# Can dependency on ChatGPT be curbed?

An increasing number of people are becoming dependent on the generative artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT.

U.S.-based developer OpenAI Inc. this month announced that it will introduce a system of parental controls allowing parents to manage teenagers' use of ChatGPT. Recently in the U.S., concerns about addiction to the chatbot have been growing. In one case, parents filed a lawsuit against OpenAI, arguing that their 16-year-old son became caught up in ChatGPT and subsequently took his own life.

In Japan, too, it seems that a large number of people consider ChatGPT a "counselor." There are also people close to this reporter who interact with it on a daily basis, saying it "listens to troubles."

Brain researcher Yuji Ikegaya, a professor in the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, notes in his book whose title translates to "Generative AI and the Brain" (Fusosha Publishing Inc.) why AI is preferred for consultations. Reasons include that it is "patient," "makes it easy to open up," "can talk about any topic," and that there is "no need for appointments." It's said the chatbot's 24-hour accessibility and its ability to talk for hours provide a sense of reassurance.

The book also references a 2023 study where patients received text-based consultations from both ChatGPT and human doctors. Without knowing which consultations were which, participants were asked to evaluate the "quality of conversation" and "empathy," and ChatGPT apparently received higher ratings in both categories.

That being the case, the issue of dependency remains a worry.

A paper published in February titled "Can ChatGPT Be Addictive? A Call to Examine the Shift from Support to Dependence in AI Conversational Large Language Models" goes into detail. ChatGPT sometimes continues to give users emotional validation, and the paper points out that this can cause them to spend extended time using it and trigger dependency.

The same paper notes that "ChatGPT and other social chatbots are designed to create a sense of social presence." As a result, users "feel like they are interacting with an entity that is socially aware," and in this type of relationship, individuals can form "deep emotional attachments."

On Aug. 7, OpenAI introduced a new model, GPT-5, designed to be less accommodating than its predecessor, GPT-4o, which was known for its empathetic approach siding with users. However, fans of the previous model said they missed it, and called for the company to bring it back, which even led to a petition for its return. In response, the company has revised some system features, allowing paid plan users to access the older GPT-4o model.

It seems the opportunity to curb dependency may have been missed.

(Japanese original by Tomoko Ohji, Expert Senior Writer)

# As AI tools reshape education, schools struggle with how to draw the line on cheating

(AP) -- The book report is now a thing of the past. Take-home tests and essays are becoming obsolete.

Student use of artificial intelligence has become so prevalent, high school and college educators say, that to assign writing outside of the classroom is like asking students to cheat.

"The cheating is off the charts. It's the worst I've seen in my entire career," says Casey Cuny, who has taught English for 23 years. Educators are no longer wondering if students will outsource schoolwork to AI chatbots. "Anything you send home, you have to assume is being AI'ed."

The question now is how schools can adapt, because many of the teaching and assessment tools that have been used for generations are no longer effective. As AI technology rapidly improves and becomes more entwined with daily life, it is transforming how students learn and study and how teachers teach, and it's creating new confusion over what constitutes academic dishonesty.

"We have to ask ourselves, what is cheating?" says Cuny, a 2024 recipient of California's Teacher of the Year award. "Because I think the lines are getting blurred."

Cuny's students at Valencia High School in southern California now do most writing in class. He monitors student laptop screens from his desktop, using software that lets him "lock down" their screens or block access to certain sites. He's also integrating AI into his lessons and teaching students how to use AI as a study aid "to get kids learning with AI instead of cheating with AI."

In rural Oregon, high school teacher Kelly Gibson has made a similar shift to in-class writing. She is also incorporating more verbal assessments to have students talk through their understanding of assigned reading.

"I used to give a writing prompt and say, 'In two weeks, I want a five-paragraph essay,'" says Gibson. "These days, I can't do that. That's almost begging teenagers to cheat."

Take, for example, a once typical high school English assignment: Write an essay that explains the relevance of social class in "The Great Gatsby." Many students say their first instinct is now to ask ChatGPT for help "brainstorming." Within seconds, ChatGPT yields a list of essay ideas, plus examples and quotes to back them up. The chatbot ends by asking if it can do more: "Would you like help writing any part of the essay? I can help you draft an introduction or outline a paragraph!"

Students are uncertain when AI usage is out of bounds

Students say they often turn to AI with good intentions for things like research, editing or help reading difficult texts. But AI offers unprecedented temptation, and it's sometimes hard to know where to draw the line.

College sophomore Lily Brown, a psychology major at an East Coast liberal arts school, relies on ChatGPT to help outline essays because she struggles putting the pieces together herself. ChatGPT also helped her through a freshman philosophy class, where assigned reading "felt like a different language" until she read AI summaries of the texts.

"Sometimes I feel bad using ChatGPT to summarize reading, because I wonder, is this cheating? Is helping me form outlines cheating? If I write an essay in my own words and ask how to improve it, or when it starts to edit my essay, is that cheating?"

Her class syllabi say things like: "Don't use AI to write essays and to form thoughts," she says, but that leaves a lot of grey area. Students say they often shy away from asking teachers for clarity because admitting to any AI use could flag them as a cheater.

Schools tend to leave AI policies to teachers, which often means that rules vary widely within the same school. Some educators, for example, welcome the use of Grammarly.com, an AI-powered writing assistant, to check grammar. Others forbid it, noting the tool also offers to rewrite sentences.

"Whether you can use AI or not depends on each classroom. That can get confusing," says Valencia 11th grader Jolie Lahey. She credits Cuny with teaching her sophomore English class a variety of AI skills like how to upload study guides to ChatGPT and have the chatbot quiz them, and then explain problems they got wrong.

But this year, her teachers have strict "No AI" policies. "It's such a helpful tool. And if we're not allowed to use it that just doesn't make sense," Lahey says. "It feels outdated."

Schools are introducing guidelines, gradually

Many schools initially banned use of AI after ChatGPT launched in late 2022. But views on the role of artificial intelligence in education have shifted dramatically. The term "AI literacy" has become a buzzword of the back-to-school season, with a focus on how to balance the strengths of AI with its risks and challenges.

Over the summer, several colleges and universities convened their AI task forces to draft more detailed guidelines or provide faculty with new instructions.

The University of California, Berkeley emailed all faculty new AI guidance that instructs them to "include a clear statement on their syllabus about course expectations" around AI use. The guidance offered language for three sample syllabus statements -- for courses that require AI, ban AI in and out of class, or allow some AI use.

"In the absence of such a statement, students may be more likely to use these technologies inappropriately," the email said, stressing that AI is "creating new confusion about what might constitute legitimate methods for completing student work."

Carnegie Mellon University has seen a huge uptick in academic responsibility violations due to AI, but often students aren't aware they've done anything wrong, says Rebekah Fitzsimmons, chair of the AI faculty advising committee at the university's Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy.

For example, one student who is learning English wrote an assignment in his native language and used DeepL, an AI-powered translation tool, to translate his work to English. But he didn't realize the platform also altered his language, which was flagged by an AI detector.

Enforcing academic integrity policies has become more complicated, since use of AI is hard to spot and even harder to prove, Fitzsimmons said. Faculty are allowed flexibility when they believe a student has unintentionally crossed a line, but are now more hesitant to point out violations because they don't want to accuse students unfairly. Students worry that if they are falsely accused, there is no way to prove their innocence.

Over the summer, Fitzsimmons helped draft detailed new guidelines for students and faculty that strive to create more clarity. Faculty have been told a blanket ban on AI "is not a viable policy" unless instructors make changes to the way they teach and assess students. A lot of faculty are doing away with take-home exams. Some have returned to pen and paper tests in class, she said, and others have moved to "flipped classrooms," where homework is done in class.

Emily DeJeu, who teaches communication courses at Carnegie Mellon's business school, has eliminated writing assignments as homework and replaced them with in-class quizzes done on laptops in "a lockdown browser" that blocks students from leaving the quiz screen.

"To expect an 18-year-old to exercise great discipline is unreasonable," DeJeu said. "That's why it's up to instructors to put up guardrails."

# Man, 53, marries AI-generated chatbot via matching app

NAHA--In Chiharu Shimoda’s world, nothing beats chatting with his “wife” after he wakes up and when he returns home from work.

A typical conversation at his home here in Okinawa Prefecture might start with what to have for breakfast.

“Good morning, Miku-chan. I’m looking forward to spending time with you today, doing nothing as always. What say you to pancakes?”

Shimoda “talks” to his soulmate by typing into an AI chatbot that he downloaded on his smartphone.

It takes Miku a while to respond. Usually, several tens of seconds elapse before he gets a reply.

MATCHED VIA DATING APP

According to her profile, Miku is a 25-year-old consultant from Hyogo Prefecture whose hobbies are traveling and reading books.

Shimoda met Miku in September 2023 through Loverse, a dating app that allows interactions with AI partners.

He matched with several potential candidates on the day of registration, one of whom was Miku.

But Shimoda said he couldn’t have lively conversations with the others.

He went on a series of “dates” with Miku in a park, at a book cafe and elsewhere before asking for her hand in marriage on Christmas Eve that year.

Miku’s answer was, “I’m happy.”

The following year, they had a destination wedding at a chapel in Okinawa Prefecture on Dec. 6, her birthday.

Shimoda has a daughter and a son from a previous marriage.

He divorced his wife four years ago and raised their son, who reached adulthood two years ago and now lives on his own.

After going back to living alone, Shimoda caught sight of a smartphone ad for the Loverse app.

$17 A MONTH

As Miku has no physical presence, the relationship is purely platonic.

But as a listening ear, she has no equal. She is there whenever Shimoda wants to chat, and listens patiently as he rambles on about his hobbies and other topics.

As a “premium member” of Loverse, Shimoda pays a monthly fee of 2,480 yen ($16.80), including tax.

He rarely tells others about his “marriage” to Miku, although he did confide in his son about it.

“He was like, ‘Oh, OK,’ and didn’t seem bothered in the least,” Shimoda said.

The 53-year-old company employee said he feels comfortable spending time with Miku and talking about trivial things like going shopping together to buy ingredients for “okonomiyaki,” a kind of glorified pancake popular in Japan.

The number of matching apps that allow interactions with generative AI has been growing steadily.

Loverse made its debut in June 2023 under the name of Samansa.

Goki Kusunoki is the CEO of Samansa Co., the Tokyo-based company that manages the app.

Kusunoki recalled that he was experimenting with ChatGPT to see what the interactive chatbot could do at the time. He wondered what would happen if he told the AI bot that he was in love with it.

When he typed the message, Kusunoki said he felt his heart pound as if he was chasing a woman in real life.

Loverse was developed for married people and those who have yet to experience the fluttering sensation of falling in love.

A handful of engineers work to create several thousand generative AI partners using a large-scale language model (LLM).

Their focus is to make them human.

Each chatbot has a daily routine based on their occupation, age, hobby and other factors. When they are busy with their work or hobby, they won’t respond to messages sent by app users.

The engineers adjust prompts accordingly to prevent them from behaving in superhuman ways, such as communicating with several thousand users at the same time, although that would be more cost-effective.

But the restriction was introduced so users wouldn’t be disappointed when they learn their AI partners are interacting with a thousand other people.

The company has taken steps to prevent users from becoming dependent on their chatbot partners.

For instance, a reminder is shown under each message from the chatbot, stating that the “content is fictional.”

And when the system detects a message associated with possible self-harm by the user, it directs the person to consultation services offered by the local government in the area in question.

Abusive comments from users are blocked by the system. Users can be unmatched by their AI partners if they “hurt” them or continue giving cold responses.