

## **A Necessary Conversation about Artificial Intelligence**

### **Transcript of Episode 376**

**Julie Walker:** Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, “IEW.” My name is Julie Walker, and I’m honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

**Julie Walker:** Things are changing so fast around here, Andrew. It's hard to keep up well

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well around here and around everywhere, I think. Right?

**Julie Walker:** Yes, So much new technology. And today we're going to introduce a subject that we've never talked about before because it's so relatively new

**Andrew Pudewa:** we've been trying to avoid talking about it till we have something that we can actually know.

**Julie Walker:** Something meaningful to say. Right. That's that's good advice. Don't say anything unless you actually have something meaningful to say, wow, I'm going to, I'm gonna practice that more often.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Try to follow that,

**Julie Walker:** Yeah.

**Andrew Pudewa:** But now we might be able to,

**Julie Walker:** We are, and let me just let you know that next month we're going to release an ask Andrew anything.

And the very first question, Actually leads beautifully into this subject, and this is from Donna. Donna asks, what are your thoughts, comments, concerns with the emerging AI chat technology as we use it for writing almost anything?

**Andrew Pudewa:** You know, and this very morning, Like, 30 minutes before I walked in here, I got an email and the heading was AI writes better than you do.

**Julie Walker:** oh my,

**Andrew Pudewa:** And it was selling me, you know, some kind of lifetime subscription to an AI-based software that obviously is gonna write better than I do. That's not hard, but yeah, I mean, everybody, everywhere I go, everybody is asking about this,

**Julie Walker:** Right, right. Well, we have maybe not an expert on the subject, but someone who knows a bit about this from a unique perspective as a guest on our podcast today, and our guest is, Drew Formsma and he's actually a college student.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah.

**Julie Walker:** My goodness. This young man has so many notches on his belt of things that he's done, and he's only 21 years old. He's written a book, he's given talk. He's given Ted Talks. Andrew,

**Andrew Pudewa:** I haven't even given a Ted Talk.

**Julie Walker:** I know age 21. What was I doing? Not that,

**Andrew Pudewa:** Okay, not even, we're not going there but his family ministry is really quite remarkable.

**Julie Walker:** So Drew, welcome to our podcast. Thanks for joining us today.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, welcome. I met you first, uh, at a great homeschool convention, and I think it was Greenville or Cincinnati. Do you remember?

**Drew Formsma:** Yeah, it was. Well, it's great to be on here today. I'm so excited to be able to talk with your audience and just share with you Andrew, and what's happening in the AI world. But we met each other at the Great Homeschool Convention, South Carolina. That's where it all began.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Okay, and I was just walking by, you apprehended me and you asked me a really odd question, which I don't remember exactly. Do you?

**Drew Formsma:** I do, I said, are you worried about the next generation and the integration with ai?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, which is awfully random because we didn't know each other and it really attracted me. You know, I, I don't like small talk, but I do like it when people start a conversation kind of with a, a punch or a bang or a snap or a zip, and that did it. And then I'm kinda like, well, who are you anyway?

**Julie Walker:** Well, and I'm kind of curious, Drew, did you know who you were talking to?

**Drew Formsma:** Well, you walk around these massive conferences and. Mr. Andrew's face is plastered all over the books people are holding. So I only, I mean, I, I started to realize that I'm talking to the grammar guy and I just had to, I had to know.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So we had what I would consider a short but very interesting, focused conversation. Uh, and when I found out that you are a college student and you have firsthand

knowledge of how the ChatGPT and the AI are now affecting creating opportunities, handicapping, changing the world of college students. I want to know more. So thank you for coming on to talk about that.

**Drew Formsma:** Well, it's an honor.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Now, um, most of the people that I have interacted with, the big question is, well, what are, what are teachers gonna do when kids just ask AI, write the paper for me? And then the teacher reads it and goes, wow, that's pretty good. And so it's disconnecting, of course, effort from product.

Uh, but. You pointed me in a slightly different direction. So first of all, how would you respond to people who are worried that teachers won't be able to know if students actually wrote papers they're turning in? Uh, what, if anything, are teachers doing about that, at least in, in your sphere of awareness? And then what are some of the other subtler problems you see?

**Drew Formsma:** Sure. So for the listeners that may have no idea what we're talking about, ChatGPT, AI, they have no idea some of this foreign language ChatGPT is a natural language processing tool that is driven by AI technology that allows you to have human-like conversations and it produces responses that are very unique.

They're not copy and pasted. They are uniquely made for your response. So that way you can't track this as plagiarism, specifically copying or copyright, because it's always made unique based on your response. Nobody has the same response, even if you put in the same question multiple times. That is the beauty of it.

Now, schools really have had some troubles over the last year. They didn't have any rules around it. This new technology, they weren't really sure what to do or how to deal with it. But many schools started to realize and take a different approach. I thought they would've cracked down on it and said, we can't do this. We're not doing it. But they actually took a different approach and I think it's something that, uh, made me realize. Jordan Peterson said, if you can't think, you can't write. And if you can't write, you can't speak. What's happening in our world today is this push of many kids are not even having to think anymore.

Now we can't. Now we have technology like this, now we can't even write by ourselves. And now we're getting to a point that it all comes down to speaking. Now, this is what schools are doing. They're realizing that you can type in three words such as write me an essay on George Washington, and it will produce a whole essay on George Washington in the matter of four or five seconds.

Now, what schools are doing about this is if I submitted that paper, my teacher has the authority to then schedule a Zoom call with me or meet with me in person, and if I don't properly match up to the writing that I wrote or that I said I wrote. If I don't align or understand the concepts that I wrote about, or even word that I used, then they can fail me.

So now it's become this interesting little dynamic where students now have to explain their writing. See, it's less about the work now. It's more about, can you actually explain what that word was that you used? Can you explain the concepts? Which means it's all come down to communication now, which is really fascinating.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah. It also sounds a little bit like a cat and mouse game. Like, you know, a student tries to pull one off. A professor then has to put in like extra energy to investigate, which most Professors probably don't really want to have to do, but they do if they're good. And then so the student has to figure out, okay, what level of preparedness do I need to defend this thing?

Is it kinda like that? Like now there's a new game that students and professors are playing?

**Drew Formsma:** It is a new game. It's a amazing thing to watch because what's changed is you used to have this cycle where you would just write papers and do assignments and such, and this, this machine, this AI machine does way more than that. It can make pictures, it can make long essays. It can make a new ad campaign, it can do a, a marketing strategy for your company, IEW.

It could write your whole social media structure for the next month. So it has some amazing capabilities, but where the future lands is how you ask and prompt the AI. So what they're, I, I have many different people I talk to in this area and they tell me, well, Drew, what's gonna happen is we're gonna start teaching students on how to properly feed an AI because it takes quite a bit of strategy to be able to interact with an AI, to be able to work with ChatGPT. It takes you some time to really facilitate the right questions, to ask it, to feed out the right response. So it just changes the game and that's the game has been changed and the lid has been lifted. And now we have this technology where, yes, you can cheat, but I would say this, if you are cheating, even if you're just copying someone's math problems at school, you are stealing from yourself.

And so what I, I could easily cheat on any assignment I do using ChatGPT and maybe get away with it cause you can use another AI to paraphrase what it says and then it's kind of hard to track or. You can stop trying to go underneath like we've done for years, where everybody wants to take the shortcut and you go, you know what? This is a fundamental process for me to become the person that I'm gonna become and I must learn how to write if I want to be able to speak. And that is something that every student across America needs to hear because you're cheating yourself out of speaking well, and you're just hurting yourself in the end.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, and I think we see that almost universally, people posting sometimes even what they probably think is high quality conversation on social media, but every fourth word is like and stuff, and it's actually at a pretty low level, but then you think, well, who are they talking to? So that's kind of interesting.

So one of the things I have kind of said a few times, partly in jest, but actually I, maybe partly. I really think this, this phenomenon of having artificial intelligence be able to write anything for anyone. It's either gonna kill our business Institute for Excellence in Writing or it's gonna explode our business.

I guess part of that is how we position, how we can stay informed, how we can understand what are the capabilities, what are the implications? And you know, we, we serve parents and teachers primarily. So what is it that parents and teachers really want to be able to help the students do, but I, I, and you can comment on that, but I want to throw out this next thing because this is the thing that really caught my attention in our very brief conversation.

In fact, I don't, I don't think we spoke for more than about four minutes, but I would say it's possibly the most impactful four minute conversation I've had with anyone in a while. You brought to my attention the problem of students who would get an AI generated source of information, fully written paper, or just something they would have as a source of information.

And then they would kind of rewrite that, upgrade the style, perhaps make it their own. But in doing so, I, I think the way you put it is that they have to then consent to or to some degree agree with the content that's being automatically provided.

**Drew Formsma:** That is correct. What's happening is this is where the world can become very scary and this can be a dangerous tool because what can start to happen is you can manipulate the responses that come out of a AI machine like ChatGPT, where things can start to slowly infuse the content subtly. And I've noticed that as I've interacted with the ChatGPT often, is you may not even know it but there's always, how can, how can anything be perfectly 50/50 fair? And we know with technology and tech across America, it seems to lean one way. So how does this not be infused as well? And that is a huge danger, I would say, is in our world, we start to have things that are shifting our minds. And if at a young age things are being shifted and we're, we're okay with things that are written, oh, it seems fine, but there's a little bit of a tone integrated that is a very, I would say, dangerous path that this world is headed into.

But, uh, one thing I would talk about, Andrew, is with you and pivoting. You said, you know, this could either kill us or we could, you know, blow up. I think it all comes down to a pivot, I think for you guys is how do you then incorporate well, how to use the AI and your grammar skills and your writing skills and combine them, because I believe there's a middle ground in everything.

When the internet came out in the two thousands and everybody was freaking out, it's the same way. It's just how do we adapt, how do we pivot and how do we combine both, both things that can both be harmful but also super helpful. Things can get done at a faster pace. I found one stat that said over 80% of jobs in America, they're offloaded their work by 20% because of AI

So they have 20% less work because of an AI tool. Well, that's quite amazing, you know? But there also is the downside, which is you could have a president who looks like our current president as an AI, and it speaks like a president. It looks like Joe Biden, but it actually isn't him, and somebody manipulated the footage and we can be manipulated in doing so, which can be very scary.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And, and discerning the difference between manipulated, uh, created images and video versus authentic is almost impossible for the average person to detect.

**Drew Formsma:** Very true, and that is, that is where there's been a big group of leaders such as Elon Musk and a lot of these AI leaders where they've realized this has almost come to a point where it's so advanced. I think many of your listeners may not have any concept of. There are many businesses including one called BuzzFeed. All of their articles that you can see on the internet are AI created. They fired all their writing staff and only use AI. It's quite concerning because that's something many people read and, and go for it, but there's a lot of integration that's happening so fast. It's progressing at such rapid speeds.

It's why it's important. I, I was just at a conference and there were. There was this nice, uh, couple and they were a bit older and they were just talking about how scared and fearful and they don't even wanna look into it. I don't think that's the approach. I think it's just starting to start. If you haven't, I would, I would look up ChatGPT and try it yourself, because the best thing you can do is become informed about these type of things and to become educated, because in that education you can see where you fit in it and you can help others steer in a positive direction.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I'm sure there's gonna be some products or courses or tutorials

**Julie Walker:** Oh sure!

**Andrew Pudewa:** and there probably are already YouTubes on how to get started using ChatGPT.

**Julie Walker:** ChatGPT. Yeah.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So if anyone is out there like me who has not even wanted to try anything yet. Um, is there, is there like a best way to start out, you might recommend?

**Julie Walker:** Well, and before he answers this question. And I, I do wanna insert a couple comments here.

**Andrew Walker:** Yeah.

**Julie Walker:** I think Andrew, of your talk, "Nurturing Competent Communicators," and one of your big emphasis there is putting content in because you can't get something out of a brain that isn't in there to begin with. And my daughter-in-law actually asked ChatGPT to tell her about the Institute for Excellence in Writing.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, my.

**Julie Walker:** And there was a couple paragraphs that, you know, were relatively well-written. They did not have our stylistic techniques appropriately documented, but, but I found it interesting that the slant of that, and Drew, you mentioned this, there's a bias there that, IEW is for homeschoolers, and we know that we have, one of our fastest growing areas of reach is full-time schools, and so I would say, well, they forgot a few things, but they're just reading the content on the websites and

**Andrew Pudewa:** all the blogger mommies, and other people who write about it. I guess the thing that scares me is, we don't have any control over or way to influence that. I mean, even with Wikipedia, you could kind of challenge something or try to edit an error out. But this one, I mean, where do you even go?

I don't know. Drew. Drew. Do you know how, how do you challenge an error that ChatGPT gives you?

**Drew Formsma:** Well, this is the problem, Open AI, which is what ChatGPT has created, started out as a nonprofit, but quickly became a for-profit business. As many of these business leaders saw an opportunity to make a lot of profit rather quickly. Uh, it's owned by Microsoft, so owned by Microsoft, whatever their agenda is and how they want to influence people is implemented as well.

So it's very important. I would say it, I think it's a part of a global thing that parents need to be having with their kids. See in China, TikTok, it's all educational. In America, it's all a waste of time. You can endlessly, I bet there's a lot of parents and grandparents even that use TikTok and it's an endless scroll.

It's better than Instagram. It. Over 300 million Americans are on it. It is insane how persuasive, the content can be to keep you engaged hours on end. So that is an area that many of our brains are now just becoming numb, and now we just, it's so instant every 15 seconds, we're getting another hit of another great video.

Now we're having this area of writing in technology where now we don't even have to do our schoolwork. It's creating dumb kids. So what I would say to many parents out there is start to become aware of this, that there's something bigger at place, that people want to dumb us down, and it's important to stay on the front edge of things, use it to positively affect our kids and affect us personally and start to watch these red flags such as social media. I mean, it is gripping my generation. There are kids who cannot even sit down for one second without picking up their phone. What's happening is we're becoming programmed as well. We're getting looped into this world where we're always looking on the next thing on social media where, where there's more anxiety and depression than ever.

Kids are more, you know, anxious, they're poorly uh, performing in schools and now we have this opportunity for them to not even have to try anymore. That is what's scary. You have an opportunity to steward this technology well.

**Andrew Pudewa:** so you, you go to Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, that's your school and that's a Christian school. And so I would guess that in general there's kind of a higher integrity level of the students at your school compared to maybe some more average state school or something. Um, I mean, do you think that's true or am I just imagining it to be true?

**Drew Formsma:** Yeah, I think you're, I think you're right. I think when you have something that can solve a problem quickly and it can take a shortcut, it's hard not to take, and I think for a lot of

students what is happening is this work ethic of the next generation. They want to be part of something that's purposeful and you know, life changing and can help the world become better.

But I think in the midst of that, we have a lot of people that maybe are apathetic and slow moving and indecisive, which comes to a lack of hardworking. I just think there's just a lack of hardworking attitudes out there in personalities and people, and this is not helping that because you can get away with doing very little.

I'm still getting an A in the class, and that's the concern I would have is if you have a kid, I would encourage them, start working early, start getting them to do things, even if it's the chores, getting them to work hard. That is what will sustain your kids in this world, because that's character building.

Even when it's hard, you're sweating. Maybe you're mowing the lawn, maybe you're picking the weeds. These are instrumental things to do to create that character. Because when you're presented with an opportunity to possibly take the easy route, you're gonna go the hard route. Because when there's hard things, when you're being stretched, what's happening? You are growing.

I always say that to my friends. I want hard circumstances. I don't wanna be comfortable. As soon as I'm comfortable, that's when the devil loves to swoop in and grab the opportunity and to keep me there. We must continue to grow. And growing starts with becoming uncomfortable and open AI and ChatGPT? It's uncomfortable. So I challenge you. Get your hands dirty, check it out, and become more aware of it and have a conversation with your kids about it and what you can do together to realize this could be really helpful to possibly even spread the gospel. In, in places it can, but also just for people to become aware of, wow, what an opportunity this.

Watch how technology is affecting our lives. Let's make sure we're not losing control of it.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, I had, uh, a conversation with a very good friend of mine a few days ago, and. We were, we somehow got on the topic of contemplation as a distinctly human activity and how contemplation happens so often in the spaces between articulated ideas and concrete information. So, you know, we, we absorb a tremendous amount through sensory intakes and, and then our mind in a semi subconscious way will just start to quickly make all sorts of connections and analogies and comparisons.

And it does this in a way, we really don't even consciously notice, but then circumstances may require us to draw on that, and then we are able to speak that idea into existence. So it went from, from very non-verbal, non-binary, global, analogous information into being concrete, deliverable, recordable, communicable. And then I made the observation that's one thing that this language-based artificial intelligence would never be able to do. But you know, I'm, I'm saying that from a very distant point of observation. Would you agree that the, that the language based AI, AI is very limited to its binary nature and its language thinking? I mean, I don't, I don't know if it could make intuitive leaps, could it?



**Drew Formsma:** Well, that's an interesting question and I think that's still gonna be determined, but I will say the human mind people don't realize the capabilities of it. I think I don't even understand sometimes all that it can do. It doesn't forget things. It remembers everything that we've ever done. And I once read a book that talked about how you don't forget anything.

And they did a study of 30, 30 people and it was all around can people continue to remember things even in their past that happened 35 years ago? And so they would find different prompts to prompt you back to that memory. But I think what's interesting, what you just brought up is. Another word for contemplation would be in a reflection, thought

**Andrew Pudewa:** Mm.

**Drew Formsma:** study or survey.

These are kind of things that come to mind for me. Well, if there's no contemplation, when you're writing and you have that essay and you're up all night, you're contemplating every sentence. You're, you're sitting there, oh, it doesn't sound good. Rewrite. That is practicing your brain and helping your brain grow.

When you're just having an AI write it, you're not contemplating anything. You're contemplating how quick that just got done. That's about it. I mean, you're wondering if you're gonna get caught cheating, and if you're gonna have to explain yourself. I think the most powerful tool that we have in the world is the spoken word that will never be taken away.

We have to become good writers, to become good communicators, and in the midst of that, connecting ideas with one another. That is something an AI tool can't do. Realizing, oh my goodness, you know, right before this podcast came on, Andrew connected, he's like, oh, I wanna connect you with somebody in California and I want to connect you with another friend that doesn't. . . You can't have an AI tool do that. It takes practice and comprehension with a mix of reflection to build that type of connection. In the end, an AI tool can't do that. But what can happen is if our brains are not being even trained on a small scale, I think we become dumb, and when we become dumb, that is when we become comfortable and we don't realize the capabilities that God has created us to be and the purpose we're here to achieve.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And we become more controllable. Which is, I think the thing that at the core is what I am most concerned and considering. I have loved this conversation so much. I want to encourage you, if you continue to do homeschool conventions, please do a talk on helping parents learn about AI and what it is and the capabilities and the dangers, and encourage them as you have encouraged me and our listeners today, um, to, to not be afraid to just dig in and play with it and find out because, you know, I think that's, you know, at a certain age you just kind of, I don't need any new technological baggage in my life. Young people like you, you love change. Yeah. A new idea, let's go. Uh, and I think a lot of parents are kind of in between that. So I think that would be a hugely valuable and possibly very popular, timely topic for you to present at any conventions you go to in the future.

**Julie Walker:** So Andrew, I'm thinking about the story of Thoth that you tell, that I'd love for you to kind of wrap up this podcast with, right. And then, um, because I know, well, I'll let you tell the story.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, it, it's an illustration of how technology will atrophy the skill, which it replaces. But I don't know if you know the story, drew. It's in, uh, Plato's, uh, dialogue, the Phaedrus, I believe. And so Socrates tells the story of the great God, Thoth, that nobody knows how to pronounce it. Thoth who gives many technology gifts to the people of Egypt.

Among those is the technology of writing. And the King of Egypt responds and basically says, well, you know, thank you. We'll accept your gift cuz you're the great God Thoth. But this gift of yours will cause forgetfulness in the minds of the learners because they will rely on the external characters rather than their internal memory and knowing. And you, you think, wow, writing, that's a pretty ancient technology. But even that, you know, illustrates this idea that I think we see coming into almost end times level of extremism of yeah, we can actually completely replace thought Now. Oh, Oh that's funny. Thoth and thought. I never thought of that before.

**Julie Walker:** Yeah, I wonder.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That's funny. Gosh, we could talk forever. What two things. Uh, where can people find out more about you and what you do in your organization and all that? And last thoughts for our listeners here, cuz we could go on forever but we can't.

**Drew Formsma:** Sure here. My name's Drew Formsma and you can find us at, [ilikegiving.com](http://ilikegiving.com) if you have a homeschool family and want to learn more about our 26 week Bible curriculum that takes 10 minutes a day. All about teaching a lifestyle of generosity. Go to [generousfamily.com](http://generousfamily.com). My last thoughts would be, your kids have been raised in the first digital generation.

They're digital natives. It's important to not overlook that. You were born in a world where there was no technology, but as new parents, it is important to remember that technology is a part of who we are. Now, how do we embrace it? But not let it control us. It's been a blessing being with y'all.

**Julie Walker:** Thank you Drew. And just so our listeners know, we are going to have Drew back on our podcast in November to talk more about his organization. Yes. Super excited. It's been so great having you, Drew. Thank you.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Thank you so much.

**Julie Walker:** Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Google podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at [IEW.com/podcast](http://IEW.com/podcast). Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.