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Uses of generative AI and related information interactions in journalistic story creation process

Laura Korkeamäki

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Abstract

Introduction. Generative AI is changing journalists' information environment, potentially affecting their interactions with information. The aim of this study is to examine the uses of generative AI and related information interactions in journalistic story creation process.

Method. A task-based information interaction evaluation model informed the research design. Research data were collected April to June 2025 using a qualitative reconstruction interview method. Fourteen journalists were interviewed about their journalistic story creation processes, uses of generative AI, and information interactions.

Analysis. The interview data were analysed qualitatively. The uses of generative AI in journalistic story creation process were identified from the interview data and then further examined to identify related information interactions.

Results. Four categories of uses of generative AI were identified: uses in task planning and reflective assessment (testing-and-learning use, support in story ideation); uses in searching and selecting information (exploratory oriented, topic-oriented, document content-oriented use); uses in working with information (preparing for and transcribing interviews, support in analysing data); and uses in synthesising and reporting (support in drafting and editing).

Conclusion. This study increases understanding of journalists' generative AI use and information interactions, which is key to designing generative AI tools that support real-life story creation processes.

Introduction

Journalists create journalistic stories, with the purpose of providing accurate and newsworthy content for the audience (e.g., Attfield & Dowell, 2003; Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2022). However, generative artificial intelligence (AI) is changing journalists' information environment, potentially affecting their interactions with information (e.g., Sundin, 2025). Moreover, generative AI is already used across news production, from gathering information to distributing news (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2026; Wu, 2026), and journalists are in a process of making sense of what generative AI means to their work and profession (Firdaus et al., 2025). Considering that journalists as news creators are key to the news production process, it is important to examine how journalists use generative AI and what are their information interactions like in this context.

The purpose of this study is to examine uses of generative AI in journalistic story creation process. In this study, a journalistic story creation process refers to a work task that is examined through its performance (Byström & Hansen, 2005) from ideation and planning to the completed journalistic story (Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2022). Therefore, the approach of this study is task-based. Journalistic stories, the products of those work tasks, may be of various types (e.g., news reports or opinionated texts) and represent various topical areas (e.g., lifestyle or business), and they often follow the style of the publishing media outlet (Jaakkola, 2018; Mast, 2020). Journalism is an information-intensive profession, where not only the accuracy of information but also its creative use are central to the work (Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2022; Tuazon et al., 2020). Therefore, the domain offers a rich context for studying uses of generative AI.

Generative AI refers to models (such as large language models) that generate and synthesise information according to human instructions (Ai et al., 2025). Generative AI tools are tools based on such models. Moreover, generative AI tools may refer to tools that are available to the public such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude, or media organisations' in-house tools (see Thurman et al., 2025; Wu, 2026). In this study, uses of generative AI encompass uses of any tools that journalists perceive as generative AI based. Earlier research has shown that journalists associate both concerns and possibilities with the use of generative AI (Minotakis, 2025; Møller et al., 2025). However, more research is needed on its real-life uses, which is the focus of this study.

Furthermore, this study examines how journalists' real-life uses of generative AI are related to their information interactions, i.e., interactions between human and information (Fidel, 2012, p. 17). Although recent studies have examined the uses of generative AI in journalistic work (D'haeseleer et al., 2025; Guenther et al., 2025; Liu, 2025; Sarısakaloğlu, 2025; Wu, 2026), their focus was not on information interactions per se, but rather on the values and perceptions journalists attach to the uses of generative AI tools. Notably, there is a lack of research that focuses on journalists' information interactions while using generative AI in journalistic work. Studying information interactions is important to understand how they could be supported, especially in a situation where technology is changing the information environment and potentially affecting people's accustomed ways of working.

Utilising a qualitative reconstruction interview method, fourteen journalists were interviewed about their journalistic story creation processes, uses of generative AI, and information interactions during the processes. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study:

> RQ1. What types of uses of generative AI are included in journalistic story creation process?
>
> RQ2. What kind of information interactions do journalists exhibit when they use generative AI during the journalistic story creation process?

Journalistic story creation process

There are several models depicting journalistic story creation process. Attfield and Dowell (2003) presented a research and writing process with three stages. Stage 1 *Initiation* involved, for example, identifying a story angle. Stage 2 *Preparation* included discovering and gathering information, ensuring the story angle's originality, and increasing personal understanding. Stage 3 *Production* included managing the information and, if necessary, gathering additional information. Furthermore, the model depicted product constraints (e.g., word count) and resource constraints (e.g., archives or subject knowledge) in the process.

Some models concern journalists' information seeking. Based on a systematic review, Hertzum (2022) presented a model with four information seeking stages in news story creation: (1) identifying sources (e.g., with source selection criteria such as quality or credibility); (2) interacting with sources (e.g., building trust with human sources); (3) interpreting information, including providing balancing information; and (4) managing sources (e.g., maintaining relationships with human sources). Gilbert et al. (2022) studied environmental journalists' information seeking with a focus on their library use.

Tuazon et al.'s (2020) model focused on creativity in journalistic story creation process. The model had four phases: (1) Cognizance concerned formulating story ideas; (2) Cultivation involved gathering information, cultivating trust with human sources, and verifying and analysing information; (3) Captivation was about writing engaging stories for readers (e.g., using certain structure or word choices); and, (4) Introspection refers to reflecting on completed journalistic stories, receiving feedback, and learning from it.

Gutierrez Lopez et al. (2022) examined creativity and verification in journalistic story creation process. Their analysis showed that creativity was present throughout the process, from developing story ideas to constructing and contextualising the stories. Verification was present, for example, in finding credible sources, tracing original sources, basing the stories on facts, cross-checking sources, confirming information through experts, as well as informing readers by attributing sources and disclosing any uncertainties in the stories.

However, the studies mentioned above were conducted before the recent developments of generative AI. Therefore, this study focuses on generative AI use in journalistic story creation process. Furthermore, in this study, a journalistic story creation process is defined similar to that of Gutierrez Lopez et al. (2022) encompassing information activities from story ideation and planning to the completed journalistic story.

Uses of generative AI in journalistic work

Recent studies examined the uses of generative AI in journalistic work across news production. Wu (2026) found that journalists used generative AI in news gathering (e.g., for finding information, generating interview questions, and transcribing), in writing and presenting (e.g., for drafting, summarisation, and coding), in news editing (e.g., for grammar), and in news promotion (e.g., for creating social media posts). Cools and Diakopoulos (2026) reported that journalists avoided using generative AI for news verification, with some exceptions, such as using it as a second pair of eyes in time-limited situations. Guenther et al. (2025) identified journalistic uses of AI and generative AI for routine tasks, but also for more creative purposes such as brainstorming or overcoming writer's block. However, human supervision was seen as imperative in news production.

This study contributes to the existing research by examining journalistic uses of generative AI with a specific focus on related information interactions.

Information interactions with generative AI

Information interactions with generative AI have been addressed from various viewpoints. Krakowska and Zych (2025) studied strategies used by university students when using generative AI in solving predefined tasks. The authors identified information seeking and prompt formulation strategies such as iteration (e.g., with revised or follow-up prompts). Response expansion was used for detailed information and response condensation for simplified information. A single-response strategy was used for efficiency and a step-by-step strategy for accuracy and detail. Moreover, the authors identified strategies of integrating specific sources and utilising predefined prompts in forming queries.

Mayerhofer et al. (2025) conducted a user study, with participants from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, to examine interactions with different search modalities when solving questions about medical treatments. In the study, the participants had different strategies of utilising the search modalities. They either used traditional Web search or generative AI chat, or both. The authors also identified several tactic categories, including reflection (e.g., assessing information credibility) and meta-level tactics (e.g., choosing between search modalities).

Zhao et al. (2025) studied users' tactics in dealing with limitations of generative AI tools. One of the findings was that when participants used generative AI tools, their understanding of how the tools worked improved. This was reflected in the tactics they used. Lee et al.'s (2025) survey study focused on knowledge workers' critical thinking while using generative AI. As an example of the study's qualitative results, respondents perceived that, while searching information required less effort, more effort was needed to verify AI-generated responses.

Method

The research data for this study were collected utilising a qualitative reconstruction interview method. Fourteen journalists were interviewed about their journalistic story creation processes, uses of generative AI, and information interactions during the processes. A task-based information interaction evaluation model (Järvelin et al., 2015) informed the research design. The model enabled studying information interactions within the entire journalistic story creation process. It also provided a framework for the analysis.

In Finland, AI tools are used in several media organisations. When this study was conducted, AI tools were being developed in media organisations and adopted in journalistic work. Altogether, the journalists who participated in this study estimated their experience of using generative AI tools in journalistic tasks to be between a few months and three years. This means that in the interviews, their information interactions concerned these early uses of generative AI in journalistic tasks.

Recruitment and participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to find information-rich examples (Patton, 2002, p. 230) of different kinds of journalistic story creation processes. Suitable participants for this study were journalists who create journalistic stories and who have used generative AI during their story creation process. Furthermore, to increase variability in participants' access to different generative AI tools, participants were sought by reaching out to in-house journalists (i.e., journalists who work in media organisations) as well as freelance journalists. While an in-house journalist has access to the media organisation's tools, a freelance journalist may need to rely only on tools that are publicly available.

The study participants were recruited and interviewed during the first half of 2025. Most participants were recruited through gatekeepers (i.e., 'someone who has the authority to grant or deny permission to access potential participants, and/or the ability to facilitate such access';

King et al., 2019, chapter 4). After contacting gatekeepers in media organisations by email, a meeting was held in person or remotely, where the researcher informed the gatekeepers about the research and asked to interview journalists from their organisation. Working with gatekeepers was necessary to gain access to participants. Although this gave gatekeepers control over whom to recruit for the study, it also allowed the researcher to explain the study objectives and what kinds of participants were sought for the study, so that the gatekeepers could assist finding suitable participants. After the meeting, the gatekeepers sent potential participants' contact information to the researcher. Another recruitment method was sending a research invitation to a newsletter directed to journalists, to also reach freelance journalists. The invitation contained information about the study and the researcher's contact information. (The newsletter is not named to help preserve confidentiality and privacy.)

Each participant was provided with an information sheet and a privacy notice about collecting and processing their personal data. Participants gave their informed consent before starting the interview. An ethical approval was not requested from the research organisation because in Finland there are specific requirements for when it can and has to be requested (e.g., a deviation from informed consent), which were not met in this study (see Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2019, sect. 4.2).

Fourteen participants were recruited for the study (Table 1). Twelve participants had a higher education degree (i.e., bachelor's or master's level), and two had other qualifications such as higher education courses or vocational education.

Aspect	Category (number of participants)
Education	Higher education degree (12) Other qualifications (2)
Years of experience working as a journalist	1-5 (1) 6-10 (1) 11-15 (4) 16-20 (3) 21-25 (3) 26-30 (2)
Form of work	In-house, organisation A (5) In-house, organisation B (1) In-house, organisation C (3) In-house, organisation D (2) Freelance (3)
Number of stories chosen for the reconstruction	2 (1) 1 (13)
Story type (some described the story with more than one story type)	Feature article (4) News story (4) Translated news article (3) Guide article (1) Overview article (1) Background article (1) Cultural story (1) Current affairs story (1) Data journalism story (1) Investigative story (1) Long-read article (1) Preview article (1)
Topical area of the story (some described the story with more than one topical area)	Culture (4) Rural services (2) Technology (3) Agriculture (1) Commercialisation (1) Culture history (1) Environment (1) Foreign affairs (1) Politics (1) Regulation (1) Sports (1) Accidents (1) Decision-making (1)

Table 1. Participants' background information

Participants' self-reported years of experience working as a journalist ranged from over three to thirty years. Eleven participants worked as in-house journalists in four different media organisations in Finland and across eight different journalistic publications (six special interest publications, one regional newspaper and one local newspaper). Most in-house journalists reported their job title as journalist, however, one was working as an editor-in-chief, and three others also had some editorial duties. Three participants worked as freelance journalists, with some also describing themselves as non-fiction writers or media all-rounders.

One participant chose two stories; others chose one story for the reconstruction. The stories represented a wide range of story types and topical areas. The stories had both typical and untypical characteristics compared to the kind of stories the participants usually wrote. For example, a story may have been a typical example of a story type (e.g., a feature article) but still

have some untypical characteristics regarding its creation process (e.g., more complex than usual). Moreover, some participants had chosen a story during the making of which they had used more generative AI than usual.

Reconstruction interviews

Research data were collected by applying a qualitative reconstruction interview method where participants are asked to reconstruct the process of how a journalistic story was formed (Reich & Barnoy, 2020). The reconstructions generate retrospective accounts of information interactions in journalistic story creation process (Bird-Meyer et al., 2019; de Haan et al., 2022; Flanagan, 1954; Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2022). They elicit detailed information, reflections and reasonings that are anchored in real-life situations (Reich & Barnoy, 2020; Schwinges, 2024). Therefore, the method is suitable for studying real-life uses of generative AI in journalistic story creation process and related information interactions.

The overall focus of the reconstruction interview protocol was guided by a task-based information interaction evaluation model (Järvelin et al., 2015). It depicts a task process by describing information interactions in five information activities. (1) *Task planning and reflective assessment* spans the whole task process. It involves planning how the task should be performed, monitoring the task process, and reflecting on and learning from the task process. The activity contributes to and is affected by one's metacognitive skills. The next activities are (2) *searching information* by utilising search strategies and tactics and (3) *selecting information* that is relevant and useful for the task. (4) *Working with information* includes information interactions such as organising and analysing. (5) *Synthesising and reporting* deals with combining what has been learnt into a coherent product. It involves information interactions such as paraphrasing and summarising information, writing drafts and editing them. In this study, the model enabled examining information interactions within the entire journalistic story creation process, from ideation and planning to the completed story.

The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of four parts. The first part included background information questions about participants' education, journalistic work experience, job description, and experience of using generative AI. The second part was the reconstruction of the story creation process. Participants were asked to prepare for the interview by choosing one or more journalistic stories where they had somehow used generative AI during the story creation process. They were instructed to reconstruct the story creation process from story ideation and planning to the completed story. Brüggemann (2013) described reconstruction as a method in which journalists are 'asked to tell the stories behind their news stories' (p. 402). In this study, the participants were asked to talk through the story creation process by describing what the process was like, how it progressed, and how their thought process unfolded. They were also asked to describe whenever they had used generative AI during the process.

The specific starting point for the reconstruction was identified by asking the participants where they thought the story creation process began. Often participants started the reconstruction by describing a story idea, source of information, or work assignment that initiated the story creation process. Participants were encouraged to carry the reconstruction forward in their own words. However, they were asked for additional information or clarification if necessary. Although the researcher had planned probing questions based on the five information activities in the task-based information interaction evaluation model (Järvelin et al. 2015), they usually did not need to be asked and were mainly used by the researcher to monitor that the focus of the reconstruction remained on the story creation process and related information interactions. This allowed conducting the reconstructions in a participant-driven manner, with as little influence as possible on the course of the reconstruction from the researcher.

During the reconstruction, participants were also asked to demonstrate how they used generative AI in the story creation process. The purpose was to generate more detailed research data about interactions with generative AI tools. Five participants agreed to have the demonstration video recorded. Some did the demonstration with only the audio recording on because they either did not agree to video recording or permission for it was not obtained from the media organisation. Some participants did not do the demonstration at all because they felt that they were better at just verbally explaining how they had used the generative AI tools. The reconstruction usually ended when the participants had reached the point where they had completed the journalistic story. However, some also talked about activities beyond that, such as marketing the story in social media.

The third part of the interview consisted of more general questions. Participants were asked about their other uses of generative AI in journalistic tasks beyond the reconstruction that they just did. They were also asked about their views regarding benefits and concerns of using generative AI. The fourth part, concluding the interview, had questions about whether there was anything the participants would like to add or discuss in the interview. Notably, participants were free to share their thoughts and reflections throughout the interview, without strict boundaries between the interview parts (see Schwinges, 2024).

The interviews were conducted April to June 2025 in person (eleven interviews) and remotely (two via videoconference and one by phone). As noted, all interviews were audio recorded and some were also video recorded. The total duration of the interviews was 13 hours 45 minutes. The duration of individual interviews ranged from 29 minutes to 1 hour 41 minutes. This includes the five demonstrations (ranging from 3 to 28 minutes) that were also recorded on video. The audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher first converted the audio recordings to text using Subtitle Edit program, then carefully listened to the recordings in their entirety, checked the transcriptions, and corrected the mistakes. The video recordings were included in the transcripts by writing descriptions of the observed activities. Identifiable names of persons, organisations, publications, and in-house generative AI tools were removed from the data.

Data analysis

The analysis was qualitative and combined inductive and deductive approaches, and it proceeded iteratively. The analysis started inductively with open coding to identify the interview sections where participants discussed or demonstrated using generative AI in their story creation processes. It continued by writing preparatory memos, which, for each participant, summarised the reconstructed story creation processes, the uses of generative AI tools during the reconstructions, as well as in other journalistic story creation tasks. This was followed by 'preparatory conceptual work' (Keane, 2022), where the uses of generative AI tools were compiled across all participants and grouped under preparatory, inductively identified generative AI usage categories (e.g., uses in supporting idea generation or uses in supporting background research). They served as intermediate steps in the analysis and were subjected to re-examination in the next stage of the analysis.

To build more conceptual depth, the analysis proceeded to pattern coding (see Miles et al., 2020). This stage of the analysis was guided by the task-based information interaction evaluation model (Järvelin et al., 2015). The pattern coding was carried out through examination of the research data and preparatory memos, refinement of the codes, and further analytic memo-ing (Miles et al., 2020). The similarities and differences between the uses of generative AI were compared to form use types that inherently align with the activities in Järvelin et al.'s model. Two of the model's activities, searching and selecting information, were intertwined in participants' narratives and therefore combined in the analysis. A similar decision to combine the models'

searching and selecting activities was made in Korkeamäki and Kumpulainen (2019) and Kumpulainen and Late (2022).

The use types of generative AI were further examined to identify information interactions that journalists exhibit when using generative AI. Järvelin et al.'s (2015) model focuses on individuals' behavioural and cognitive information interactions. This was applied in the analysis by paying attention to participants' activities in the story creation processes, as well as their explanations and reasonings behind the activities. Moreover, some participants discussed their reasons for not using generative AI tools for specific purposes in the story creation process. These articulations were included in the analysis because making conscious choices about whether to use generative AI tools was integral to participants' information interactions.

Lastly, interview quotations were chosen from the Finnish-language transcriptions and translated into English by the researcher to exemplify the results.

Results

By applying the task-based information interaction evaluation model (Järvelin et al., 2015), four categories of uses of generative AI were identified in this study: (1) uses in task planning and reflective assessment, (2) uses in searching and selecting information, (3) uses in working with information, and (4) uses in synthesising and reporting. The results are presented below and then summarised in Table 2.

Uses in task planning and reflective assessment

Task planning and reflective assessment included two types of uses of generative AI: *testing-and-learning use* and *support in story ideation*. They contributed to participants' metacognitive understanding of conditions where the generative AI tools could be useful and to the planning of the journalistic story at hand.

Testing-and-learning use

Testing-and-learning use refers to the process of trying the tools out in real-life situations and learning from it. This included identifying situations where generative AI could be useful in the story creation process. Sometimes using generative AI was found beneficial to the process (e.g., by facilitating information searching). Other times participants turned back to traditional tools (e.g., when generative AI did not provide relevant information). Participants described trial-and-error interactions with generative AI tools and what they had learnt about the tools while using them in the story creation process. A participant, who looked back at the prompts they had written while searching for information, commented:

> *[Prompting has] still at that point been … this ongoing, like, iteration. And I have just … realised there that, okay, if I prompt like this, then what comes out is completely random, so you have to, like, be more specific.* (P1)

Participants also reflected on the suitability of the tools for their own ways of working. For example, a participant, who had transcribed an audio-recorded interview for the first time, was conflicted about how it affected the story creation process.

> *I am not sure if [the transcription] made it easier or harder … It was somehow much easier for me to start looking at the stuff the artificial intelligence had transcribed and decide what to take … But then there is the danger that … the story becomes … more boring when you look at the …[transcribed] text too much.* (P7)

Furthermore, during reconstructions, participants recognised points in the story creation process where they had not yet used generative AI tools but could see themselves trying them out for such purposes in the future. However, participants had differing views of using generative

AI in the story creation process, and not all participants wanted to use generative AI for the same purposes.

Support in story ideation

Story ideation refers to the process of trying to come up with new ideas for a journalistic story. Some participants used generative AI to support story ideation. However, they did not necessarily expect the AI generated outputs to be usable as is. It was more about the anticipation that the generative AI could provide inspiration and new perspectives that stimulate one's own thinking. A participant reflected on the matter as follows:

> *You won't necessarily get any real answers from the artificial intelligence. But the way it works is that it triggers your own thoughts, and kind of directs your thoughts away from your own bubble … And it might also lead to a new, own idea afterwards … the big advantage is … the broadening of thinking and perspectives.* (P2)

On the other hand, some participants said that they did not use generative AI at all in story ideation or did not want to use it in specific parts of the story ideation process. One participant explained this in the context of developing a story angle:

> *I started skimming the [source material] and, um, thinking about what the … angle here could be … This is the kind of situation where [the generative AI tool] could be used … but I don't want to … I want to challenge my brain, because I feel that is the essence of this work.* (P4)

Uses in searching and selecting information

Searching and selecting information included three types of uses of generative AI: *exploratory oriented*, *topic-oriented*, and *document content-oriented use*.

Participants used generative AI alongside other search tools and sources of information for searching and selecting information. For example, they used generative AI tools either in parallel or sequentially with other generative AI tools and traditional search tools.

Participants emphasised the importance of verifying the information before using it in a story, for example, by checking the original source or by verifying the information from another source. They were aware of the unreliable nature of generative AI (e.g., '*sometimes, for whatever reason, [generative AI] just makes something up*'; P10). However, several pointed out that the journalistic principle of verifying the information remains the same, and that verifying and evaluating the information is part of a journalist's professional skills.

Exploratory oriented use

In exploratory oriented use, generative AI was used to explore information space to gain an overall understanding of information and aspects potentially relevant to writing the story, thus supporting background research and story development. Generative AI was perceived to enable faster, more extensive and more in-depth exploration compared to traditional search tools. Playful experimentation and iterative prompting were examples of explorative information interactions with generative AI. It also supported associative thinking by facilitating following side avenues that came to mind, which would not have been possible in the timeframe with only traditional tools.

> *You can get, like, ridiculously deep into some side avenues … fairly quickly. You may or may not find something there. But then again, without artificial intelligence, I wouldn't really go and spend, say, three days on figuring out [this particular side avenue].* (P1)

Topic-oriented use

In topic-oriented use, generative AI was used to find information about specific topics (e.g., technical features, societal events, or topic-related Websites). Participants appreciated generative AI's concise and well-structured responses on a given topic. One participant recounted how using generative AI to search for information left more time for learning about the topic and for the creative process of writing the story.

> *I asked artificial intelligence about it … it gave a good introduction, and a very detailed and well-structured answer … it left me time to kind of delve into [the topic] … more time for the creative process than for searching for information.* (P10)

Another participant used a generative AI tool to search topic-related journalistic stories from the media organisation's own archives to gain background information and to avoid creating a story that is too similar to what has been written before. The participant reflected that although the list of articles provided by the tool was incomplete, and the same articles could have been found with traditional archive search, the benefit of using the generative AI tool is that it provides an easy access point to information.

> *[It] quickly gives an overview, from which you can then move forward to check and explore those things yourself.* (P13)

On the other hand, for some topical searches, generative AI's responses were considered not at all or only partially useful because the information was outdated (e.g., when trying to find information on current events) or part of it was presented at too general a level to be useful in writing the story.

Document content-oriented use

In document content-oriented use, participants used generative AI to help them grasp relevant content from a source document (e.g., a news article), for example by instructing it to translate or summarise the content. This was helpful while doing background research or writing a story based on a news article from another media outlet, for example, when participants needed to go through multiple documents, or when the source article was long and multifaceted or written in a foreign language.

The use of generative AI was combined with skimming and reading the documents, as well as verifying the AI-generated summaries against the original content. Participants described how having generative AI to summarise or translate document content facilitates information selection (e.g., selecting documents or information within a document). For example, generative AI was used to compare whether one's own understanding of the document's main points matched with what the AI picked up from the text.

> *When [the generative AI tool] has made the summary, if it's something that I want to use, I go over those points again [and] compare them to the original article.* (P1)

> *I will also read the original text myself … I often start by skimming through the original source myself, then I have it translated and … ask for a summary … Especially if there is a 10,000 character long news story that you end up condensing into 500 characters for your own [news story], so at that point the artificial intelligence is quite handy, like what would it pick from that? And is it the same as what perhaps stood out from the text after reading it myself?* (P2)

Participants described that using generative AI to translate and summarise document content leaves time to go through more source materials, helps identifying key terms and clarifying unclear content, and enables moving more quickly to the writing stage.

> *I was able to more quickly grasp what … the main points in the text [of the source article] are … I started writing this story from scratch, when I had some kind of mental image of what the story is about … It had taken me around five minutes to choose the [source article] … have it translated and summarised … so that I was able to get started more quickly with writing the actual story.* (P8)

Uses in working with information

From the reconstruction interviews, two types of uses of generative AI were identified in the activity of working with information. The participants' use types were *preparing for and transcribing interviews* and *support in analysing data.*

Preparing for and transcribing interviews

Often a story creation process involved interviewing people for the story. Journalists used generative AI at various points to support this process. First, generative AI was useful for gaining knowledge that helped prepare for the interviews. Therefore, its use intertwined with searching and selecting information.

In working with information, generative AI was used to assist in drafting an interview request. A participant who was unfamiliar with the local customs and style of written communication in a foreign language utilised generative AI to make sure that everything would go according to protocol. The participant first gave generative AI the specifications (e.g., information content, context and format) for the desired output and then modified the output to better suit their personal style.

Participants also used generative AI to support preparing the interview questions. One participant said that even if generative AI helped with figuring out only one additional question, it would still be useful for the process. Another participant described using generative AI to check whether a list of interview questions could be further improved:

> *I did have a list of questions, but I thought that [the generative AI tool] might still come up with a few sharp additional questions, and it did.* (P13)

On the other hand, some did not want to use generative AI to prepare interview questions. For example, one participant felt that AI's suggestions are too generic, and that interview questions created by a journalist are likely to be more original.

Several participants also used tools to transcribe interviews. Typically, this meant transcribing audio-recorded interviews to text, although participants were not always sure whether the tools they used were generative AI-based. One participant used a generative AI tool to correct typos in their written interview notes.

Support in analysing data

Analysing refers to participants working with data (e.g., statistics or geographic data) to support journalistic storytelling or investigative work. Generative AI was used to summarise data, for example, by asking generative AI to identify trends or anomalies based on statistical information. Verifying the AI generated outputs was an integral part of the process.

> *I've … asked to … analyse and summarise data from … the links I provided, and then instructed to … identify … trends from that, and to name … surprising anomalies … all this … would probably have taken me, like, a month just … [using] Google, Excel, or whatever. So, it wouldn't have gotten done.* (P1)

Generative AI was also used to ask for procedural advice when working with data, for problems such as '*how to do something specific in Excel*' (P13) or '*something in my code is causing an error*' (P3). For example, asking generative AI to locate the coding error was perceived to make

independent work more efficient compared to strategies such as searching the answer from question-and-answer sites. Moreover, generative AI was considered useful for assisting in coding tasks because they are procedural in nature and do not require fact based answers.

Uses in synthesising and reporting

Synthesising and reporting included two types of uses of generative AI: *support in drafting* and *support in editing*.

Support in drafting

Drafting refers to creating a preliminary version of a journalistic story. Some participants used generative AI tools to help draft journalistic stories based on a source document (e.g., a preview article based on a press release or a translated news article based on an article from another media outlet).

Using generative AI to translate and summarise the source article supported expressing its content in different words. A participant, who did not use generative AI for the actual writing, explained:

> *Sometimes with translated news … your Finnish may become awkward when you start translating from those really long sentences. So, it can help that you read [the source article] as, like, summarised by artificial intelligence … then your own thoughts shift away from it, so that you don't translate it word for word.* (P2)

Generative AI was also used to translate or otherwise process the source document, in whole or in part, to generate an initial story draft or excerpts for it. For example, one participant used generative AI to condense parts of a press release by removing '*marketing gibberish*' (P11) as unnecessary for journalistic text and then incorporated the generated excerpts into the article draft. Another participant used generative AI to create an initial story draft based on a press release.

The participants then continued working with the texts by manually reviewing, revising, and rewriting them for accuracy, focus, context, and style, and by writing new sections to the text such as an introductory paragraph. One participant recounted the process as follows:

> *I moved this [part] to the beginning, so that the reader, like, understands … why this [person] is being talked about in this context.* (P14)

> *I rewrote this [part] that came out like this odd-looking numbered list … we don't use things like that in journalistic text … And I looked into what on earth [a particular term] means … I thought that if I don't know, then probably everyone else doesn't either.* (P14)

Following the editorial policy of the media organisation, the participant disclosed the use of generative AI to readers. Moreover, the participant concluded that, although using generative AI in drafting did not necessarily make the writing faster, it freed cognitive capacity for more demanding journalistic tasks.

However, it was also mentioned in the interviews that generative AI was not perceived as useful in producing initial drafts for long, in-depth stories that required a lot of journalistic thought, such as careful planning of the story angle and structure. Moreover, participants did not want to handle confidential source materials (e.g., interview transcripts) to create story drafts with generative AI tools that were not secure.

Support in editing

Editing means reviewing a near-complete story for finishing touches, to get the story ready for publication. Generative AI was used to support the editing process. Participants' articulations illustrated their desire to be in control of the process, so that new mistakes would not appear into the text (e.g., copy-pasting or AI-driven mistakes). For example, one participant did not want the generative AI to make changes to the text directly. Instead, the participant asked generative AI to make a list of typos and grammar mistakes so that the suggestions could be reviewed and corrected manually.

> *If you don't ask it to make a list, then [the tool] kind of fixes the story directly … and then gives the fixed version. But I don't want that because then [the tool] corrects a lot of things wrong … then I went through the list, and from that I then put the kind of relevant tweaks into my own story.* (P5)

On the other hand, one participant explicitly stated that they did not want to use generative AI in correcting grammar mistakes because '*that is the journalist's task*' (P6).

Generative AI tools were also used to provide suggestions or feedback regarding the headline, lede, and structure of the story. However, one participant emphasised that the authority regarding the final headline and lede remains with the journalist. Another participant had noticed that the suggestions were sometimes incorrect and therefore needed to be checked.

> *You can get good ideas … for headlines, but of course they need to be checked very carefully to make sure they are accurate, because [the generative AI tool] also gives some clearly incorrect headlines.* (P9)

Other times, suggestions from other people during the editing process were considered more useful regarding the headline and the lede of the story.

Summary of results

A summary of the results is provided in Table 2. By applying Järvelin et al.'s (2015) model, four categories of uses of generative AI were identified throughout the story creation process, from task planning to synthesising and reporting. Under each category is summarised the use types of generative AI (shown in the left column) and the information interactions exhibited by journalists (shown in the right column) when using generative AI during the journalistic story creation process.

Uses in task planning and reflective assessment	
Testing-and-learning use	Identifying generative AI's potential usefulness in the story creation process, trial-and-error interactions, learning about generative AI tools while using them, and reflecting on their suitability for one's own ways of working.
Support in story ideation	Finding inspiration and new perspectives to support story ideation. AI generated outputs are not necessarily expected to be usable as is but to stimulate one's own thinking.
Uses in searching and selecting information	
Exploratory oriented use	Exploring information space to gain an overview of potentially relevant information for the story. Supports associative thinking and story development.
Topic-oriented use	Searching information about a topic. Getting concise and well-structured answers is perceived to take time away from the information searching, thus leaving more time for delving into the topic and for the creative process.
Document content-oriented use	Using generative AI to help grasp relevant content from a source document and to facilitate information selection. Helps identifying key terms and clarifying unclear content. Enables going through more source materials and moving more quickly to the writing stage.
Uses in working with information	
Preparing for and transcribing interviews	Intertwines with searching and selecting information because generative AI assists gaining knowledge that helps preparing for the interviews. Using generative AI to draft an interview request, prepare interview questions, and transcribe interviews.
Support in analysing data	Asking to summarise data or asking for procedural advice (e.g., for coding).
Uses in synthesising and reporting	
Support in drafting	Supports expressing content from a source document in different words. Processing a source document to generate a story draft or excerpts for it. Revising the text for accuracy, focus, context, and style.
Support in editing	Asking suggestions or feedback regarding spelling, grammar, headline, lede, and structure of a story. Desire to be in control of the process to avoid new mistakes appearing into the text.

Table 2. Uses of generative AI and related information interactions exhibited by journalists during the journalistic story creation process.

Discussion

This study examined the uses of generative AI and related information interactions in journalistic story creation process, from a task-based perspective. The research questions were: RQ1: What types of uses of generative AI are included in journalistic story creation process? and, RQ2: What kind of information interactions do journalists exhibit when they use generative AI during the journalistic story creation process?

By applying Järvelin et al.'s (2015) task-based information interaction evaluation model, four categories of uses of generative AI were identified. They included qualitatively different use types and information interactions (see also Late & Kumpulainen, 2022). First, uses in task planning and reflective assessment concerned testing-and-learning use and support in story ideation. Testing-and-learning use included interactions such as trial and error, and it dealt with learning about and reflecting on generative AI use in story creation processes. This type of use contributes to one's metacognitive understanding of conditions where generative AI tools could be useful,

including how one personally prefers using (or not using) them (see Flavel, 1979; Pintrich, 2002). Support in story ideation concerned finding inspiration and new perspectives. However, generative AI was not expected to provide usable ideas as is. Rather it was used to stimulate one's own ideation process. Similar observations were made in other studies (Vainikka et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). Vainikka et al. stated about screenwriters that 'Some informants described having had conversations with ChatGPT, using it as a partner to throw ideas around but at the same time keeping control and producing the final idea themselves' (p. 62).

Second, in searching and selecting information, generative AI was used in an exploratory, topic and document content-oriented manner. Exploratory and topic-oriented uses are well-known approaches to information searching (e.g., Marchionini, 2006; Rose & Levinson, 2004). However, generative AI was perceived as enabling (for example) more extensive or more efficient information searching, providing information in a form that better meets the task performer's current information needs compared to traditional search tools. Document content-oriented use (for example, by skimming and reading the documents while selecting them (Late & Kumpulainen, 2022)) is also a known approach in information interaction. However, this study suggests that generative AI makes these types of interactions more dynamic. It facilitates interaction with document contents that themselves are static, for example, by generating translations or summaries of the contents according to human instructions.

Third, working with information involved various uses of generative AI. For example, it was used to support creativity (e.g., creating interview questions) and to save time in more mechanistic parts of the work process (e.g., transcribing interviews). In analysing data, generative AI enabled asking questions about the data and thus supported its interpretation. It was also used to assist with procedural questions regarding coding and other tool usage. In comparison, other research indicates that support from generative AI may facilitate taking on data journalism tasks that require technical skills (De Cooker et al., 2026).

Fourth, in synthesising and reporting, generative AI was used to support drafting and editing. In drafting, participants' information interactions concerned reviewing, revising, and rewriting the AI generated story drafts or excerpts. This resonates with the findings in Lee et al. (2025) about task stewardship. According to them, with the use of generative AI, the focus in knowledge workers' task performance shifted toward working with and revising generative AI responses, and ensuring the quality of their work products. In editing, participants used generative AI to give suggestions or feedback regarding the text (e.g., grammar) but wanted to be in control of the process. This suggests that generative AI tools should not be overly supportive, doing more than what is asked of them for the specific editing task.

Verification of generative AI responses was a theme that recurred in different uses of generative AI. This is not surprising as verifying information is at the core of writing journalistic stories (Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2022). Participants were aware of the unreliable nature of generative AI and exhibited verification interactions, for example, in searching and selecting information, analysing data, and reviewing and revising the AI generated drafts or excerpts. Furthermore, other research reports that generative AI itself could be used for verification in journalism *'to rapidly cross-reference statements*' (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2026, p. 887), but such use was not observed in this study.

The results of this study indicate that journalists have different preferences for using generative AI in the story creation process. Deciding whether to use generative AI tools can be seen as part of the task planning activity that, as Järvelin et al. (2015) noted, affects information interactions within the other activities in the task-based information interaction model. Moreover, the results suggest that journalists do not treat all story types the same regarding the use of generative AI. For example, generative AI was not considered useful in producing initial drafts for in-depth

journalistic stories. This suggests that uses of generative AI should be supported in ways that make them applicable to different ways of working and different story creation contexts.

This study has some limitations. It focused on cognitive and behavioural activities in accordance with Järvelin et al. (2015), but did not examine the affective dimension (Kulhthau, 2004) in journalists' information interactions. This could be a subject for future studies. Other research has shown that people seek, for example, emotional support from generative AI (Zhao et al., 2025). Second, the participants were not always entirely sure whether the tools they were using were based on generative AI (e.g., in-house tools may have integrated also other tool features than generative AI). However, the results reflect participants' own understanding of using generative AI tools. Third, this study did not compare the uses of different types of generative AI tools, for example, in-house tools and tools available to the public. This could be addressed in future studies.

In this study, uses of generative AI were examined in the context of creating journalistic stories. The results could be transferable to other work or learning tasks where the goal is to create a written product, although this requires more research. Furthermore, this study contributes to understanding information interactions while using generative AI in real-life tasks.

Conclusion

Generative AI is changing journalists' information environment. In this study, uses of generative AI and related information interactions were qualitatively examined in journalistic story creation process. A task-based information interaction evaluation model (Järvelin et al., 2015) was applied in the study. The study's main contributions are as follows. First, the results of this study showed that generative AI was used in journalistic story creation process in various ways that are qualitatively different, from ideation and planning to the completed journalistic story. Second, this study illustrated how journalists applied some well-known approaches to information searching and selecting (namely exploratory, topical, and document content-oriented approaches) when using generative AI in their work tasks (see, for example, Late and Kumpulainen, 2022; Marchionini, 2006; Rose and Levinson, 2004). These findings increase understanding of generative AI use and information interactions, which is key to designing generative AI tools that support real-life journalistic story creation processes.

Third, this study pointed to information interactions with generative AI that require more in-depth investigations in the future. Specifically, this study suggests that generative AI may facilitate journalists' information searching and information access. However, more investigations are needed on how people search, access, or work with different types of information items (such as documents and data) in generative AI environments. Especially in a highly exploratory oriented use of generative AI, these could be intertwined. This study also suggests that journalists take various steps to verify the AI-generated content. Future studies could examine journalists' information verification strategies when using generative AI in different information activities and work tasks.

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About the author

Laura Korkeamäki works as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences at Tampere University, Finland, in a research project on journalism and generative artificial intelligence. Her research interests focus on human information interaction. She can be contacted at laura.korkeamaki@tuni.fi

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