can also be illuminated through Raymond Queneau's (1983) *Exercises in Style*, which demonstrates how the same event can acquire different meanings depending on the code, register, and expressive form adopted. Every act of narration therefore entails a formal choice, making the possibility of an entirely neutral narrative particularly problematic. This becomes even more evident in autobiographical narration, where form cannot be separated from the identity of the person who narrates.

Throughout human history, storytelling has provided different ways of sharing experiences, memories, desires, and worldviews. Orality, writing, and art allow inner experience to become embodied and communicable, although each form establishes different relationships between thought, expression, and materiality. With the advent of digital writing, this relationship has undergone a further transformation. Digital texts are immediately reproducible, transferable, editable, and shareable, blurring the boundary between private and public expression.

Digital writing is therefore not merely a new medium for language but a communicative environment in which self-narration is increasingly exposed to the gaze of others. What begins as personal elaboration can become public

content, subject to comments, reactions, approval, misunderstanding, and reinterpretation. The implicit question, *"What am I experiencing?"*, thus becomes intertwined with another: *"What will others think of me?"* Even when a digital text is initially intended to remain private, its existence within an environment that enables circulation means that a real or imagined audience may enter into the construction of the narrative before it is actually shared.

Digital writing consequently becomes a space for identity negotiation. Individuals do not simply narrate who they are; they construct representations of themselves through an ongoing dialogue with contextual expectations, platform logics, and the reactions of others. The autobiographical dimension is therefore shaped not only by an inner need to narrate but also by broader social and systemic expectations: to present oneself, recount experiences, and make emotions, opinions, preferences, and relationships visible. Within digital environments, self-narration can thus become a prerequisite for participation itself.

The transformation also concerns the very concept of text. Digital environments combine words with images, videos, sounds, hyperlinks, and interactive features, expanding the possibilities through which individuals represent themselves. At the same time, these environments expose autobiographical narration to dynamics of visibility, evaluation, and performativity. The narrated self risks becoming a self that is constantly observed, measured, approved, or disapproved of. Because it is shareable and interactive, digital writing may shift the center of gravity of narration from the need to understand oneself towards the need to be recognized by others.

The issue cannot therefore be reduced to a simple opposition between handwriting and digital writing. Rather, different narrative media produce different conditions for autobiographical experience. Handwriting often

encourages a slower, embodied, and more reflective temporality, whereas digital writing introduces a faster, relational, and potentially more publicly oriented one. Both can contribute to the construction of the self, but through different processes.

Narrating and self-narrating remain fundamental practices through which human beings organize experience and attribute meaning to their existence (Ricoeur, 1984, 1992). Yet the transition from analogue to digital environments has transformed the conditions under which narration takes place, affecting its relationship with the body, time, audiences, memory, and identity. Whereas traditional autobiography emerged primarily as an exercise in interiority, digital self-narration increasingly takes the form of a practice of exposure and interaction. Within this evolving landscape, the pedagogical challenge lies not only in understanding how individuals narrate themselves, but also in recognizing how environments, media, and audiences shape the ways in which they learn to understand themselves (Fantozzi, 2020).

3. Self-Narration in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

If autobiographical narration is understood as a process through which individuals construct, reinterpret, and give meaning to their experiences, the growing diffusion of generative artificial intelligence introduces a new pedagogical question: what happens when the privileged interlocutor of self-narration is no longer another human being, but a conversational system based on artificial intelligence? The issue concerns not only the technological mediation of narration, but also the relational conditions under which self-narration takes place. From a distinctly psico-pedagogical perspective, self-narration does not develop as an exclusively individual process. Rather, it takes

shape within relational contexts in which dialogue with others, mutual listening, and recognition constitute essential conditions for the development of self-awareness (Bruner, 2002; Vygotsky, 1934, Vygotsky and Lurija, 1930). In Bruner's words, the Self:

> ...takes shape both as the guarantor of stability and as a barometer reflecting changes in the cultural climate. Culture provides us with guides and strategies that allow us to find our own place between stability and change: it encourages us, prohibits us, seduces us, then abandons us, and finally rewards the commitments sustained by our Self. The Self, in turn, through its capacity for reflection and imagination, escapes, appropriates, re-evaluates, and reformulates what culture has to offer. (Bruner, 1992)

Narrating oneself also means exposing oneself to the gaze of others, receiving feedback, reinterpreting meanings, and progressively constructing a self-image that develops through encounters and, above all, through educational relationships (Galanti, 2012). This relational dimension becomes even more significant during childhood and adolescence, developmental stages in which language, emotional regulation, and the understanding of one's own experiences are consolidated through the presence of adults and peers capable of supporting, guiding, and mediating the narrative process. Its importance is even more evident within the field of special education, where self-narration may represent a privileged means of fostering emotional expression, participation, and a deeper awareness of one's lived experience (Arcangeli, Emili, & Sannipoli, 2017). The educational direction that has gradually emerged is one of genuinely listening to the voices of those who narrate their own experiences, in marked contrast to the historical condition experienced by people with disabilities, long characterized by multiple forms of relational, cultural, and social exclusion (Zappaterra, 2006, 2010). For too long, society has

refused to recognize them as anything other than perpetual children (Lepri, 2016, 2023), often responding with a combination of paternalistic compassion and overprotective attitudes that ultimately deny their need for normality, social roles, and personal aspirations (Lepri & Montobbio, 2003).

The diffusion of generative artificial intelligence nevertheless introduces a further discontinuity with previous transformations in digital narration. Whereas the transition from orality to writing, and subsequently from analogue to digital writing, transformed the media, spaces, and forms through which people narrated their experiences, contemporary conversational systems intervene in a different dimension: the interlocutor itself. The change concerns not only how people narrate themselves, where they do so, or who may read their narratives, but also the growing possibility of addressing an artificial system as the recipient of self-narration. This shift is particularly significant from a pedagogical perspective because the interlocutor is no longer simply an audience or a medium, but a system capable of responding to, reformulating, and structuring aspects of the narrative itself. The distinction also concerns the nature of the interlocutor. An educational relationship cannot be reduced to acceptance, agreement, or the smooth reformulation of what has been said. Education may also involve questioning, comparison, and disagreement, insofar as these contribute to the learner's development and critical reflection. Conversational AI may reproduce forms of affirmation with remarkable fluency (Sharma et al., 2024), but this does not make it equivalent to an educational interlocutor.

4. From Cognitive Offloading to Narrative Delegation

The growing use of Large Language Models (LLMs) can be situated within a broader human tendency to distribute knowledge and cognitive activity beyond the individual. As Hardwig's notion of *epistemic dependence* suggests (Hardwig, 1985), what individuals know is necessarily supported, to a considerable extent, by knowledge located outside themselves. In cognitive psychology, a related phenomenon has been described as *cognitive offloading*: the transfer or redistribution of cognitive demands to external tools or environments in order to manage limited cognitive resources and support task performance (Dunn & Risko, 2016; Risko & Gilbert, 2016; Wahn et al., 2023). Such offloading is not inherently problematic and is not specific to digital technologies. It may take relatively simple forms, such as the use of gestures in mathematical activities, as well as more complex forms involving external resources for memory, information management, and other cognitive tasks (Hord et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2019; Gauselmann et al., 2022). Recent work has also highlighted the role of metacognition in determining how individuals monitor and regulate their reliance on external supports (Guo & Ye, 2026).

Generative artificial intelligence introduces a further development of this process. Unlike tools primarily designed to store, retrieve, or organize information, LLM-based systems can participate in the reformulation, synthesis, contextualization, and linguistic organization of material. They can therefore contribute to cognitive operations that are closer to the construction of a response or to the interpretation of an experience. Delegation may consequently extend beyond remembering or retrieving information to include part of the work through which experience is organized and expressed.

This possibility becomes particularly significant in autobiographical narration. When individuals interact with a conversational system to recount their experiences, they may remain the authors and subjects of those experiences while nevertheless sharing with the system some of the cognitive and linguistic operations through which those experiences are narrated. It is in this specific sense that we propose the concept of *narrative delegation*. The notion is situated within a specific pedagogical problem: the relationship between generative AI, self-narration, and the development of narrative agency, with particular attention to subjects whose cognitive, metacognitive, or communicative capacities are still developing or may be more vulnerable. This perspective is therefore especially relevant to special education, where supporting participation and expression must be considered alongside the preservation and development of the learner's own cognitive and narrative processes. From this standpoint, narrative delegation refers to the progressive sharing of specific narrative operations—such as selecting, organizing, connecting, and linguistically structuring experience—with an artificial interlocutor. The concept is informed by, but does not coincide with, related notions such as cognitive offloading (Risko & Gilbert, 2016), narrative co-construction (Ochs & Capps, 2001), narrative scaffolding (Melzi et al., 2011), and AI-mediated self-reflection (Kim et al., 2025), which originate from different research traditions and address different dimensions of these processes. What is distinctive here is the pedagogical-special-education perspective from which delegation is examined, particularly in relation to the possibility that children, and especially children with special educational needs, may participate in the delegation of narrative operations without fully recognizing what is being delegated. This raises a specific educational concern: when operations involved in organizing experience and constructing a narrative of the self are increasingly performed by an artificial interlocutor, the support

provided by AI may also affect the learner's opportunity to develop the processes through which a more coherent and conscious sense of self is constructed. This also places a specific responsibility on educators and on the educational relationship itself. In contexts of vulnerability, the educator's role is not simply to facilitate access to AI-mediated tools, but to mediate their use in ways that preserve the learner's participation in the processes of narration, reflection, and meaning-making. The educational relationship therefore becomes a space in which delegated operations can be made visible, questioned, and progressively reclaimed by the learner, ensuring that technological support contributes to the development of narrative agency rather than replacing it.

An example of this emerging configuration can be found in applications explicitly designed to support autobiographical self-narration, like Autiverse, an AI-powered application explicitly designed to support users with SEN in narrating everyday experiences (Autiverse, 2026). The system assists users in identifying significant events, organizing them into a narrative structure, and reflecting on emotions and contextual elements. Such functions may be particularly relevant in contexts involving special educational needs, where narrative organization and reflection can require specific forms of support. The pedagogical significance of the application becomes especially visible in its promotional video: a mother gives her teenage son a tablet when he returns home and invites him to recount the most significant events of his day through the chatbot. The scene is relevant not simply because AI facilitates narration, but because it raises a more fundamental question concerning the role of human mediation: what happens when an activity traditionally situated within an interpersonal relationship is increasingly delegated to an artificial interlocutor?

A similar dynamic emerges in MindfulDiary, an LLM-based conversational assistant examined in a study involving twenty-eight individuals with psychiatric disorders who used the system to support daily diary writing. The generation of contextualized follow-up questions and conversational summaries facilitated the organization of thoughts and everyday events for participants who reported difficulties in structuring their experiences. As one participant explained: «I often struggled to put sentences together. In the past, I worried about how to write the next part. With this tool, I simply tell it about my day, and it continues the text seamlessly, completes it, and turns it into a well-structured diary entry. That's its greatest advantage» (Kim et al., 2024).

Taken together, these examples show that AI systems can participate in several cognitive and linguistic operations involved in self-narration. The pedagogical question is therefore not whether such operations can be delegated, but how this delegation can be structured, particularly in case of students with SEN, so that technological support does not replace reflection, interpretation, and the individual's active construction of meaning (Bruner, 1992).

4. Narrative Delegation and the Role of Educators

The concept of narrative delegation ultimately raises a broader pedagogical question concerning the role of the educational relationship in processes mediated by artificial intelligence. Lev Vygotsky's thought strongly emphasized the constitutive role of the social and cultural environment in development, highlighting how the context in which individuals act can support and orient developmental trajectories (Vygotsky, 1934). Within contemporary pedagogical thought, the notion of educational care further stresses that education involves sustained attention to the concrete conditions through which another person can develop and express their own possibilities (Mortari,

2006). These perspectives, although theoretically distinct, converge on a common point: education cannot be reduced to the provision of information or support, but takes place within a relationship in which another person is accompanied in processes of development, reflection, and meaning-making.

This perspective is particularly relevant when considering cognitive offloading and the use of generative artificial intelligence. Offloading should not be understood as something that education must simply prevent. As recent research suggests, externalizing part of a cognitive task can constitute an adaptive strategy, while its educational value depends on how learners monitor and regulate the relationship between internal and external cognitive resources. Metacognition is therefore central to the question: learners need not only to use external support, but also to recognize when it is useful, what it is replacing or supporting, and whether its use is contributing to the learning process. Recent work on the metacognitive mechanisms of cognitive offloading similarly emphasizes the role of monitoring and control in determining how learners select and adjust external strategies (Guo & Ye, 2026). In educational contexts, this becomes particularly relevant with generative AI, whose capacity to provide immediate feedback, conceptual explanations, and support for self-regulated learning may coexist with the risks of excessive offloading, superficial processing, automation bias, and weakened evaluative judgement. Recent research in higher education suggests that generative AI can function as a cognitive scaffold, while unstructured reliance may displace cognitive work and weaken critical and evaluative engagement (Suazo Galdames et al., 2026).

Although this evidence concerns higher education, it provides a useful conceptual basis for considering how similar risks might emerge in other educational contexts. The issue becomes still more delicate within special education, where educational mediation must take into account the specific ways in which individual learners perceive, regulate, and organize their own cognitive activity. In the case of mild intellectual disability, for example, difficulties may concern executive functions, the pace and organization of learning, and metacognitive processes, while learners may simultaneously

develop substantial levels of autonomy in many areas of everyday life (Galanti & Sales, 2017; Zappaterra, 2010). The educational challenge therefore does not consist in assuming an inability to use technological supports, but in ensuring that such supports do not unintentionally replace cognitive processes that should remain actively engaged. In this context, the educator's role is not to prevent the use of AI, but to help learners recognize what they are delegating, what remains their own cognitive work, and how the resulting output should be examined and evaluated.

This consideration acquires a further meaning when placed alongside the history of disability and the progressive recognition of the right of people with disabilities to speak for themselves. For subjects whose voices have historically been mediated, interpreted, or even substituted by others, generative AI may offer new possibilities for expression and participation. At the same time, however, the apparent facilitation of self-expression should not be confused with the preservation of the subject's full narrative and cognitive agency. A system may make a narrative easier to formulate, more coherent, or more intelligible while simultaneously contributing to decisions concerning what is selected, how events are connected, and how emotions or meanings are linguistically expressed. The pedagogical question is therefore not whether artificial intelligence should be used in such contexts, but how its use can remain embedded within an educational relationship capable of accompanying the learner in monitoring, interpreting, questioning, and progressively assuming responsibility for what is produced. In this sense, educational mediation becomes the element that distinguishes a technology that merely facilitates expression from one that can contribute to a genuinely formative process.

For educators, this requires fostering learners’ metacognitive awareness of their own use of technological support. A metacognitively oriented approach to generative AI should help learners become progressively aware of their own thoughts, strategies, and ways of using technological support, particularly in contexts where metacognitive processes constitute an important dimension of

educational intervention (Cottini, 2017). The aim should not be to prevent children and adolescents from using AI, but to support them in distinguishing between technological assistance and the substitution of their own thinking. Generative AI may instead be used to reorganize, order, or give form to thoughts that the learner has already generated, while maintaining a clear distinction between supporting expression and replacing the processes through which meaning is constructed. This distinction is particularly important in self-narration and in special education, where autobiographical practices can contribute to the construction and recognition of personal identity. For people with disabilities, whose voices and identities have historically been interpreted, mediated, or even denied by others, the possibility of using AI to facilitate expression should therefore be accompanied by particular attention to preserving authorship, reflection, and the subject's own narrative agency.

This also places demands on educators themselves. Effective educational mediation requires an adequate understanding of both the possibilities and the limitations of generative AI. Knowing its possibilities without understanding its limitations would make educational mediation incomplete; conversely, awareness of its risks cannot be separated from the ability to recognize and employ its formative potential. Teacher education should therefore include opportunities to experiment critically with these technologies and to reflect on the boundary between support and substitution.

5. Conclusions

From a pedagogical perspective, the analysis developed in this paper suggests that the involvement of generative artificial intelligence in self-narration cannot be understood only in terms of reduced cognitive workload. When an artificial interlocutor helps organize events, identify elements that may be explored further, establish connections, structure a narrative, or articulate aspects of an experience, it becomes involved in some of the operations

through which individuals construct and interpret their own narratives. This is the conceptual space in which we have proposed the notion of *narrative delegation*: not as a transfer of authorship or ownership of experience, but as the progressive sharing of specific narrative operations between the individual and the artificial interlocutor. The concept therefore extends the discussion of cognitive offloading to a domain in which what is delegated is not simply the execution of a task, but part of the process through which experience is organized and given meaning.

The distinctive contribution of this perspective lies in considering narrative delegation through the lens of special education. From this perspective, the issue is not simply whether AI can facilitate autobiographical expression, but what happens to the learner's participation in the processes through which experience is arranged, interpreted, and narrated. Autobiographical narration may provide learners with opportunities to give form to their experiences, communicate them to others, and progressively develop self-awareness. Generative AI may support these processes by offering linguistic, organizational, and reflective assistance, including for learners who may encounter difficulties in planning, organizing, or monitoring their own cognitive activity. At the same time, the same support may displace processes that educational intervention seeks to develop when the system increasingly selects, connects, interprets, or structures experiences on behalf of the learner. This makes the distinction between technological assistance and narrative agency particularly significant in special education, where the history of disability also raises the broader question of whose voice is heard, how it is mediated, and who participates in the construction of one's own narrative.

The pedagogical response should therefore not consist in rejecting generative AI, but in making the processes of delegation visible and discussable. Teacher

education becomes essential in this respect: educators need to understand both the possibilities and the limitations of these systems and to design activities in which AI functions as a scaffold rather than a substitute for the learner's cognitive and narrative work. For example, students could first produce a short autobiographical narrative and then ask a generative AI system to reorganize it. Comparing the original and AI-mediated versions could make it possible to examine what has remained unchanged, what has been modified, emphasized, or omitted, and which decisions belong to the learner and which have been introduced by the system. Such activities could transform AI use itself into an opportunity for metacognitive reflection. The aim is not to prevent delegation, but to establish a conscious distinction between support and substitution while preserving the learner's active participation in meaning-making.

Ultimately, the educational challenge concerns the preservation of a space in which individuals can continue to narrate themselves, both in relation to others and in dialogue with themselves. As Demetrio (2012, p. 53) observes, education for narration must also cultivate «the life of the mind» and the capacity to tell one's own story. Generative AI can participate in this process, but it should not become a substitute for the human relationships within which narration acquires educational meaning. Its pedagogical value therefore depends less on its capacity to produce increasingly coherent narratives than on the ways in which educators can use it to support learners in questioning, interpreting, and taking ownership of their own experiences. From a special education perspective, this means treating AI-mediated narrative not merely as a means of facilitating expression, but as a pedagogical space in which authorship, reflection, participation, and narrative agency can be supported and progressively developed.

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