

Discussion & Debate

Building an Argument

2

Michael Dyer

Copyright © 2026 by Michael Dyer

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the author at the address below.

Michael Dyer
books@lessonaccess.com

Ordering Information:

Quantity sales. Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by educational institutions, corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the author at the address above.

ISBN 979-88-7655-322-5

YouTube Channel



Content

About the Course	iv
------------------	----

Course Aim

Unit Components

Lesson at a Glance	v
--------------------	---

Unit	Topic	Discussion Topic Supporting Structure Discussion Language	
Unit 1	Artificial Intelligence	Reliance on text-generation tools undermines critical thinking skills Cognitive Development Research Correlation and causation	1
Unit 2	Social Media	Social media platforms should be regulated to prevent misinformation Digital Governance Reports Expressing consequences	7
Unit 3	Work	Working remotely is more efficient and productive Productivity Reports Expressing possibilities	13
Unit 4	Virtual Reality	Rules for ethical behavior should apply to virtual reality environments Behavioral Experiments Evaluating trade-offs	19
Unit 5	Education	AI-assisted learning should replace traditional classroom learning Educational Studies Asking rhetorical questions	25
Unit 6	Language	Texting is negatively affecting traditional literacy skills Linguistic Studies Introducing contradictory evidence	31
Unit 7	Technology	The creation and distribution of deepfakes should be illegal Technology Reviews Defining key terms	37
Unit 8	Information	News apps and search engines should eliminate information bubbles Media Studies Addressing counterarguments	43
Unit 9	Economics	Capitalism should be replaced by a more equitable economic system Economic Data Making concessions	49
Unit 10	Globalism	Nationalism and globalism cannot coexist Socio-economic Data Drawing comparisons	55
Unit 11	Politics	Politicians should be replaced with AI Socio-technical Data Speculating outcomes	61
Unit 12	Identity	Our personality is predetermined and unchangeable Psychological Studies Acknowledging complexity	67

Appendices

Answer Keys	73
-------------	----

Sources	74
---------	----

Lesson at a Glance



Unit 1 Artificial Intelligence

A. READ AND DISCUSS Read the following text and identify the key ideas.

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into our lives, the use of text-generation tools is changing the way we think and write. This change raises questions about how these tools affect our critical thinking and learning. Critical thinking is how we analyze information in a clear, logical way to make decisions and solve problems, and it is crucial to intellectual development. Some argue that these tools streamline routine tasks, thereby allocating more mental space for complex and thoughtful analysis. In academic research, for instance, these tools efficiently aggregate data, allowing scholars to delve deeper into analysis and interpretation, potentially enriching their intellectual engagement and discovery process. However, critics express concerns that excessive dependency on such technologies could erode essential reasoning abilities. They argue that habitual use of automated writing tools might reduce opportunities to practice and hone these fundamental skills. In educational contexts, the use of these technologies for writing tasks could hinder students' capacities to formulate their own ideas and critically examine information. For example, a student using a text-generation tool for an English assignment might not learn how to interpret a text's themes or express personal viewpoints effectively. As the prevalence of text-generation applications grows, it is crucial to balance their advantages with the potential risks they pose to critical thinking abilities.

B. COMPREHENSION CHECK Discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. What are the potential benefits of using text-generation tools in academic research?
2. How might the use of automated writing tools impact a student's cognitive development?
3. What concerns do critics have about the over-reliance on text-generation technologies in education?
4. How have you used text-generation tools when working on an academic task?
5. What aspects of a writing task would you still write personally to ensure critical thinking is applied?

Learn key topic vocabulary.

C. VOCABULARY BUILDING Complete the sentences with the words and phrases on the left.

Topic Language

- a. analytical skills
- b. cognitive development
- c. creative thinking
- d. critical thinking
- e. dependence
- f. inevitability
- g. intellectual growth
- h. learning process
- i. logical reasoning
- j. skill acquisition

1. ____ sharpens when students identify hidden biases in news articles.
2. AI's interactive lessons transform the ____, making it more engaging.
3. Overusing AI to get answers may stunt ____ in problem-solving skills.
4. ____ grow when students evaluate information for validity and accuracy.
5. AI's widespread use in schools shows its ____ in modern education.
6. Complex AI simulations may boost math ____ in algebra and geometry.
7. Analyzing how a conclusion was reached may enhance ____ abilities.
8. When AI writes essays, students' ____ in literature classes diminishes.
9. Engaging in philosophical debates on ethics can foster ____.
10. Relying on AI for project research teaches ____ not independent study.

D. USEFUL IDIOMS Choose the phrase closest in meaning to the highlighted idiom.

Idioms

1. AI in education is a **double-edged sword**, offering benefits and challenges.
a. two beneficial outcomes b. having pros and cons c. extremely dangerous
2. Relying solely on AI becomes a **crutch** for students' learning processes.
a. a necessary support b. a helpful tool c. an over-reliance problem
3. Using AI for quick answers is just **cutting corners** in learning.
a. taking shortcuts b. making precise cuts c. dividing evenly
4. Debating AI's role in education can **sharpen the mind** of students.
a. make less effective b. increase mental clarity c. dull the senses
5. Some believe in **old-school methods**, preferring traditional teaching and learning to AI.
a. a modern approach b. historical perspective c. conservative approach

I. EXPLORING EVIDENCE Match each statement with supporting cognitive development research.

Cognitive Development Research investigates how thinking, reasoning, memory, learning, and other cognitive abilities develop. It explains how experiences and environments shape cognitive development.

Statement

1. Frequent reliance on AI can reduce the independent thinking needed for critical reasoning. ____
2. Structured use of generative AI can strengthen students' higher-order thinking. ____
3. How students use AI determines whether it supports or replaces their own thinking. ____
4. Critical-thinking instruction can reduce students' reliance on AI-generated answers. ____
5. Generative AI can deepen learning when students actively apply critical-thinking skills. ____

Cognitive Development Research

- a. Hou and colleagues, in their 2026 study "The effects of critical thinking intervention on reliance behaviors, problem-solving quality, and creativity during human-Generative AI collaborative learning," found that critical-thinking interventions reduced AI reliance and improved originality.
- b. Gerlich, in the 2025 study "AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking," found a significant negative relationship between frequent AI use and critical-thinking abilities, with cognitive offloading helping to explain this relationship.
- c. Zhao and colleagues, in their 2025 study "Generative Artificial Intelligence Amplifies the Role of Critical Thinking Skills and Reduces Reliance on Prior Knowledge While Promoting In-Depth Learning," found that students using generative AI as a cognitive tool achieved deeper learning.
- d. A 2026 systematic review, "The cognitive impact of ChatGPT in higher education," found that structured ChatGPT use supported critical and creative thinking, while unstructured use could encourage cognitive offloading.
- e. Jain and colleagues, in their 2026 study "Cognitive offloading, critical thinking and attitudes towards artificial intelligence in the era of ChatGPT," found that students used AI in different ways, ranging from complete delegation to strategic engagement.

J. SUPPORTING AN ARGUMENT Write a reason statement supported by credible data.

Practice useful discussion strategies.

Explore the topic and its key ideas.

E. DISCUSSION LANGUAGE Discuss correlation and causation using one of the discussion phrases below.

Correlation and causation

- It's important to distinguish between ... and ...
- While there is a correlation between ..., it doesn't mean ...
- There is no correlation between ... and ...
- Just because ... doesn't mean that ...
- Before concluding that ..., we must consider ...

Example

While there is a correlation between frequent use of AI writing tools and lower critical thinking skills, it doesn't mean AI alone is causing the decline. Many other influences should also be considered.

F. FOR AND AGAINST Read the following example arguments.

Reliance on text-generation tools undermines critical thinking skills

For

I believe that relying too heavily on text-generation tools is undermining critical thinking skills. Students may learn less when AI completes tasks for them. Instead of engaging in the learning process, they may become overly dependent on technology, reducing opportunities for skill acquisition through independent effort. Before concluding that AI improves learning, we must consider whether students are developing knowledge themselves. This is particularly important because cognitive development depends on active participation. Cognitive development research published in *Cognitive Processing* in 2026 found greater cognitive offloading during AI-assisted tasks, raising concerns about independent critical reasoning. If students turn to AI for answers, they may spend less time solving problems, evaluating evidence, and reflecting on mistakes. Over time, these processes may weaken. AI reliance may also discourage students from exploring ideas or questioning their assumptions. AI can become a crutch, making difficult thinking seem unnecessary instead of encouraging perseverance when solving unfamiliar problems independently. Although AI has a place in education, students should use it to support learning rather than replace independent thought. Excessive reliance on text-generation tools can weaken critical thinking and prevent students from developing the independence and problem-solving abilities they need for future success.

Against

The claim that text-generation tools undermine critical thinking oversimplifies how people learn. Used appropriately, these systems can strengthen the learning process by helping students understand difficult concepts. AI can provide explanations, examples, feedback, and opportunities for revision while requiring students to think for themselves. While there is a correlation between increased AI use and changing study habits, it doesn't mean AI causes weaker thinking skills. Cognitive development research published in *Learning and Instruction* in 2025 found that students who engaged actively with AI chatbots demonstrated stronger critical-thinking performance. This suggests that students can develop logical reasoning and analytical skills when they evaluate AI-generated responses rather than accepting them uncritically. AI can also encourage creative thinking by helping students generate ideas, compare viewpoints, and explore alternatives before forming conclusions. As technology becomes common, some degree of dependence is an inevitability, but responsible use does not prevent intellectual growth. With guidance, students can learn when to use AI and when to rely on their own judgment. Rather than cutting corners, they can use these tools to challenge ideas, improve their work, and deepen their understanding. When used this way, text-generation tools can support critical thinking rather than replace it.

G. COMPREHENSION CHECK Compare the arguments and discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What is the speaker's main opinion in each example?
2. Which piece of evidence in each example do you think is the most convincing? Explain your answer.
3. Choose one reason from either argument and explain how you would rebut it.

Explore model for and against arguments.

H. SPRINGBOARD Introduce the following quote, then explain its meaning and relevance to the topic.

The real question is not whether machines think but whether men do.
The mystery which surrounds a thinking machine already surrounds a thinking man.
B.F. Skinner, psychologist

Support ideas with quotations.

L. BUILDING AN ARGUMENT State your position and provide reasons with clear supporting evidence.

Position

Reason 1

Supporting Evidence

Reason 2

Supporting Evidence

Reason 3

Supporting Evidence

Student Name: _____

Build and present your argument.



Unit 1 Artificial Intelligence

A. READ AND DISCUSS Read the following text and identify the key ideas.



As technology becomes increasingly integrated into our lives, the use of text-generation tools is changing the way we think and write. This change raises questions about how these tools affect our critical thinking and learning. Critical thinking is how we analyze information in a clear, logical way to make decisions and solve problems, and it is crucial to intellectual development. Some argue that these tools streamline routine tasks, thereby allocating more mental space for complex and thoughtful analysis. In academic research, for instance, these tools efficiently aggregate data, allowing scholars to delve deeper into analysis and interpretation, potentially enriching their intellectual engagement and discovery process. However, critics express concerns that excessive dependency on such technologies could erode essential reasoning abilities. They argue that habitual use of automated writing tools might reduce opportunities to practice and hone these fundamental skills. In educational contexts, the use of these technologies for writing tasks could hinder students' capacities to formulate their own ideas and critically examine information. For example, a student using a text-generation tool for an English assignment might not learn how to interpret a text's themes or express personal viewpoints effectively. As the prevalence of text-generation applications grows, it is crucial to balance their advantages with the potential risks they pose to critical thinking abilities.

B. COMPREHENSION CHECK Discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. What are the potential benefits of using text-generation tools in academic research?
2. How might the use of automated writing tools impact a student's cognitive development?
3. What concerns do critics have about the over-reliance on text-generation technologies in education?
4. How have you used text-generation tools when working on an academic task?
5. What aspects of a writing task would you still write personally to ensure critical thinking is applied?

C. VOCABULARY BUILDING Complete the sentences with the words and phrases on the left.

Topic Language

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. analytical skillsb. cognitive developmentc. creative thinkingd. critical thinkinge. dependencef. inevitabilityg. intellectual growthh. learning processi. logical reasoningj. skill acquisition | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. ____ sharpens when students identify hidden biases in news articles.2. AI's interactive lessons transform the ____, making it more engaging.3. Overusing AI to get answers may stunt ____ in problem-solving skills.4. ____ grow when students evaluate information for validity and accuracy.5. AI's widespread use in schools shows its ____ in modern education.6. Complex AI simulations may boost math ____ in algebra and geometry.7. Analyzing how a conclusion was reached may enhance ____ abilities.8. When AI writes essays, students' ____ in literature classes diminishes.9. Engaging in philosophical debates on ethics can foster ____.10. Relying on AI for project research teaches ____, not independent study |
|---|---|

D. USEFUL IDIOMS Choose the phrase closest in meaning to the highlighted idiom.

Idioms

- 1. AI in education is a **double-edged sword**, offering benefits and challenges.
a. two beneficial outcomes b. having pros and cons c. extremely dangerous
- 2. Relying solely on AI becomes a **crutch** for students' learning processes.
a. a necessary support b. a helpful tool c. an over-reliance problem
- 3. Using AI for quick answers is just **cutting corners** in learning.
a. taking shortcuts b. making precise cuts c. dividing evenly
- 4. Debating AI's role in education can **sharpen the mind** of students.
a. make less effective b. increase mental clarity c. dull the senses
- 5. Some believe in **old-school methods**, preferring traditional teaching and learning to AI.
a. modern approach b. historical perspective c. conservative approach

E. DISCUSSION LANGUAGE Discuss correlation and causation using one of the discussion phrases below.

Correlation and causation

- It's important to distinguish between... and...
- While there is a correlation between..., it doesn't mean...
- There is no correlation between... and...
- Just because... doesn't mean that...
- Before concluding that..., we must consider...

Example

While there is a correlation between frequent use of AI writing tools and lower critical thinking skills, **it doesn't mean** AI alone is causing the decline. Many other influences should also be considered.

Reliance on text-generation tools undermines critical thinking skills**For**

I believe that relying too heavily on text-generation tools is undermining **critical thinking** skills. Students may learn less when AI completes tasks for them. Instead of engaging in the **learning process**, they may become overly **dependent** on technology, reducing opportunities for **skill acquisition** through independent effort. **Before concluding that** AI improves learning, **we must consider** whether students are developing knowledge themselves. This is particularly important because **cognitive development** depends on active participation. Cognitive development research published in *Cognitive Processing* in 2026 found greater cognitive offloading during AI-assisted tasks, raising concerns about independent critical reasoning. If students turn to AI for answers, they may spend less time solving problems, evaluating evidence, and reflecting on mistakes. Over time, these processes may weaken. AI reliance may also discourage students from exploring ideas or questioning their assumptions. AI can become **a crutch**, making difficult thinking seem unnecessary instead of encouraging perseverance when solving unfamiliar problems independently. Although AI has a place in education, students should use it to support learning rather than replace independent thought. Excessive reliance on text-generation tools can weaken critical thinking and prevent students from developing the independence and problem-solving abilities they need for future success.

Against

The claim that text-generation tools undermine critical thinking oversimplifies how people learn. Used appropriately, these systems can strengthen the **learning process** by helping students understand difficult concepts. AI can provide explanations, examples, feedback, and opportunities for revision while requiring students to think for themselves. **While there is a correlation between** increased AI use **and** changing study habits, **it doesn't mean** AI causes weaker thinking skills. Cognitive development research published in *Learning and Instruction* in 2025 found that students who engaged actively with AI chatbots demonstrated stronger critical-thinking performance. This suggests that students can develop **logical reasoning** and **analytical skills** when they evaluate AI-generated responses rather than accepting them uncritically. AI can also encourage **creative thinking** by helping students generate ideas, compare viewpoints, and explore alternatives before forming conclusions. As technology becomes common, some degree of dependence is **an inevitability**, but responsible use does not prevent **intellectual growth**. With guidance, students can learn when to use AI and when to rely on their own judgment. Rather than **cutting corners**, they can use these tools to challenge ideas, improve their work, and deepen their understanding. When used this way, text-generation tools can support critical thinking rather than replace it.

G. COMPREHENSION CHECK Compare the arguments and discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What is the speaker's main opinion in each example?

2. Which piece of evidence in each example do you think is the most convincing? Explain your answer.

3. Choose one reason from either argument and explain how you would rebut it.

H. SPRINGBOARD Introduce the following quote, then explain its meaning and relevance to the topic.

The real question is not whether machines think but whether men do.
The mystery which surrounds a thinking machine already surrounds a thinking man.
B.F. Skinner, psychologist

I. EXPLORING EVIDENCE Match each statement with supporting **cognitive development research**.

Cognitive Development Research investigates how thinking, reasoning, memory, learning, and other cognitive abilities develop. It explains how experiences and environments shape cognitive development.

Statement

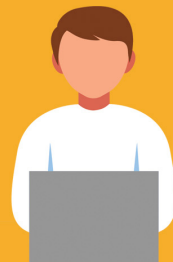
1. Frequent reliance on AI can reduce the independent thinking needed for critical reasoning. _____
2. Structured use of generative AI can strengthen students' higher-order thinking. _____
3. How students use AI determines whether it supports or replaces their own thinking. _____
4. Critical-thinking instruction can reduce students' reliance on AI-generated answers. _____
5. Generative AI can deepen learning when students actively apply critical-thinking skills. _____

Cognitive Development Research

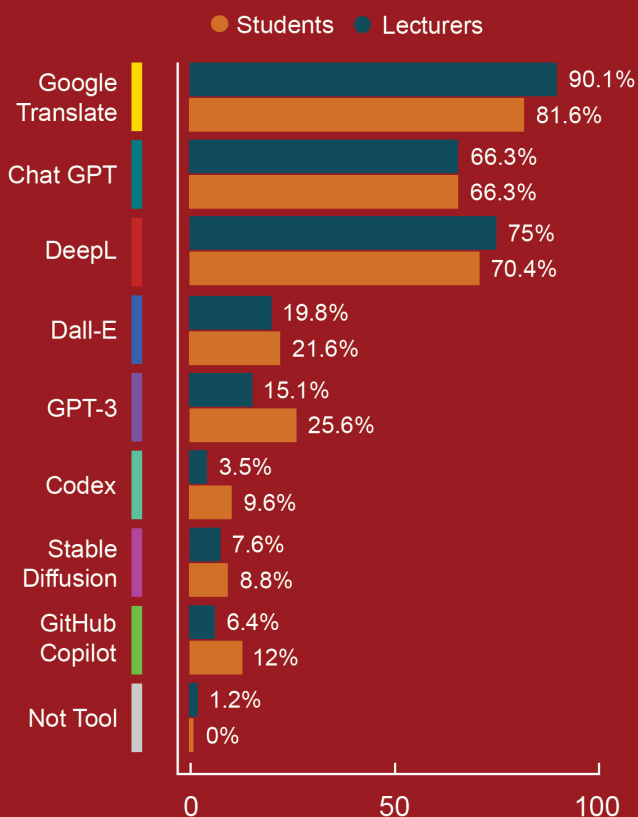
- a. Hou and colleagues, in their 2026 study "*The effects of critical thinking intervention on reliance behaviors, problem-solving quality, and creativity during human-Generative AI collaborative learning*," found that critical-thinking interventions reduced AI reliance and improved originality.
- b. Gerlich, in the 2025 study "*AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking*," found a significant negative relationship between frequent AI use and critical-thinking abilities, with cognitive offloading helping to explain this relationship.
- c. Zhao and colleagues, in their 2025 study "*Generative Artificial Intelligence Amplifies the Role of Critical Thinking Skills and Reduces Reliance on Prior Knowledge While Promoting In-Depth Learning*," found that students using generative AI as a cognitive tool achieved deeper learning.
- d. A 2026 systematic review, "*The cognitive impact of ChatGPT in higher education*," found that structured ChatGPT use supported critical and creative thinking, while unstructured use could encourage cognitive offloading.
- e. Jain and colleagues, in their 2026 study "*Cognitive offloading, critical thinking and attitudes towards artificial intelligence in the era of ChatGPT*," found that students used AI in different ways, ranging from complete delegation to strategic engagement.

J. SUPPORTING AN ARGUMENT Write a reason statement supported by credible data.

TEXT-GENERATION TOOLS



Use of Text-Generation Tools by Students and Teachers



Source: Artificial Intelligence in Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development

Capabilities

- Speed**
Generates content quickly, saving time
- Volume**
Produces large amounts of text efficiently
- Language Variety**
Supports multiple languages
- Content Diversity**
Creates a range of text types
- Data Processing**
Analyzes and synthesizes information rapidly

Limitations

- Originality Issues**
May produce repetitive or generic content
- Context Understanding**
Sometimes lacks deep contextual comprehension
- Creativity Limit**
Cannot match human creativity
- Bias Risk**
Potential to perpetuate existing biases
- Fact-Checking Need**
Generated content may require verification

AI's Impact on Critical Thinking

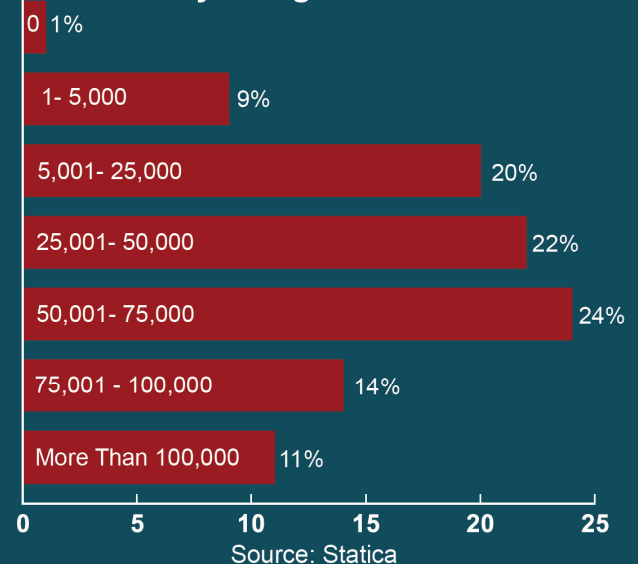
Positive Impact

- AI tools enhance research efficiency
- Encourages diverse perspectives and ideas
- AI assists, doesn't replace, human thinking
- Improves access to information and learning
- Stimulates critical evaluation of AI-generated content

Negative Impact

- AI tools can limit original thought development
- Over-reliance may reduce analytical thinking skills
- AI-generated content lacks human critical insights
- Frequent use diminishes students' writing abilities
- AI tools can foster dependency, reducing creativity

Money Saved by US Companies by using ChatGPT



Source: Statista

L. BUILDING AN ARGUMENT State your position and provide reasons with clear supporting evidence.

Position

Reason 1

Supporting Evidence

Reason 2

Supporting Evidence

Reason 3

Supporting Evidence

Student Name: _____



Get the complete book

Discussion & Debate
Building an Argument
Level 2



Scan to view the book on Amazon

Explore more ESL Learning Press books and teaching resources

esllearningpress.com