



Teaching Literature in the Age of AI: Towards a Posthuman Pedagogy

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Abstract

As modern AI tools become increasingly integrated into student learning, the foundational assumptions of literary education such as authorship, originality, and interpretation are unsettled. This paper argues that AI ought not to be framed exclusively as a destabilizer or a peril to academic integrity, but as an opportunity to reimagine the teaching and comprehension of literature. The study draws upon the posthumanist theory (Rosi Braidotti), authorship studies (Barthes, Foucault), digital humanities (Katherine Hayles), and critical pedagogy (Paulo Freire) to articulate a posthuman model of pedagogical practice using AI as a co-writer, interlocutor, and as a reflective tool for students' development. It discusses the inadequacies of human-centric teaching practices as a response to AI's interpretive and generative capabilities, and suggests some executable activities with students, including critiquing AI interpretations of poetry, comparing their readings and interpretations with outputs from virtual machines, and the use of AI to reimagine the original composition of canonical texts into contemporary vernaculars. Ultimately, this study reconceptualizes the teacher's pedagogical role from an evaluator to a facilitator who encourages students to investigate meaning, authorship, and textuality in an age of machine intelligence. Therefore, instead of resisting AI, literature classrooms must enable students to explore the ways that human and artificial intelligence can interact critically, creatively, and ethically. By situating AI within broader debates on literacy, authorship, and technological mediation, this paper also contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about the future of humanities education in an era increasingly shaped by algorithmic cultures and hybrid forms of knowledge production.

Keywords: AI in education, critical pedagogy, digital humanities, literary authorship, posthuman pedagogy

Introduction

AI tools have come into classrooms at an unprecedented rate and scale in recent years. Tools such as ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and Grammarly are easily accessible, often for free, and can create essays, literary readings, and stylistic investigations. Students of literature are using these tools sometimes unknowingly and sometimes intentionally, prompting discussions on plagiarism, creativity, authorship, and academic integrity related to

students' use of AI (Chan & Lee, 2024). Still the question that remains larger than detection or regulation is pedagogical: What does it mean to teach literature when machines can write too? Literature classrooms have relied on certain presumptions that meaning creates text, interpretation is an eminently human and intellectual act, and that student writing is original thinking. These arguments are complicated by AI's ability to establish plausible essays, write creatively, develop a number of authorial voices, and



produce essays about any number of complex texts. For example, when a student utilizes an AI tool to generate an essay, is that plagiarism or collaboration or an opportunity to critique machine-based learning? These predicaments, which seem farfetched when analyzed theoretically, are now commonplace and suggest new pedagogical approaches to teach literature.

This paper contends that literature educators should not limit or police the artificial intelligent technologies, as an obstacle but work with them critically and creatively as a potential form of transformation. The rise of AI programs and increasing reliance on it, for writing and thinking, displays a drastic redirection from traditional practices. The advent of AI introduces a challenge to long-standing conjectures about reading, authorship and interpretation. It necessitates us to shift our notions from human-centered to posthuman pedagogy to recognize nonhuman intelligences as catalysts who produce knowledge through their interaction with literacies. Drawing on posthumanist theory, digital humanities, authorship studies, and critical pedagogy, this study proposes that AI needs not to be treated as a threat but a tool to extend and illuminate. As a co-reader, co-writer, or co-interpreter, AI can provide students with new possibilities of thinking about literature and at the same time enable and develop habits of questioning, critique, and reflection on the growing presence of machine-based knowledge that might play in their lives as intellectual beings.

To formulate this into practice, the paper takes into consideration the activities in which students work with an AI interpretation of a poem and compare their own, critique the difference in tone, historical awareness, and the depth of meaning, and consider what that means in terms of what each work represents or omits. Other activities include having AI re-imagine a classic text in contemporary vernaculars or different writing styles, asking the students to analyze what remains, what has changed and what has disappeared. These deliberately oppositional activities promote critical literacy, creativity, and a sense of ethics, all of which are

essential competencies as we increasingly live in an algorithmically driven society. In this version of practice, the responsibilities of the teacher shift completely from gatekeeper of authenticity to convenor of a discussion between human and machine thinkers. Rather than acting as only human interpreters of literature, students are invited to act as hybrid thinkers-in-process, negotiating meaning at the nexus of reading and the technological mediations that disrupt traditional forms of interpretation. This posthuman space creates a thinking about the future, ethically-oriented, model of co-authoring and co-reflecting towards facilitating engagement with literature in an AI-centric context.

Theoretical Framework

AI is changing literature education, and to recognize its impact, it must be situated within theoretical traditions. Theories with genesis in posthumanism, authorship, digital humanities, and digital pedagogy allow us to understand how knowledge, interpretation, and meaning are produced or transected when classrooms are equipped by both human and machine actors.

In posthumanism, the work of Rosi Braidotti, challenges the anthropocentric leaning tendencies in traditional pedagogy. She emphasizes the role of other factors in thinking and knowledge creation which resonates well with the educators considering AI alongside human students (Braidotti, 2019). From a pedagogic standpoint, this suggests that AI could be used as an epistemic partner, rather than considering it an antagonist of human knowledge, growth, and learning. Also Braidotti (2019) argues that meanings are only one result of human thought; therefore, if we agree with Braidotti and recognize that there are other factors involved in knowledge and meaning creation, then the understanding of pedagogy will also have to change in order to consider for the newness of the agency we are working alongside.

Roland Barthes' and Michel Foucault's theories of authorship also assume a new meaning. Both theorists decenter the concept of the author in their works, *The Death of the Author* (1967) and *What Is*



an Author (1969). Their concepts adopt an innovative shape in the world of algorithmic writing, where we can generate literary criticism, a pastiche, or poem in seconds by using AI tools. Now, the question arises, who is the author? The student who prompted the AI? The engineer who trained the AI? Or the database the AI draws from? These theories guide us to rethink the originality, intention, and authority in relation to AI texts, while also equipping students with the means to examine the changing notion of authorship.

In digital humanities, the work of N. Katherine Hayles complicates the understanding of human-machine binary. She describes both “close reading” and “machine reading” and advocates for the blend of two (Hayle, 2012). Literature classes can proceed with this perspective as well where artificial intelligence is a reader. This will enable students to understand what is gained or lost in a mechanical interpretation of a literary work while facilitating the comparison of human-based and machine-based literary analyses.

Finally, in relation to critical pedagogy, especially Freire’s educational pedagogy as a dialogic and ethical act of liberation, any use of artificial intelligence should be ethical and reflective (Freire, 1970). So, judicious use of AI in education can help engage students in critical questioning of machine-based readings, compare them with their own notions, and ultimately aiding in creating their own reflective knowledge. This will empower learners shifting their position from being recipients of knowledge to co-authors of knowledge.

Collectively, these theories encourage literature teachers to modify their current position of AI skepticism. These theories empower the visions of a posthuman pedagogy wherein AI not only operates as co-creator of literary meaning but a potential partner assisting in reimagination of the world inclusive of intelligent machines.

Reframing Literary Pedagogy

Traditional literary pedagogy is established on multifarious longstanding assumptions such as authorship is human and sacred, essays are evidence

of original/individual thought, and the meaning is contained within the fixed boundaries of a text (Johnston, 2005). These assumptions are fundamentally questioned by artificial intelligence at present. ChatGPT and other tools now generate entire essays, duplicate literary styles, and provide credible interpretations of a range of texts expeditiously. In this new scenario, old methods of teaching that prioritize originality, linear meaning, and strict human interpretive capabilities are not sufficient. Instead continuing to scrutinize AI usage, educators must rethink the purpose of literary education in this new context. The aim is not to ban or outsmart AI tools but to create public, educational experiences and to inculcate them into learning. When students use AI to produce a reading of Lord Byron’s “Darkness” (1816), the pedagogical engagement is to ask students to analyze the reading. For example, does it convey the apocalyptic tone? Does it understand the historical moment? What emotion does it ignore? This activity is less reliant on AI as an obstacle to academic dishonesty and processes rather invoking AI as a tool to deeper inquiry. This will compel students to critically interrogate both human understanding and machine interpretations of the text. This reframing means students are not using AI as an effective shortcut to stop thinking, instead as a catalyst to think more critically about meaning, authorship, and creativity in digital age. This new understanding also changes the role of teacher from imposing originality to fostering interrogation and comparative critique collaboratively and pedagogically consistent with the realities of a posthuman classroom.

AI as a Pedagogical Tool

When implemented as a supplement to teaching and learning, AI introduces new opportunities, rather than removing the experience of literary education. It creates new forms of engagement for creativity, comparison, and critical thinking. Educators can design assignments that situate AI side by side with human interpretation, prompting students to examine the nature and limits of both. For example; it can be used in comparing and contrasting where students



can input a literary excerpt in ChatGPT, review the interpretation, and compare it to their own. This not only reveals differences in style and themes, but also creates metacognitive awareness about how concepts of meaning are being created. Similarly, activities of stylistic imitation, like asking AI to generate prose in the voice of Virginia Woolf, Dickens, or Eliot become reflective exercises that enable students to study tone, diction, and literary techniques by analyzing how AI does and does not get it right. Another branch of inquiry is to “rework” canonical texts. Students can ask AI to rewrite “Ozymandias” (1818) in contemporary idiom or as a spoken word piece, and then observe what is left in the interpretation and what is lost in the translation. This also raises ethical considerations because AI systems are likely to reproduce cultural biases, erase marginal voices, or universalize interpretations of the content that students should learn to identify and critique. Such exercises will develop students’ analytical and interpretive skills along with creativity in their response to the literature.

This use of AI will specifically help students to learn differences in interpretations of a text. It will also enable higher-order thinking by helping students to move from reproduction to evaluation, synthesis, and critique but ethical use is essential. Students must be introduced to the fact that artificial intelligence can be used in non-critical and passive ways. They must learn that AI is not authoritative in terms of validity, values, and social effects, and must be challenged on those terms. By considering careful use of AI, it evolves as a useful tool, enabling the enhancement of cognitive domain by considering multiple dimensions of interpretation. In this way, the classroom evolves into a co-creative space where students, teacher, and AI conjointly develop/shape the meaning thus reinforcing the dialogical nature of the posthuman pedagogy.

Reimagining the Role of the Teacher

The rise of artificial intelligence in literary education facilitates a necessary shift to redefine the teacher’s role. Students can use machines to draft essays, to analyze poetry, and to imitate the writing styles. The

role of the educator functioning as the gatekeeper of originality and assessor of knowledge and ideas is diminishing. Rather, the teacher must now become a facilitator in establishing ethical, interpretive, and creative avenues through AI. Contrary to expend energy and resources detecting AI writing as a cheating mechanism, educators must engage students in critically graduating their evaluation approaches. As projects get published online, debates need to happen about the authorship, intention, and biases behind them. What does it mean for a machine to “read or write”? Can the machine hold the same capacity for understanding metaphor, emotion, or irony in writing or merely simulate the impression of those human traits? If AI is made an object of critique, students can engage in deeper thinking about literature, as well as technology.

An important example is to ask students for an AI generation of a written interpretation of a Shakespearean soliloquy and then to think about it in a reflective way. Students can be asked: Does the AI understand the historical situation? Can it capture the emotional complexity of Hamlet’s internal struggle? Is its explanation coherent, imaginative, or reductive? Such assignments allow for a close reading of texts, critical thinking, and digital literacies, which are utterly necessary in an increasingly machine-intelligent world. Teachers can also use AI as a reflective prism of human thinking. As students compare their interpretations to that generated by the machine, they can engage their assumptions related to authorship and authority. The classroom is framed as dialogical space, with meaning negotiated and co-created, learning and facilitating, human and machine, student and text.

This shift in teaching and learning also supports a more inclusive approach to literature. Students who are challenged by learning differences, language acquisition, or access to textual knowledge of literary traditions, can use AI to support and scaffold their learning. This change needs that educators leave the “big brother” role of surveillance and embrace a guiding mindset that pushes students to engage critically and ethically with AI and other tools. Ultimately, this portrays a shift in the role of the



teacher away from the gatekeeper of pre-AI sensibilities and to posthuman sensibilities and empowering students to engage with literature and technology in critical ways with depth, creativity, and responsibility, while the teacher assumes the role of a cultivator of critical relation to texts, technologies, and the ever-changing realm of ideas.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study is theoretical in nature and does not incorporate empirical classroom data to substantiate its pedagogical propositions.
2. The paper looks at AI tools at a specific point in their evolution; in the rapidly evolving world of technology, some of the pedagogical suggestions may soon be out of date.
3. The article creates inclusivity, but does not fully engage with the impact of socio-economic, linguistic, or neurodiverse factors which may influence students' experiences with AI-assisted learning.

Conclusion

This paper discusses posthuman pedagogy for literature education that embraces AI as a generative partner in meaning-making rather than a threat to human authorship. Drawing on post humanist theory, digital humanities, and critical pedagogy, it

advocates for a repositioning from surveillance pedagogy to a critical conversation with machine-made meanings. This approach shifts the teaching paradigm as mediating agency in conversations between human and nonhuman agencies, in thinking and ethical reflection, and meaning making through interpretive complexity. The paper also restructures the literature classroom as a hybrid space to critically navigate newly emergent forms of authorship, knowledge making, and technological mediation.

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