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Generating discussion: Using ChatGPT to foster critical thinking skills

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While generative AI has been around since the 1950s (Cao et al., 2023), in the last year and a half, the release of ChatGPT 3.5 and the influx of similar programs using large language models has left many in the academic world scrambling to find answers of how such powerful machines and education can coexist. Whether one is excited or concerned by the prospect of AI like ChatGPT in the classroom, a question remains: when students can turn to technology for so many answers, how can educators continue to encourage creativity and critical thinking in the classroom? One rather straightforward answer is by exposing students to the realities of ChatGPT and educating them how it can be used. Rather than impairing their ability to think critically, by giving students the space to discover the successes and deficiencies of ChatGPT and similar programs, AI can be a tool to foster critical thinking skills (Chang et al., 2021). This presentation will outline a classroom practice for English-language students at a private, Japanese university. The presentation will discuss the procedure, the positives, and the challenges of a practice in which students analyzed discussion questions created by ChatGPT. Students were required to use higher-order thinking skills by considering the significance, role, and qualities of thought-provoking discussion questions and evaluating generated questions against these criteria. Beyond encouraging critical thinking, the activity highlighted its necessity when adopting new, exciting technology.

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Keywords

critical thinking, ChatGPT, discussion

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