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Do AI Idiosyncratic Uses Disagree with Students' Learning Focus and Self-Efficacy?

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Abstract

A critical aspect of how students approach higher education is the distinction between learning orientation and grade orientation. Learning orientation has been linked to effective study habits, low test anxiety, and high performance. In the age of generative artificial intelligence (AI), it remains unclear whether these orientations are also associated with differences in AI use and self-efficacy (i.e., confidence in one's abilities). For second-language speakers at English-medium institutions, the enticement of AI tools as linguistic problem-solvers coexisting with a grade orientation may be particularly detrimental to academic success. To address this issue, a purposive sample of 388 Arabic-English bilingual students pursuing an undergraduate degree at an English-medium university was surveyed. Students were asked to report their proclivities for three modes of generative-AI use: dependency on AI tools for academic tasks, as means of academic support, and as platforms for developing academic skills. They also reported their self-efficacy and their primary interest in learning and grades. In this study, 150 students were found to be grade-oriented, 205 learning-oriented, and 33 did not express a proclivity for either orientation. Welch's ANOVA revealed that learning-oriented students exhibited lower AI dependency and use of AI for academic support, but higher self-efficacy. Grade-oriented students exhibited the opposite pattern. Use of AI for skill development did not differ between groups. These findings question the widespread utilization of AI tools in higher education for learning or teaching purposes. They suggest that training intended to moderate the consumption of AI may be warranted.

Keywords: AI Modes Of Use, Self-Confidence, Learning Preference, Grade Preference, Underrepresented Student Population