

The AI Curriculum Gap: Linguistic and Institutional Evidence of Perceived Control Asymmetries from Faculty and Student Discourse in Business Education

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Abstract

Generative AI has created a governance challenge for business schools: faculty and students hold systematically different views about what AI-related skills and orientations should be prioritized in the curriculum. This study argues the gap is structurally produced rather than idiosyncratic, grounded in institutional theory, self-determination theory (SDT), and perceived locus of control.

Faculty operate under academic-professional logic, shaped by accreditation pressures, normative disciplinary standards, and collective governance responsibility, consistent with a more externally oriented institutional/governance frame. Students operate under market logic, oriented toward workforce readiness and individual competitive positioning, reflecting greater perceived internal control. These structural differences produce predictably different linguistic orientations measurable in discourse.

Three theoretically derived hypotheses are tested using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22; Pennebaker et al., 2022) applied to speaker-level focus group transcripts from faculty ($n = 11$) and students ($n = 8$) in a business college AI working group. Mann-Whitney U tests reveal that faculty exhibit significantly higher Affiliation language ($U = 77$, $p = .004$, $r = .75$) and higher first-person plural pronoun use ($U = 70$, $p = .016$, $r = .59$), reflecting external control orientation. In comparison, students exhibit significantly higher past-focus language ($U = 19$, $p = .020$, $r = .57$), reflecting internal control orientation. All three effects are large. Findings provide a theoretically grounded, empirically tested account of the faculty-student curriculum gap and actionable guidance for institutions navigating AI curriculum governance.

Keywords: generative AI, business and IS education, institutional theory, self-determination theory, perceived control, curriculum governance,

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Generative AI has diffused rapidly into higher education, reshaping how students learn, how faculty teach, and how institutions govern academic practice. Large language model tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are transforming instructional delivery and assessment design while introducing new challenges related to academic integrity and epistemic trust (Cotton et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023). Within business schools, AI functions simultaneously as a pedagogical tool, an integrity risk, a workforce-readiness requirement, and a source of pressure on institutional legitimacy. Employer demand for AI-literate graduates is well documented, with skill gaps reported across industries (Cummings et al., 2023), and accreditation bodies, including AACSB, have formally signaled that AI governance is now a dimension of institutional accountability (AACSB, 2025). Meanwhile, students are already using generative AI tools extensively and independently, often ahead of any formal curriculum response (Perkins et al., 2024; Smolansky et al., 2023). The result is a governance problem with no obvious resolution, suggesting that faculty and students have different perspectives on what AI education should accomplish.

1.2 Research Motivation

AI curriculum decisions in business schools are shaped by both institutional structures and individual experiences. Accreditation requirements, governance policies, and professional norms define the boundaries of legitimate practice, while faculty and students interpret those boundaries differently based on their roles, incentives, and relationships with the labor market (Perkins et al., 2024). The central question is whether the gap between faculty and student priorities reflects systematic, theoretically predictable structural differences or simply idiosyncratic individual preferences. Structural gaps call for structural solutions, and motivational gaps require motivational interventions. Distinguishing between these possibilities requires evidence beyond attitude surveys.

Prior research has documented attitudinal differences between faculty and students (Smolansky et al., 2023) and curriculum relevance gaps between business school programs and industry expectations (Cummings et al., 2023; Hart & Rodgers, 2025). However, three important gaps remain. First, most studies focus on what faculty and students think about AI rather than on the structural factors explaining why those perspectives differ. Second, the business and IS education literature has not applied a theoretical framework to explain within-institution divergence between faculty and students, as stakeholder groups, operating under competing logics. Third, to the best of our knowledge, no prior study in IS or business education has used speaker-level computational linguistic analysis and inferential statistics to empirically characterize and test these differences.

This study examines how faculty and students in a business college context differ in their orientations toward AI curriculum priorities, including differences in perceived control, external institutional

pressures, and internal self-determined needs. Linguistic patterns in discourse are treated as measurable proxies for underlying psychological and institutional orientations, tested using nonparametric inferential statistics. Two research questions guide the inquiry:

RQ1: How do faculty and students differ in their orientations toward AI curriculum priorities in business education, including their perceptions of control?

RQ2: What structural and motivational factors, including perceived external and internal control, explain the divergence between faculty and student perspectives?

This study contributes to IS and business education research by offering an exploratory speaker-level linguistic approach for examining AI curriculum governance. Rather than relying solely on survey attitudes or aggregate focus-group themes, we use LIWC-22 measures at the individual-speaker level to test whether faculty and student discourse differ in theoretically predicted ways. This approach provides a replicable method for identifying stakeholder misalignment in AI curriculum conversations.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The faculty-student curriculum gap reflects structural differences in how each group relates to the institution, the labor market, and AI. Two complementary theoretical lenses, institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), help explain why this divergence is expected and how it manifests in observable terms.

2.1 Institutional Theory: Orientation and Constraints on Control

Institutional theory explains how organizational practices are shaped by social pressures rather than solely by efficiency. Organizations adopt structures to secure legitimacy, conforming to widely accepted expectations rather than purely operational needs (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995). These pressures produce *isomorphism*, a tendency for organizations to converge in structure and practice (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), operating through three mechanisms. *Normative isomorphism* obliges faculty to uphold academic rigor and scholarly credibility. *Mimetic isomorphism* leads faculty to model AI policies after peer institutions and students to replicate AI practices from peer networks. *Coercive isomorphism*, driven by AACSB requirements for AI accountability, directly constrains faculty decisions about curriculum (Cordier & Stablein, 2013; Lounsbury & Wang, 2020).

These pressures produce a structural divergence between faculty and students. Faculty are subject to accreditation mandates and academic integrity expectations that encourage cautious or symbolic AI adoption (*signaling acceptance, but not integrating into practice*), producing an externally oriented locus of control in which curricular decisions are attributed to governance constraints (Deephouse, 1999; Rotter, 1966). Students face fewer institutional constraints and engage more freely with AI tools, reflecting an internally oriented locus of control in which AI is viewed as a capability-enhancing tool oriented toward career readiness and labor market relevance (Rotter, 1966; Sah et al., 2025). This divergence reflects institutional tensions between rigor and relevance that sustain the curriculum gap (Greenwood et al., 2010; Thornton et al., 2012).

2.2 Self-Determination Theory as a Motivational Mechanism

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) explains how structural differences manifest in individual motivation and language, distinguishing autonomous motivation, behavior driven by intrinsic interest or personally endorsed goals, from controlled motivation, behavior driven by external pressure or compliance demands (Ryan & Deci, 2024). Students' engagement with AI is self-initiated, goal-directed, and largely free from external regulatory pressure, producing communication characterized by

greater personal disclosure and ownership of stated positions (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Faculty curriculum decisions are more frequently shaped by controlled motivation as they respond to accreditation pressures, institutional mandates, and professional obligations, framing even enthusiastic AI adoption institutionally rather than personally (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Competence needs from SDT are also relevant. Faculty perceptions of competence are often undermined by technological uncertainty and limited training (AACSB, 2025), while students develop competence through frequent informal AI use, reinforcing faculty restraint and student proactive engagement (Sah et al., 2025). Relatedness further shapes behavior, as faculty align with professional communities that emphasize norms and institutional legitimacy, and students rely on peer networks where AI practices are shared and normalized (Ryan & Deci, 2024). Institutional theory and SDT thus generate convergent predictions at the group and individual levels, respectively, both anticipating the same observable linguistic differences. In IS education contexts, Chiu and Chai (2020) and Kam et al. (2020) have demonstrated that the type of motivation shapes the depth and sustainability of AI-related learning engagement, supporting the application of SDT as an interpretive lens here.

2.3 Perceived Control

Perceived locus of control refers to an individual's subjective interpretation of their ability to influence decisions and outcomes (Rotter, 1966). In educational contexts, these perceptions shape engagement with learning and responses to technological change (Cotton et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Scott, 2014). From the SDT perspective, perceived control is closely tied to autonomy and determines whether behavior is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2024). Institutional theory adds that such perceptions are shaped by structural forces, such as governance structures, accreditation requirements, and professional norms that define the boundaries of action, and individuals interpret these constraints differently based on their roles and experiences (Greenwood et al., 2010; Scott, 2014).

Faculty, subject to coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures, experience constrained perceived autonomy and an externally oriented locus of control, reflected in restricted AI use and strict adherence to institutional policy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Students, operating under fewer institutional constraints, experience greater autonomy, fostering intrinsic motivation and an internally oriented locus of control that reinforces adaptive and experimental behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Sah et al., 2025). These differences reflect structurally conditioned responses rather than individual preferences and contribute to the persistence of the curriculum gap (Greenwood et al., 2010).

2.4 Linguistic Operationalization: Connecting Theory to LIWC

Testing predictions derived from institutional theory and SDT requires identifying linguistic indicators that are theoretically consistent with different institutional and motivational orientations. This study uses LIWC-22 (Pennebaker et al., 2022), a validated, dictionary-based instrument that maps natural language to psychological, social, and motivational dimensions (Boyd et al., 2022). Pertaining to our study, we will emphasize the LIWC categories of affiliation language, first-person plural pronouns, and past-focus language.

Affiliation language captures references to social bonding, belonging, and interpersonal connection, reflecting collective alignment (Boyd et al., 2022; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Faculty operating under academic-professional logic and controlled motivation are expected to produce higher-affiliation language, framing the curriculum as a collective professional responsibility that reflects perceived external control. Students, autonomously motivated and market-oriented, are expected to produce lower affiliation language, framing AI as an individual tool that reflects greater perceived internal control.

First-person plural pronouns (we) directly operationalize collective institutional identity. Faculty framing curriculum as shared governance produces higher we-usage, while students narrating personal experience and individual goals produce lower we-usage (Pennebaker et al., 2003). *Past-focus language* captures the degree to which discourse is grounded in prior experience (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Students whose AI engagement is built on direct personal use, specific tools, internships, and/or coursework are expected to narrate from experience, resulting in higher past-focus scores. Faculty whose roles require anticipating future curriculum needs and responding to current institutional demands are expected to be comparatively less past-focused, reflecting the distinction between students as experience narrators and faculty as institutional designers.

Because LIWC categories do not directly measure perceived locus of control, we interpret these variables as theoretically derived linguistic proxies that reflect different control orientations rather than as direct psychological measures.

2.5 Research Hypotheses

2.5.1 Institutional Affiliation (*Affiliation Language*)

Faculty operating under academic-professional logic are embedded in professional communities defined by shared norms, collective governance responsibilities, and institutional accountability structures, reinforcing relatively higher perceived external control. Institutional theory predicts that this embeddedness will manifest in language oriented toward belonging, collegial obligation, and community membership. SDT reinforces this prediction that when external control is experienced as a constraint, more controlled motivation is associated with discourse centered on collective obligation and professional relatedness rather than on individual goal pursuit.

H1: Faculty discourse will exhibit significantly higher Affiliation language than student discourse, reflecting comparatively greater perceived external control and collective professional identity and institutional embeddedness under academic-professional logic.

2.5.2 Collective Identity (*Plural vs. First-Person Pronoun Language*)

The academic-professional logic frames curriculum as a shared institutional responsibility, being that decisions are made collectively on behalf of the institution rather than individually for personal benefit, reflecting comparatively higher perceived external control. This governance-focused collective orientation is expected to produce a distinctive pronoun signature in which faculty consistently use first-person plural pronouns, specifically in *what we do*, *what we require*, and *how we prepare students*. In contrast, students, operating under market logic and autonomous motivation, suggesting greater perceived internal control, are more likely to narrate their own experiences and goals as individual actors, producing comparatively lower first-person plural pronoun use, or *we*-usage.

H2: Faculty discourse will exhibit significantly higher first-person plural pronoun use (we) than student discourse, reflecting comparatively greater perceived external control and collective governance orientation of academic-professional logic versus greater perceived internal control and individual agency orientation of market logic.

2.5.3 Temporal Orientation (*Present-to-Future vs. Past Focus Language*)

Students arrive at AI curriculum conversations with a foundation of direct personal experience, having already used AI tools, built workflows, and tested skills in internships and/or coursework, reflecting comparatively greater perceived internal control. This experience-grounded orientation, consistent with

autonomous motivation under SDT and the market logic of institutional theory, is expected to produce discourse anchored in the past. In contrast, faculty, whose institutional role requires them to anticipate future student needs and respond to present governance demands, are expected to be comparatively less past-focused, reflecting their greater perceived external control and responsibility to align with institutional expectations.

H3: Student discourse will exhibit significantly higher past-focus language than faculty discourse, reflecting comparatively greater perceived internal control and a tendency to ground AI priorities in prior personal experience, while faculty, operating under greater perceived external control, orient toward present and future institutional curriculum planning.

Hypothesis	Label	Hypothesis Statement	LIWC Variable	Predicted Direction
H1	Institutional Affiliation	Faculty discourse will exhibit significantly higher Affiliation language than student discourse, reflecting <i>comparatively greater perceived external control and</i> collective professional identity and institutional embeddedness under academic-professional logic.	Affiliation	FAC >
H2	Collective Identity	Faculty discourse will exhibit significantly higher first-person plural pronoun use (we) than student discourse, reflecting <i>comparatively greater perceived external control and</i> collective governance orientation of academic-professional logic versus <i>greater perceived internal control and</i> individual agency orientation of market logic.	We pronouns	FAC >
H3	Temporal Orientation	Student discourse will exhibit significantly higher past-focus language than faculty discourse, reflecting <i>comparatively greater perceived internal control and a</i> tendency to ground AI priorities in prior personal experience, while faculty, <i>operating under greater perceived external control</i> , orient toward present and future institutional curriculum planning.	Past focus	STU >

Table 1: Summary of Research Hypotheses, LIWC Operationalizations, and Test Results

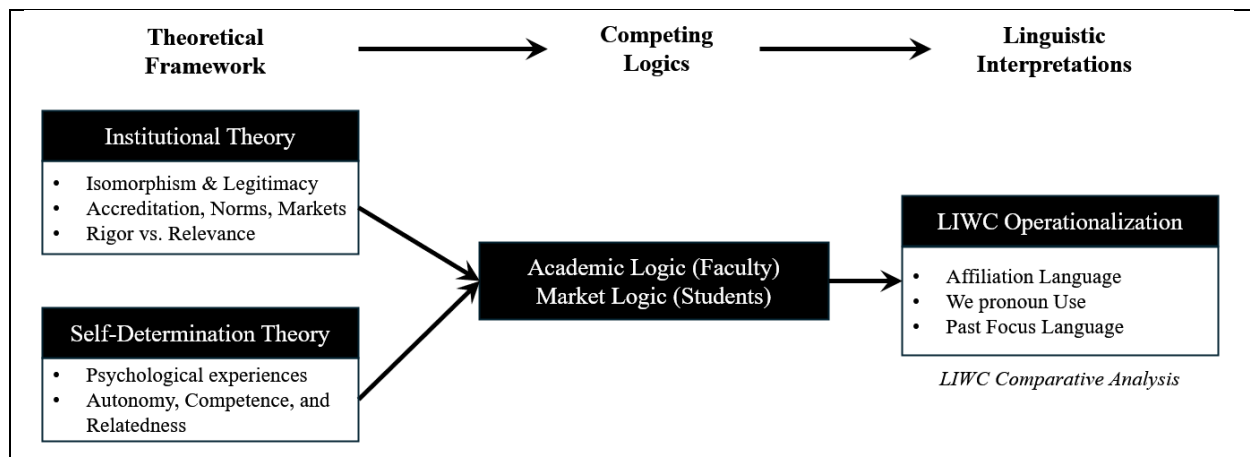


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework: Institutional Theory and SDT as Predictors of Linguistic Orientation

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory quantitative design. Theoretical predictions derived are operationalized as directional hypotheses using validated LIWC-22 constructs and tested using non-parametric inferential statistics. Focus groups were selected as the data collection method because the research question concerns the structure and orientation of discourse priorities in a naturalistic institutional setting. The resulting transcripts are treated as discourse data from which speaker-level linguistic measures are extracted and compared across groups.

3.2 Participants

Two separate focus group sessions were conducted within a regional southeastern U.S. University. The student session and the faculty session were held on different days. The same facilitation team moderated both sessions.

The student focus group comprised nine undergraduate participants representing Computer Information Systems, Finance and Banking, General Management, and International Business. The faculty focus group comprised 13 participants from the Departments of Computer Information Systems, Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing, and Supply Chain Management, as well as from Accounting, and representatives from Career Services and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation. Faculty were recruited through the college's AI working group. Participation was voluntary.

3.3 Data Collection and Corpus Preparation

Both sessions were audio-recorded using a Plaud Note AI-enabled transcription device and automatically transcribed. The device produces timestamped plain-text transcripts with speaker identifiers reviewed for accuracy prior to analysis.

Each corpus was prepared to contain only the intended group's voices. The faculty corpus retained all faculty session turns, including those of faculty facilitators, who were systematically classified to express substantive professional perspectives in approximately 65% of their turns rather than functioning as neutral moderators. The student corpus excluded all 152 facilitator turns to prevent faculty linguistic patterns from contaminating student data.

3.4 Speaker-Level Unit of Analysis

Prior LIWC studies applied to focus group data have typically aggregated all speaker turns into a single corpus per group, producing group-level descriptive scores (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010; Kush, 2023). This approach precludes inferential testing. The present study instead uses the individual speaker as the unit of analysis, aggregating each speaker's turns into a single document and computing LIWC scores at the speaker level. This produces 13 faculty observations and 9 student observations, enabling between-group statistical comparison.

Three speakers were excluded due to insufficient word counts: two faculty members (48 words and 62 words, respectively) and one student (1 word). A minimum threshold of 100 words was applied, consistent with LIWC guidance on stable category estimation (Boyd et al., 2022). Thus, the initial corpus included 22 participants, and the final speaker-level analytical sample included 19 participants after excluding three speakers below the 100-word threshold, comprising 11 faculty and 8 students.

LIWC Category	Faculty (%)	Students (%)	Difference	Direction
Summary Variables				
Word Count	13195.00	8300.00	+4895.00	FAC > ***
Analytic	13.21	19.65	-6.44	STU > ***
Clout	69.08	35.04	+34.04	FAC > ***
Authentic	63.20	72.76	-9.56	STU > ***
Emotional Tone	49.17	41.76	+7.41	FAC > ***
Words Per Sentence	12.82	16.97	-4.15	STU > ***
Drives (Motivational Orientation)				
Affiliation	3.33	1.53	+1.80	FAC > ***
Achievement	1.61	1.83	-0.22	STU > *
Power	0.65	0.55	+0.10	FAC >
Cognitive Processes				
Cognitive Processing	16.76	17.27	-0.51	STU > **
Insight	4.87	5.40	-0.53	STU > **
Causation	3.24	2.69	+0.55	FAC > **
Discrepancy	2.39	2.13	+0.26	FAC > *
Tentative	3.29	3.23	+0.06	FAC >
Certainty	0.73	1.13	-0.40	STU > *
Pronouns (Identity / Collectivity)				
I (first-person singular)	4.35	5.88	-1.53	STU > ***
We (first-person plural)	2.55	1.10	+1.45	FAC > ***
You (second person)	3.24	2.90	+0.34	FAC > *
They (third person)	1.24	0.81	+0.43	FAC > *
Social Language				
Social (overall)	13.43	9.90	+3.53	FAC > ***
Social Behavior	4.15	3.04	+1.11	FAC > ***
Social References	9.20	6.84	+2.36	FAC > ***
Communication	2.04	1.41	+0.63	FAC > **
Prosocial	0.71	0.43	+0.28	FAC > *
Work & Practical Domain				
Work	4.43	4.10	+0.33	FAC > *
Money	0.50	0.67	-0.17	STU >
Risk & Uncertainty				
Risk	0.18	0.19	-0.01	STU >

Discrepancy	2.39	2.13	+0.26	FAC > *
Certainty	0.73	1.13	-0.40	STU > *
Temporal Orientation				
Past Focus	2.23	3.22	-0.99	STU > **
Present Focus	7.54	7.39	+0.15	FAC >
Future Focus	1.76	1.65	+0.11	FAC >
<i>Note.</i> Scores represent percentage of total words per corpus. Difference = Faculty % minus Student %. *** diff ≥ 1.0; ** diff ≥ 0.5; * diff ≥ 0.2. Corpus-level scores are descriptive; inferential testing was conducted at the speaker level (see Table 3).				

Table 2: LIWC-22 Corpus-Level Category Scores by Group: Faculty and Student Focus Groups

3.5 Analytical Approach

LIWC-22 (Pennebaker et al., 2022) was applied to each speaker's aggregated text. Mann-Whitney U tests were used to compare faculty and student groups on each hypothesized LIWC variable. Mann-Whitney U is appropriate when samples are small, distributional normality cannot be assumed, and the outcome variable is continuous or ordinal — all of which apply here (Field, 2013). One-tailed tests were conducted in the theoretically predicted direction for each hypothesis. Effect size is reported as rank-biserial correlation (r), with thresholds of .10 (small), .30 (medium), and .50 (large) following Cohen's conventions adapted for rank-based statistics (Rosenthal, 1994).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Institutional Affiliation (Affiliation Language)

Hypothesis 1 (H1) predicted that faculty would exhibit significantly higher Affiliation language than students. Results strongly support this hypothesis, reflecting greater perceived external control. Faculty Affiliation scores ($M = 2.86$, $Mdn = 2.86$, $SD = 1.15$) were significantly higher than student scores ($M = 1.37$, $Mdn = 1.44$, $SD = 0.82$), $U = 77$, $p = .004$, $r = .75$, indicating a large effect size. Examination of speaker-level scores reveals the pattern is consistent across the faculty group — ten of eleven faculty speakers scored above the student median — suggesting that affiliation language reliably reflects externally oriented, institutionally embedded discourse rather than being driven by outliers.

Faculty affiliation language was pervasive across speakers regardless of department or role, reflecting consistently higher perceived external control and institutional embeddedness. References to colleagues, peer institutions, shared governance responsibilities, and professional community obligations characterized faculty discourse throughout. Student discourse, by contrast, was predominantly oriented toward individual tool use and self-directed learning, reflecting greater perceived internal control and minimal use of affiliation language. This pattern is consistent supporting H1.

4.2 Collective Identity (Plural vs. First-Person Pronoun Use Language)

Hypothesis 2 (H2) predicted that faculty would exhibit significantly higher we-pronoun use than students, reflecting greater perceived external control. Results support this hypothesis. Faculty we-pronoun scores ($M = 2.14$, $Mdn = 2.07$, $SD = 1.30$) were significantly higher than student scores ($M = 0.92$, $Mdn = 0.75$, $SD = 0.71$), $U = 70$, $p = .016$, $r = .59$, indicating a large effect. This result provides support for H2.

Faculty consistently framed AI curriculum as a collective institutional responsibility — *what we teach, what we require, how we prepare students* — reflecting the governance orientation and greater

perceived external control under academic-professional logic. Students, by contrast, narrated their own experiences, preferences, and tool engagements as individual actors, reflecting greater perceived internal control. Nine of eleven faculty speakers scored above the student median on *we*-pronoun use, confirming the consistency of the externally oriented, collective pattern across the group.

Notably, first-person singular pronoun use (*I*) did not differ significantly between groups ($U = 30.5$, $p = .141$, $r = .31$). This finding is theoretically informative rather than contradictory. Faculty discourse in this context combined institutional voice with personal anecdote — faculty shared individual teaching experiences while simultaneously speaking as institutional representatives, reflecting the coexistence of perceived internal and external control. The *we* finding clearly captures the dominance of external control and collective institutional governance orientation and illustrates that the absence of an *I* difference reflects the dual register in which faculty operate, speaking both as individuals and as members of a collective governance body.

4.3 Temporal Orientation (Present-to-Future vs. Past-Focus Language)

Hypothesis 3 (H3) predicted students would exhibit significantly higher past-focus language than faculty, reflecting greater perceived internal control. Results support this hypothesis. Student past-focus scores ($M = 3.41$, $Mdn = 3.64$, $SD = 0.77$) were significantly higher than faculty scores ($M = 2.24$, $Mdn = 1.90$, $SD = 1.05$), $U = 19$, $p = .020$, $r = .57$, indicating a large effect size. The student distribution is notably tight — all eight student speakers scored above the faculty median — indicating a consistent pattern of reliance on experience-grounded discourse associated with internal control, in contrast to the more externally constrained, forward-oriented patterns observed among faculty.

Students grounded AI discussion in prior personal experience (e.g., specific tools used in internships, classes encountered, and comparisons drawn from direct experimentation), thus reflecting greater perceived internal control. This past orientation aligns with the market logic of autonomous motivation as students speak from accumulated lived experience with AI tools that inform their curriculum priorities. Faculty, by contrast, are oriented toward present institutional challenges and future curriculum obligations, reflecting greater perceived external control. Their role requires anticipating future student needs and employer demands rather than recounting past experience, resulting in comparatively lower past-focus scores. This distinction, students as experience-narrators, faculty as institutional designers, constitutes the temporal signature of the curriculum gap, rooted in asymmetries of perceived control.

4.4 Summary of Results

All three hypotheses were supported, suggesting evidence of systematic linguistic differences between faculty and student discourse on AI curriculum priorities. The pattern is consistent with the theoretical framework that faculty language reflects greater perceived external control, associated with collective institutional identity, governance orientation, and forward-looking planning, whereas student language reflects greater perceived internal control, resulting from individual experience, market orientation, and experience-grounded priorities. Paradoxically, despite addressing the same AI curriculum context, faculty and students produce divergent yet internally consistent discourse patterns shaped by contrasting perceived control orientations.

Hypothesis	LIWC Variable	Faculty M (Mdn)	Faculty SD	Students M (Mdn)	Students SD	U	p (1-tail)	r (Effect Size)
H1	Affiliation	2.86 (2.86)	1.15	1.37 (1.44)	0.82	77	.004**	.75 (Large)
H2	We pronouns	2.14 (2.07)	1.30	0.92 (0.75)	0.71	70	.016*	.59 (Large)
H3	Past focus	2.24 (1.90)	1.05	3.41 (3.64)	0.77	19	.020*	.57 (Large)
Exp.	I pronouns (exploratory)	5.63 (6.35)	2.12	7.04 (6.58)	1.83	30.5	.141	.31 (Medium)

Note. One-tailed p-values in the theoretically predicted direction. Faculty n = 11, students n = 8. Effect size r = rank-biserial correlation: small $\geq .10$, medium $\geq .30$, large $\geq .50$ (Rosenthal, 1994). The exploratory I-pronoun comparison was not hypothesized; it is reported for theoretical context. * p < .05 ** p < .01

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U Test Results: Speaker-Level LIWC Comparisons by Group

5. DISCUSSION

Results are consistent with all three hypotheses and support a structural account of the faculty-student curriculum gap. They reflect predictable patterns rooted in how each group relates to the institution, to AI, and to the labor market, and are expressed through systematic differences in perceived external and internal control.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study makes three theoretical contributions to business education, particularly within IS education research. First, it extends institutional logics theory to within-institution stakeholder divergence through differences in perceived external control. Prior cross-disciplinary, business, and IS research have applied institutional theory at the firm or field level (Faik et al., 2020; Seetharaman et al., 2024). This study demonstrates that the same theoretical logic operates at the level of individual actors within a single organization, whereas faculty and students in the same college, discussing the same technology, produce systematically different discourse because they occupy different institutional positions and experience systematically different perceived external and internal control.

Second, the study provides an empirical bridge between institutional theory, SDT, and perceptions of control. The Affiliation and we-pronoun findings are interpretable through both lenses simultaneously. From an institutional theory perspective, they reflect actors operating under coercive accreditation pressure and normative professional standards, consistent with higher perceived external control and speaking as representatives of an institutional collective. From an SDT perspective, they reflect controlled motivation and comparatively lower internal control, producing language oriented toward collective obligation and professional relatedness. The convergence of two independent theoretical predictions into a single empirical pattern strengthens the credibility of both frameworks.

Third, the temporal finding introduces a theoretically meaningful distinction between students as experience-narrators and faculty as institutional designers, reflecting differences in perceived control. Students' greater perceived internal control aligns with past-oriented discourse grounded in personal experience, whereas faculty's greater perceived external control aligns with a forward-looking orientation shaped by institutional responsibilities. This framing is novel and has implications beyond AI curriculum, suggesting that faculty-student curriculum gaps more broadly may be partly attributable to

fundamentally different temporal orientations and associated differences in perceived control, rooted in structural role differences rather than simply disagreement about content.

5.2 Practical Contributions

The findings reveal a structural control gap that faculty operate under (and reproduce) higher perceived external control through institutional authority over curriculum and speak the language of collective governance, while students, guided by greater perceived internal control, engage as autonomous agents drawing on rich personal experience but lacking institutional voice. This asymmetry is not attitudinal, but it is structurally produced and linguistically observable.

Closing this gap requires more than faculty adopting AI tools or students learning institutional norms. It requires governance mechanisms that rebalance perceived control by creating genuine space for student experience-grounded priorities to inform curriculum decisions. Three practice-oriented recommendations follow from the findings.

First, institutions should attend to the quality and origins of motivation driving AI curriculum integration. The linguistic evidence suggests that faculty engagement with AI is frequently shaped by institutional (or external) compliance pressures rather than genuine pedagogical enthusiasm. As one faculty participant put it, “part of my work in the coming years is going to be able to tell our story as a university about how we’re using artificial intelligence and see how that aligns with the AACSB’s expectations.” Sustainable curriculum change requires motivation grounded in an authentic commitment to student learning and educational relevance, in the context of technological change, rather than in market pressure or accreditation compliance. Faculty development initiatives that cultivate intrinsic motivation in AI pedagogy, rather than treating AI integration as a regulatory checkbox, are more likely to produce durable, student-centered outcomes.

Second, the collective identity embedded in faculty discourse, while institutionally legitimate, risks reproducing curriculum priorities that reflect faculty preferences rather than market realities. The authority faculty holds over curriculum design is appropriate, but it can introduce systematic bias toward faculty preferences over student preparation. Institutions should establish structured mechanisms to connect curriculum to current employer expectations, including regular engagement with industry advisory boards and the use of graduate outcome data. This would not diminish faculty authority but would ground it in a broader and more current frame of reference.

Third, the temporal findings suggest an intervention to close the experience gap between faculty and students through direct industry engagement. Students in this study were significantly more past-focused in their AI discourse, drawing on hands-on experience with tools from internships and coursework. Faculty, oriented toward institutional design and future curriculum planning, may lack equivalent direct experience with AI in applied workplace contexts. Formalizing opportunities for faculty to engage directly with industry, through structured faculty internship programs, practitioner partnerships, or applied project collaborations, would help bridge this experiential divide. The goal is not to replace scholarly expertise with vocational training, but to ensure that faculty curriculum design is informed by the same applied AI contexts that students will enter upon graduation.

6. IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Implications for Educators and Institutions

For faculty, the findings suggest that AI curriculum engagement is shaped as much by institutional accountability structures as by individual disposition that heightens perceived external control. Faculty

development programs that address only tool competence miss the deeper motivational dynamic. When accreditation requirements and professional norms limit faculty autonomy, real engagement requires more than training, it requires explicit permission to experiment, not just rules to follow. Governance designs that recalibrate perceived control by explicitly protecting faculty autonomy in AI curriculum decisions while maintaining accountability are likely to produce more durable engagement than top-down mandates.

For institutions, the control gap documented here has direct governance implications. AI curriculum decisions made exclusively through faculty governance channels are likely to reinforce existing distributions of perceived external control and systematically underweight student priorities, because students lack comparable institutional voice. Mechanisms that redistribute or rebalance perceived control by incorporating student input as genuine stakeholders — not merely consultees — are therefore warranted. The temporal finding reinforces this asymmetry in perceived control. Students are more likely to bring experience-grounded knowledge of how AI actually performs in real workflow and employment contexts, reflecting greater perceived internal control. Faculty, when operating solely from an institutional design perspective and under stronger external control, may be less likely to possess or incorporate such real-world and experiential insights in the classroom.

6.2 Limitations

Several limitations bound the generalizability of these findings. The study draws on two focus groups from a single business college, limiting cross-institutional inference. While Mann-Whitney U tests are appropriate for small, non-normal samples, the analytical sample of 11 faculty and 8 students limits statistical power, the effects that do not reach significance should be treated as inconclusive rather than disconfirmed pending replication with larger samples. Three speakers were excluded due to insufficient word counts, and the faculty corpus was approximately 59% larger than the student corpus, reflecting differential participation volume. Finally, a planned, directed content analysis that complements the LIWC findings with qualitative coding would further strengthen the study's findings.

6.3 Future Research

Five directions extend this work directly and address the limitations noted above. First, replication across multiple institutions and disciplines would establish whether the patterns documented here generalize beyond this college's governance context. Second, studies with larger, better-powered samples would clarify whether the non-significant effects observed here reflect true null results or simply insufficient power to detect them. Third, future data collection should aim for balanced participation across faculty and student groups, both to avoid speaker exclusion for insufficient word count and to eliminate the corpus-size asymmetry that limited direct comparison in this study. Fourth, a directed content analysis using the theory-derived codebook developed for this study, with independent coders and Cohen's kappa assessment, is in preparation and will provide thematic depth to complement the linguistic patterns reported here. Fifth, longitudinal designs tracking linguistic patterns as institutions develop formal AI governance frameworks would illuminate whether the faculty-student gap narrows as governance structures mature.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a theoretically grounded, empirically tested account of why faculty and students differ systematically in their linguistic orientation toward AI curriculum priorities. Three hypotheses derived from institutional theory and SDT were all supported with large effect sizes: faculty produce significantly more affiliation language and collective pronoun use, reflecting greater perceived external control, while students produce significantly more past-focused language, reflecting greater perceived

internal control. These are not incidental differences — they are the linguistic signatures of two groups positioned differently within the same institution and shaped by contrasting configurations of perceived control as they respond to the same technology through the filters of their respective roles.

The curriculum gap in AI education is a governance problem rooted in structural misalignment between institutional constraints that shape faculty behavior and motivational dynamics that shape student engagement, reflecting asymmetries in perceived external and internal control. Computational linguistic analysis of focus group discourse offers a tractable, theoretically grounded, and statistically rigorous method for measuring this control imbalance, and for tracking whether governance interventions produce a meaningful rebalance of perceived control over time.

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TABLE AND FIGURE PLACEHOLDERS

Table 1

Summary of Research Hypotheses, LIWC Operationalizations, and Test Results

Hypothesis	Label	Hypothesis Statement	LIWC Variable	Predicted Direction
H1	Institutional Affiliation	Faculty discourse will exhibit significantly higher Affiliation language than student discourse, reflecting <i>comparatively greater perceived external control and</i> collective professional identity and institutional embeddedness under academic-professional logic.	Affiliation	FAC >
H2	Collective Identity	Faculty discourse will exhibit significantly higher first-person plural pronoun use (we) than student discourse, reflecting <i>comparatively greater perceived external control and</i> collective governance orientation of academic-professional logic versus <i>greater perceived internal control and</i> individual agency orientation of market logic.	We pronouns	FAC >
H3	Temporal Orientation	Student discourse will exhibit significantly higher past-focus language than faculty discourse, reflecting <i>comparatively greater perceived internal control and</i> a tendency to ground AI priorities in prior personal experience, while faculty, <i>operating under greater perceived external control</i> , orient toward present and future institutional curriculum planning.	Past focus	STU >

Table 2

LIWC-22 Corpus-Level Category Scores by Group: Faculty and Student Focus Groups

LIWC Category	Faculty (%)	Students (%)	Difference	Direction
Summary Variables				
Word Count	13195.00	8300.00	+4895.00	FAC > ***
Analytic	13.21	19.65	-6.44	STU > ***
Clout	69.08	35.04	+34.04	FAC > ***
Authentic	63.20	72.76	-9.56	STU > ***
Emotional Tone	49.17	41.76	+7.41	FAC > ***
Words Per Sentence	12.82	16.97	-4.15	STU > ***
Drives (Motivational Orientation)				
Affiliation	3.33	1.53	+1.80	FAC > ***
Achievement	1.61	1.83	-0.22	STU > *
Power	0.65	0.55	+0.10	FAC >
Cognitive Processes				
Cognitive Processing	16.76	17.27	-0.51	STU > **
Insight	4.87	5.40	-0.53	STU > **
Causation	3.24	2.69	+0.55	FAC > **
Discrepancy	2.39	2.13	+0.26	FAC > *
Tentative	3.29	3.23	+0.06	FAC >
Certainty	0.73	1.13	-0.40	STU > *
Pronouns (Identity / Collectivity)				
I (first-person singular)	4.35	5.88	-1.53	STU > ***
We (first-person plural)	2.55	1.10	+1.45	FAC > ***
You (second person)	3.24	2.90	+0.34	FAC > *
They (third person)	1.24	0.81	+0.43	FAC > *
Social Language				
Social (overall)	13.43	9.90	+3.53	FAC > ***
Social Behavior	4.15	3.04	+1.11	FAC > ***
Social References	9.20	6.84	+2.36	FAC > ***
Communication	2.04	1.41	+0.63	FAC > **
Prosocial	0.71	0.43	+0.28	FAC > *
Work & Practical Domain				
Work	4.43	4.10	+0.33	FAC > *
Money	0.50	0.67	-0.17	STU >
Risk & Uncertainty				
Risk	0.18	0.19	-0.01	STU >
Discrepancy	2.39	2.13	+0.26	FAC > *
Certainty	0.73	1.13	-0.40	STU > *
Temporal Orientation				
Past Focus	2.23	3.22	-0.99	STU > **
Present Focus	7.54	7.39	+0.15	FAC >
Future Focus	1.76	1.65	+0.11	FAC >
<i>Note.</i> Scores represent percentage of total words per corpus. Difference = Faculty % minus Student %. *** diff ≥ 1.0; ** diff ≥ 0.5; * diff ≥ 0.2. Corpus-level scores are descriptive; inferential testing was conducted at the speaker level (see Table 3).				

Table 3

Mann-Whitney U Test Results: Speaker-Level LIWC Comparisons by Group

Hypothesis	LIWC Variable	Faculty M (Mdn)	Faculty SD	Students M (Mdn)	Students SD	U	p (1-tail)	r (Effect Size)
H1	Affiliation	2.86 (2.86)	1.15	1.37 (1.44)	0.82	77	.004**	.75 (Large)
H2	We pronouns	2.14 (2.07)	1.30	0.92 (0.75)	0.71	70	.016*	.59 (Large)
H3	Past focus	2.24 (1.90)	1.05	3.41 (3.64)	0.77	19	.020*	.57 (Large)
Exp.	I pronouns (exploratory)	5.63 (6.35)	2.12	7.04 (6.58)	1.83	30.5	.141	.31 (Medium)

Note. One-tailed p-values in the theoretically predicted direction. Faculty n = 11, students n = 8.
Effect size r = rank-biserial correlation: small $\geq .10$, medium $\geq .30$, large $\geq .50$ (Rosenthal, 1994).
The exploratory I-pronoun comparison was not hypothesized; it is reported for theoretical context. * p < .05 ** p < .01

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework: Institutional Theory and SDT as Predictors of Linguistic Orientation

