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The Role of Academic Locus of Control and Technology Use in Predicting EFL Learners' Language Learning Motivation: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Academic locus of control (LoC), or students' beliefs about their ability to influence learning outcomes, has been linked to language success. Grounded in self-determination theory, this pilot study, conducted as part of a larger Ph.D. project, explored the relationship between academic locus of control, technology use, and language learning motivation among EFL learners, with attention to potential mediation by traditional ICTs and AI tools used for language learning. An online questionnaire, comprising Trice's Academic Locus of Control Scale (1985), a technology use frequency scale (separating ICT and AI tools), and Laine's Language Motivation Questionnaire (1988), was piloted with 21 EFL students enrolled in Hungarian universities. The first pilot confirmed strong reliability for the LoC ($\alpha = .885$) and motivation ($\alpha = .969$) scales but revealed weaknesses in the technology-use scales, which led to item revisions. The second pilot with 27 students showed marked improvement: the ICT scale reached $\alpha = .807$ after the removal of two low-performing items, and the AI scale reached $\alpha = .824$ following the deletion of one underperforming item. These refinements strengthened the internal consistency of the new technology-use measures. Preliminary analyses indicated a positive association between LoC and motivation, while mediation paths through ICT and AI use were not statistically supported due to the small sample. Even so, the results confirmed the clarity, reliability, and suitability of the revised instrument for full-scale data collection.

Keywords: Academic Locus of Control; AI Tools; EFL Learners; Language Motivation; Technology Use