

How we talk (to students) when we talk about AI

Deree-The American
College of Greece

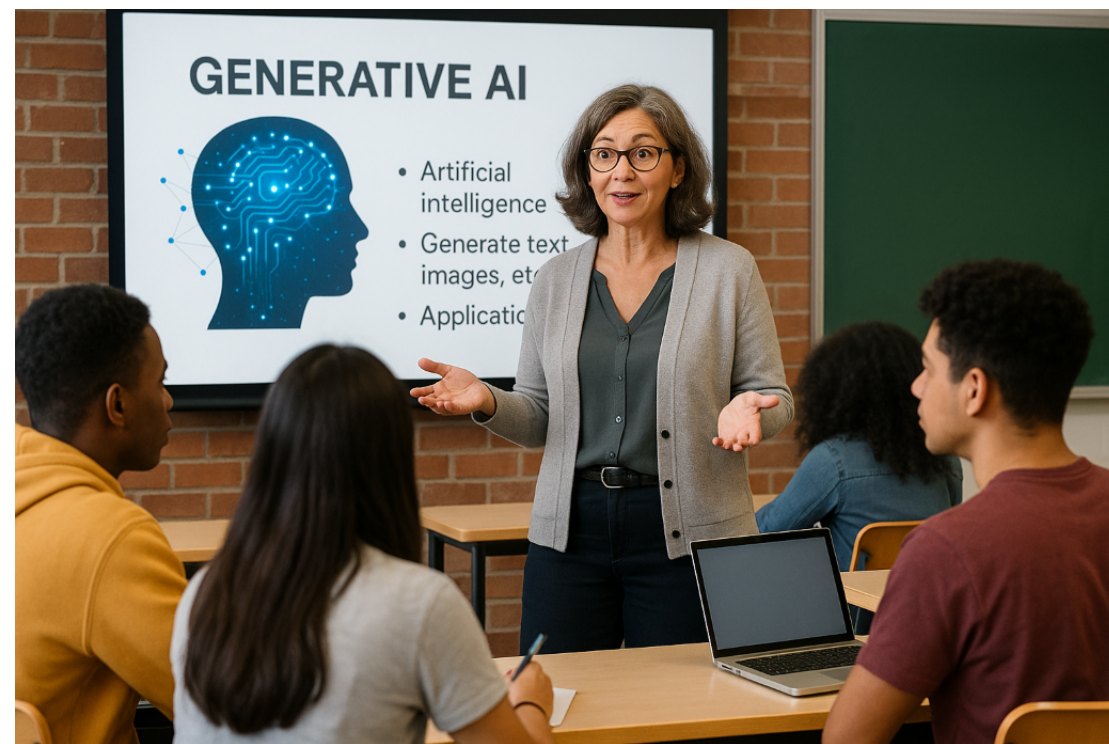


AMICAL 2025

Anastasia Logotheti, Ph.D.

Professor

Director, Teaching & Learning Center



ChatGPT generated image



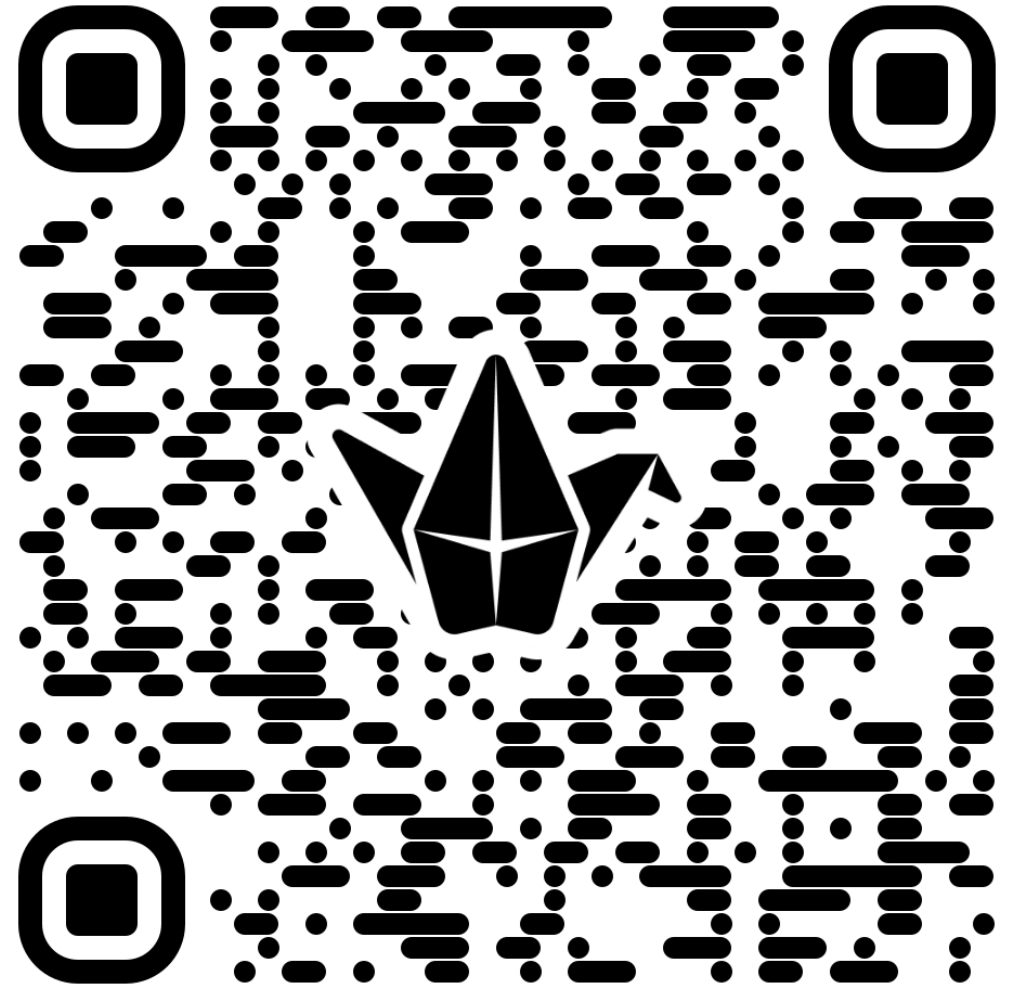
Presentation outline

- How do we conceptualize GenAI?
- Impact of the use of metaphoric language
- Selective literature review of recent research on AI metaphors (2023-25)

Padlet participation: please contribute!

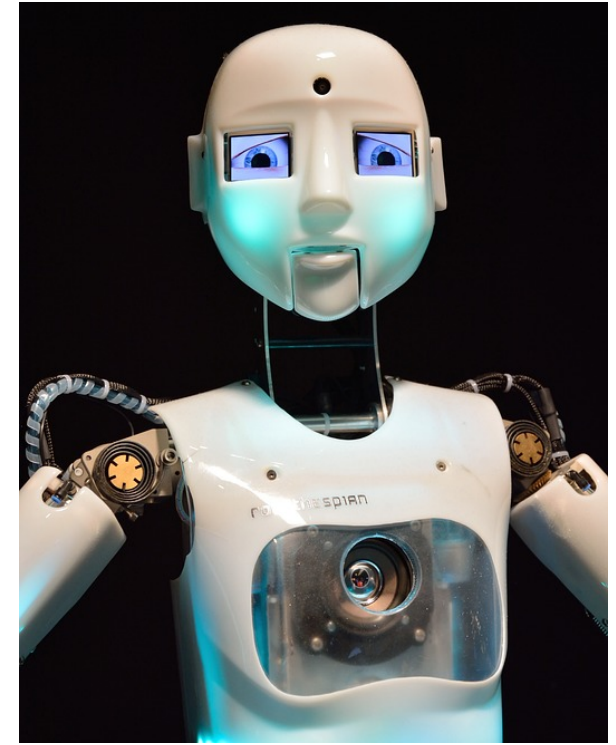
What metaphors or analogies do you use when you talk to students abt AI?

Share your thoughts through the Padlet and access poll and resources!



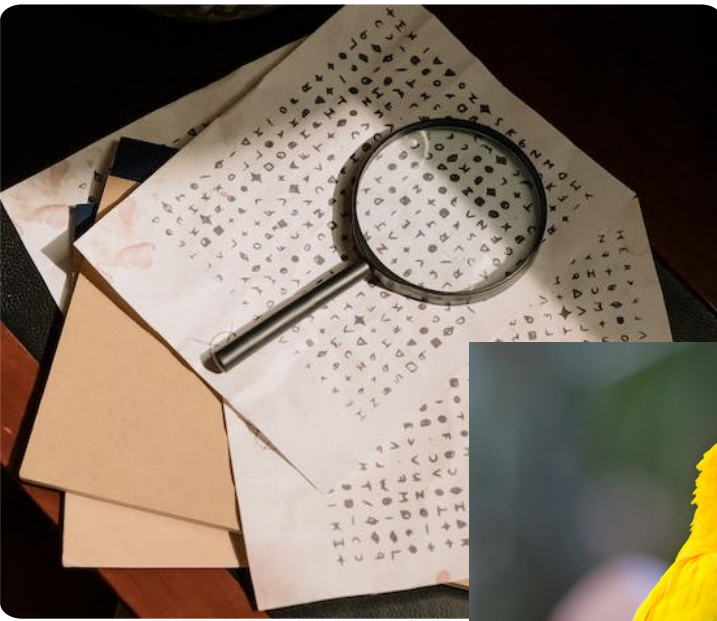
<https://aug.padlet.org/logotheti2/how-we-talk-to-students-when-we-talk-about-ai-amical-2025->

Do you conceptualize AI



as a tool?
as a living being?
with or without anthropomorphic traits?

the language we use in class may
(un)knowingly reproduce the pre- or mis-
conceptions we each carry when we
discuss new technologies (esp GenAI)



**To
anthropomorphize?**

**Or Not To
anthropomorphize?**

What's at stake?

A more conscious use of
metaphoric language when
discussing AI in class

Affects student
understanding

Develops learners' critical
AI literacy



Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“stochastic parrot”

Bender, E. M., Gebru, T., McMillan-Major, A., & Shmitchell, S. (2021). On the dangers of **stochastic parrots**: Can language models be too big? *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM conference on fairness, accountability, and transparency* (pp. 610–623).

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922>

On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 🦜

Authors:  [Emily M. Bender](#),  [Timnit Gebru](#),  [Angelina McMillan-Major](#),  [Shmargaret Shmitchell](#) [Authors Info & Claims](#)

FAccT '21: Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency • March 2021 •

Pages 610–623 • <https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922>

Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“collaborator” (Anderson, 2023)

Anderson, S. S. (2023). “Places to stand”: Multiple metaphors for framing ChatGPT's corpus. *Computers and Composition*, 68.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2023.102778>





Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“intern”

Mishra, P. (2023, July 26). ChatGPT is a **smart, drunk intern**: 3 examples.

<https://punyamishra.com/2023/07/26/chatgpt-is-a-smart-drunk-intern-3-examples/>

Mollick, E. (2023, May 20). On-boarding your **AI Intern**. *One Useful Thing*.

<https://www.oneusefulthing.org/p/on-boarding-your-ai-intern>

Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“calculator for words”

Simon, C. (2024, May 2). Did student or ChatGPT write that paper? Does it matter? *The Harvard Gazette*.

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2024/05/did-student-or-chatgpt-write-that-paper-does-it-matter/>



“Telling people not to use ChatGPT is not preparing people for the world of the future,” said Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI.

Niles Singer/Harvard Staff Photographer

ChatGPT 4o claims Bender et al use the calculator metaphor [it's a hallucination]

<https://chatgpt.com/share/7e787256-d3ba-4285-b147-0f982c3d5eb3>

Emily Bender

- **Source:** Bender, Emily M., et al. "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?" *FACCT '21: Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*, 2021.
- **Opinion:** Bender critiques large language models for their lack of genuine understanding and ethical implications. She compares their language generation to mechanical processes, similar to how calculators perform arithmetic operations.
- **Quote:** "Language models like ChatGPT operate by calculating the most statistically probable word sequences, much like a calculator performs operations on numbers."

Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“assistant”



Gupta, A., Atef, Y., Mills, A., & Bali, M. (2024). **Assistant, parrot, or colonizing loudspeaker?** ChatGPT metaphors for developing critical AI literacies. *Open Praxis*, 16(1), 37–53.

<https://openpraxis.org/articles/10.55982/openpraxis.16.1.631>

van Es, K., & Nguyen, D. (2024). “Your **friendly AI assistant**”: The anthropomorphic self-representations of ChatGPT and its implications for imagining AI. *AI & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02108-6>

Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“Funhouse mirror”

“echo chamber”

“digital plastic”

Roe, J., Furze, L., & Perkins, M. (2024). **Funhouse mirror or echo chamber?** A methodological approach to teaching critical AI literacy through metaphors.

<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2411.14730>

Roe, J., Furze, L., & Perkins, M. (2025). GenAI as **digital plastic**: Understanding synthetic media through critical AI literacy.

<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2502.08249>



Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

“cybernetic teammate”



Dell'Acqua, F., Ayoubi, C., Lifshitz-Assaf, H., Sadun, R., Mollick, E. R., Mollick, L., Han, Y., Goldman, J., Nair, H., Taub, S., and Lakhani, K. R. The **Cybernetic Teammate**: A Field Experiment on Generative AI Reshaping Teamwork and Expertise (March 25, 2025). Harvard Business School Technology & Operations Mgt. Unit Working Paper No. 25-043, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5188231>

Do you have a metaphor for AI?

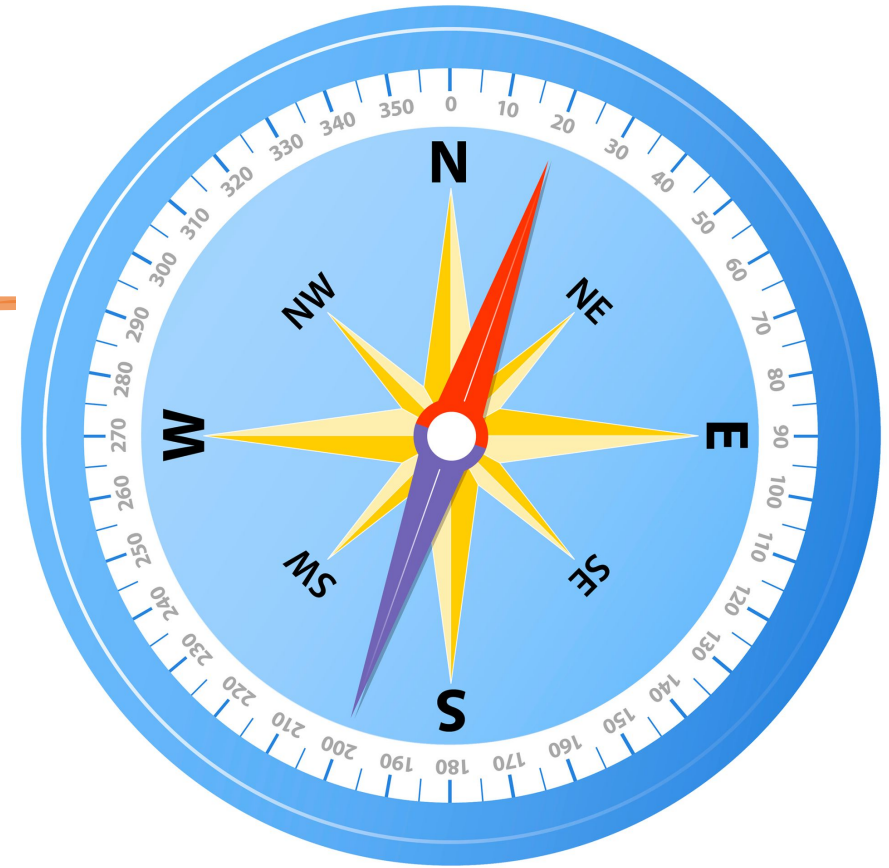
(un)common analogies:

High heels (technical support)

Compass (text development)

Spider-man (transformative potential)

Drug (threat)



Jin, F., Sun, L., Pan, Y., & Lin, C. H. (2025). **High heels, compass, spider-man, or drug?** Metaphor analysis of generative artificial intelligence in academic writing. *Computers & Education*, 105248.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2025.105248>

Do you have a metaphor for AI?

(un)common analogies:

Swiss army knives

stochastic parrots

drunk interns

overlords

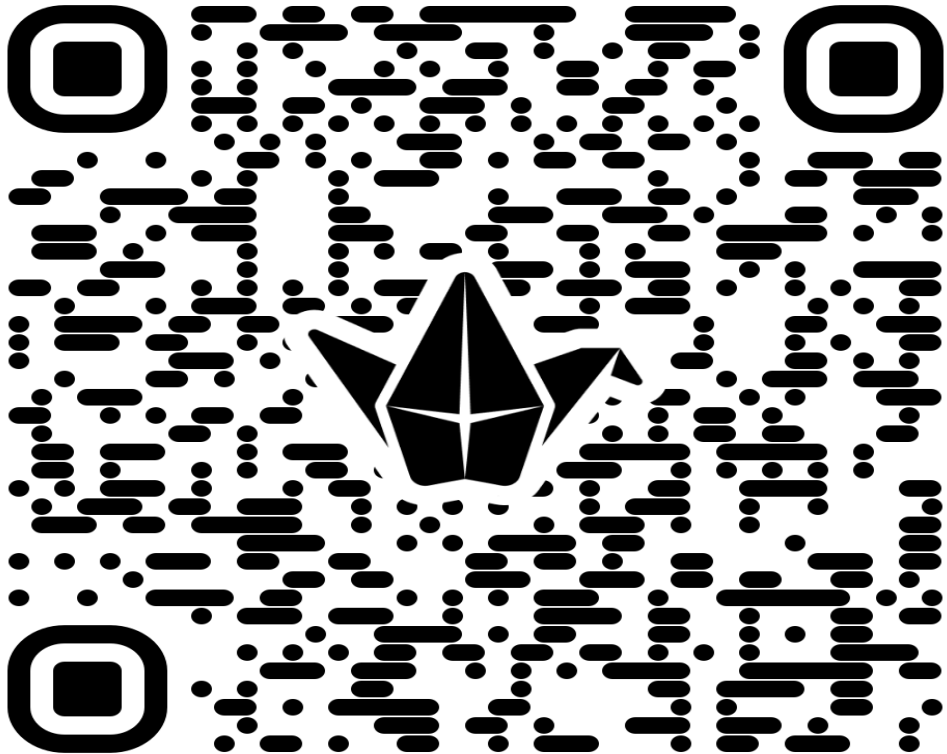
Oster, N., McCaleb, L. & Mishra, P. (2025). **Swiss army knives, stochastic parrots, drunk interns, and overlords**: Understanding AI through metaphors. In R. Jake Cohen (Ed.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 842-845). Orlando, FL, USA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

<https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/225606/>



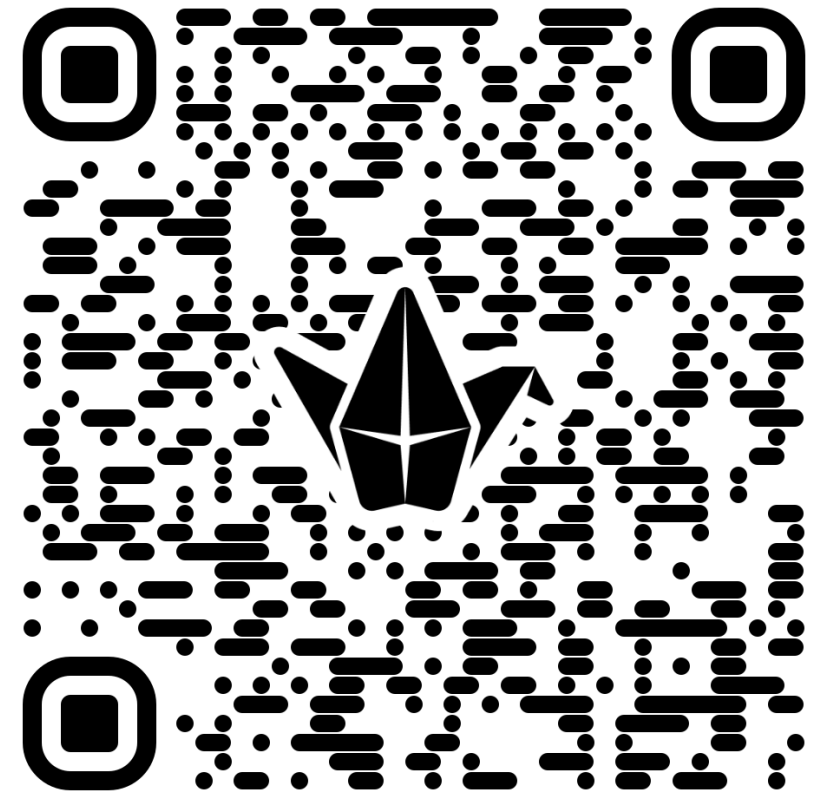
Have you contributed to [Padlet](#)?

- What are your thoughts on AI metaphors?
- Poll participation





Please continue to contribute to Padlet:



Get in touch any time:
logotheti@acg.edu