# The Construction of Literary Competence in the Age of AI: An Exploration from an Educational Practice Perspective

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**Abstract**
At present, AI technologies are rapidly evolving and integrating into education and cultural communication. In learning contexts, students increasingly rely on tools such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Doubao for writing assistance and textual analysis, making these systems popular learning companions. Although AI demonstrates strong capacities for comprehension, analysis, and text generation, it remains limited in embodying emotion and lived experience, thereby challenging traditional conceptions of literary competence. Against this backdrop, literary education must reconsider how educational practice can sustain students' subjectivity and humanistic strength within technology-enhanced environments. From the perspective of educational practice, this study explores the challenges to literary competence and its pathways of reconstruction in the context of AI. By integrating classroom cases, pedagogical reflection, and instructional strategies, it further develops a renewed model of literary competence that synthesizes technological literacy with humanistic spirit, with the aim of providing feasible references and responses for literary education in the new era.
**Keywords**: AI, Literary Competence, Educational Practice, Humanistic Spirit, Subjectivity

**Introduction**
In recent years, the emergence of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT has generated widespread debate about the future of education. As a form of generative artificial intelligence, these systems are able to produce well-structured texts within seconds, thereby challenging traditional approaches to writing assessment and academic integrity. Research points out that LLMs rely on statistical pattern generation rather than genuine understanding or meaning-making ability. In this context, it becomes necessary to reconsider which core human capacities remain irreplaceable within AI-mediated learning surroundings.

At the same time, the development of artificial intelligence is embedded in broader processes of educational datafication and automation. Algorithmic analysis and student

modeling increasingly shape pedagogical decisions, transforming learners into data profiles within platform-based governance systems. This shift not only changes instructional practices but also reshapes understandings of knowledge and subjectivity. Within such a technological background, safeguarding the humanistic dimensions of education has become an urgent concern.

Existing research have primarily focused on the ethical risks, assessment reforms, and governance issues associated with AI and data-driven educational technologies. However, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to the reconceptualization of literary competence in the age of AI. Although artificial intelligence can simulate textual production, it cannot substitute for the affective experience, cultural understanding, and interpretive judgment involved in literary reading.

Under these conditions, this study seeks to redefine literary competence in the context of AI. Literary competence is understood as a multidimensional capacity encompassing empathy, aesthetic perception, cultural expression, interpretive judgment, critical thinking, and creative expression. Through theoretical analysis and classroom-based practice, this paper proposes a five-dimensional model of literary competence and examines its unique values in instructional implementation. It argues that in an era of rapid technological expansion, literary education should actively respond to emerging challenges, collaborating with AI while reinforcing the core status of human subjectivity.

*The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Literary Education*
With the increasing prevalence of AI technologies, the practical modes of literary writing are undergoing noticeable changes. Taking English writing at the secondary and tertiary levels as an example, many students are no longer inclined to initiate writing independently; instead, they rely on generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Doubao by inputting keywords to obtain an initial draft. Subsequently, they either revise and refine the generated text or adopt it directly with minimal modification. Such creative inertia may gradually lead students to lose the patience required for generating original ideas, structuring arguments, choosing words and expressions, and engaging in repeated refinement. Although this mode of writing enhances efficiency, it undermines the essence of writing as a process of cognitive training and linguistic expression. In this regard, AI can be understood as a cognitive prosthesis (Olga et al, 2023, p. 5) that relies on statistical pattern recognition rather than genuine semantic understanding. More notably, some students even develop the perception that "AI writes better than I do," which in turn leads them to doubt their own writing abilities. As a result, teachers are no longer confronted merely with students who are unable to write, but with those who are unwilling or reluctant to write, posing a profound challenge to traditional literary education.

The emergence of AI has not only transformed students' writing practices but has also profoundly influenced their reading habits. Traditional literary reading places emphasis on attentiveness to detail, sensitivity to language, and an appreciation of textual structure, highlighting the exploration of metaphorical meanings and the emotional resonance between reader and text. By contrast, contemporary students increasingly rely on AI tools for summary and post-reading analysis, enabling them to grasp the core content of a text within a short period of time. Such practices run counter to the inherently slow-paced and deeply

experiential nature of literary reading.  As scholars have noted, large language models generate "passable imitations of knowledge" (Williamson et al, 2023, p. 1) rather than genuine understanding. Moreover, within AI-driven algorithmic recommendation systems, the literary works to which students are exposed tend to become highly homogenized, shaped predominantly by mainstream tastes and commercial logic, and lacking in exploratory depth and cultural diversity. Such recommendation-based reading gives rise to another concern: students' interest in classic works may decline, their tolerance for complex texts may diminish, and they may gradually lose sensitivity to the aesthetic qualities of literary language and the depth of literary thought.

Under the prevailing perception of AI as omniscient and omnipotent, the role of teachers in literary education is undergoing a crisis of transformation. On the one hand, the knowledge transmitted by teachers can be readily replaced by AI-enabled information retrieval; on the other hand, students increasingly question the necessity of traditional teaching approaches in the classroom. As teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge, this shift in role has led some literature educators to experience anxiety about potential technological replacement. However, the value of teachers is not confined to the transmission of knowledge; rather, it lies in their capacity to guide students' thinking, awaken emotional engagement, and stimulate the construction of meaning. While AI can respond to the key points of a text, it cannot lead students to interrogate, from a position of subjectivity, the significance of a text for their own lives. Therefore, amid the impact of AI technologies, teachers are required to relocate their professional roles, transforming from interpreters of linguistic texts into guides of intellectual and spiritual development.

*The New Definition of Literary Competence*
In classroom practice, traditional notions of literary competence are often reduced to understanding texts, producing grammatically coherent writing, and responding to standardized questions. Such an exam-oriented system of language competence assessment prioritizes whether students have mastered specific knowledge points or writing techniques, while paying insufficient attention to the emotions, experiences, and cultural values embedded beneath language.

In the age of AI, this instrumentally oriented conception of competence is facing significant challenges. This shift should also be interpreted within the broader process of the datafication of education, in which learners are increasingly transformed into data profiles that inform algorithmic decision-making (Williamson, 2019, p. 219). AI tools are capable of generating paragraphs that conform to grammatical and stylistic norms and they can summarize key ideas, polish expressions, and even imitate specific writing styles. The continuous upgrading and iteration of AI technologies compels us to ask: if AI can write, do we still need to learn how to write? If AI can read, do we still need to engage in close reading? The answer is affirmative. However, the reading and writing we require are no longer concerned with the reproduction of linguistic forms, but with the reconstruction of meaning and the re-evaluation of values.

In classroom instruction, this means that teachers should guide students to reflect on what remains unsaid in literary texts, the metaphorical dimensions of imagery, and the social and cultural consciousness embedded beneath the surface of language. These dimensions

remain beyond the reach of AI, because "its essence lies in models and algorithms dependent on human input, and it cannot absorb emotional and historical experience in the same way as humans do" (Guo, 2025, p. 15), and this constitutes a deeper dimension in which literary education cannot be replaced by technology.

Drawing on observations from educational practice and the literacy demands of the new era, literary competence in the age of AI can be redefined as a comprehensive capacity that integrates linguistic sensitivity, cultural understanding, emotional resonance, critical thinking, and creative expression. It can be further articulated through five key dimensions: (1) the deepening of reading comprehension, which goes beyond grasping surface meanings to explore authorial intention, textual structure, rhetorical strategies, and cultural contexts. This dimension emphasizes cultivating students' ability to formulate questions, encouraging them to challenge interpretations and articulate their own perspectives, rather than merely accepting given conclusions. (2) Cultural awareness and plural understanding: When engaging with cross-cultural literary works, students need the capacity to interpret texts from multiple perspectives, including identity, ethnicity, and historical context, while also developing cultural discernment and a sense of self-identification. (3) Emotional resonance and imaginative capacity: The cultivation of emotion and the shaping of character constitute essential dimensions of literary education. Students should be able to empathize with characters' circumstances, resonate with their emotions, and extend their imaginative capacities. Although AI can simulate tone and affect, it cannot genuinely experience joy or sorrow; therefore, literary education must firmly preserve the emotional dimension. (4) Critical thinking and ethical judgment: In an era characterized by fragmentation and information overload, students need the ability to identify ideological orientations, gender positions, and value judgments embedded in literary texts. Teachers can guide students to analyze textual biases and uncover the underlying problem consciousness that shapes narrative perspectives and discursive choices. (5) Creative expression and cross-media competence: Writing in the contemporary era is no longer confined to pen-and-paper composition. Literary competence should encourage students to engage in multi-modal creation, in which poetry, fiction, prose, or drama can be integrated with corresponding visual, audio, or video elements. Creativity is manifested not only in content, but also in the expansion of form and the integration of media.

Actually, the design of intelligent technology is a method which uses knowledge to achieve concrete purpose in efficiency (Owoc et al, 2019, p. 3). Therefore, AI should be incorporated into the teaching system to form a "human-AI collaborative" pathway for cultivating literary competence. Such collaboration can reduce students' over-reliance on AI, while enabling them to reflect—through the use of AI itself—on the uniqueness of human language and the creative power of human emotion.

## Pathways of Competence Transformation in Educational Practice
### AI-Assisted Pathways for Deep Writing Training
Faced with students' reliance on AI for automated writing, teachers may integrate AI into the classroom writing process, while deliberately incorporating stages that require active thinking and deep engagement, so as to prevent writing from becoming a form of "technological outsourcing." In teaching practice, instructors can design a three-stage writing training process. In the first stage, students manually draft an outline of their composition; in the

second stage, AI is used to assist in generating an initial draft; in the third stage, students revise the AI-generated text through emotional enrichment, logical completion, and stylistic reconstruction. By comparing human-written and AI-generated texts, students are guided to reflect on where the warmth of literary expression truly originates.

For example, when the writing prompt is "A Beacon of Growth," teachers may ask students to use AI tools such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, or Doubao to generate a sample essay, and then require them to "rewrite" the text based on their own lived experiences. Students are further asked to explicitly identify hollow expressions and generalized emotions in the AI-generated text. Through such comparative practice, students come to realize that although AI can produce structurally complete compositions, it lacks individualized experience and authentic conflict. This contrast-based training, in turn, stimulates students' intrinsic motivation for writing, encourages them to uphold their own subjectivity, and strengthens their awareness of meaning and style underlying linguistic expression.

*Designing Critical Reading Instruction Based on AI-Generated Texts*
Literary reading should not only rely on standardized answers or fixed interpretations; rather, it should awaken students' problem consciousness through open-ended reading. In a context where AI can readily generate interpretations and commentary, teachers can strategically use AI-generated texts as targets for critique, thereby cultivating students' abilities in textual criticism and judgment.

In classroom instruction, teachers can incorporate AI-generated textual analyses as instructional materials and guide students to engage in discussion on issues such as whether the analysis adequately captures characters' psychology, whether the textual style remains consistent, and whether emotional expression is overly generalized. This "critiquing AI" approach not only activates students' initiative in reading but also helps them recognize the complex emotional and cultural contexts underlying literary texts, all of which are not easily grasped by machines.

In addition, teachers may organize an "AI Reading Response Debunking," in which students voluntarily upload AI-generated reading response, followed by peer evaluation within groups focusing on the degree of "human presence" and interpretive depth. The activity culminates in the selection of "the least AI-like AI text," allowing students to deepen their understanding of the nature of literary reading through play, and critique.

*Multi-modal Project-Based Learning via Human-AI Co-Creation*
Against the backdrop of the increasing prominence of cross-media and multi-modal forms of expression, teachers can guide students in developing human-AI collaborative literary creation projects. In such projects, students are not merely asked to write a single text, but to engage in cross-disciplinary expression that integrates literature, design, and narrative around a shared theme. In the process, "AI can help us to understand more about our own creativity" (Luckin, 2018, p. 136), thereby strengthening our self-efficacy.

For instance, with "the scent of memory" as the theme, teachers may encourage students to use AI image-generation tools (such as Midjourney or Stable Diffusion) to create an atmosphere-rich image, which then serves as inspiration for writing poetry or prose. The

project can be further extended through performative presentation, such as audio or videos recordings. Such projects not only enhance students' creative expressive capacities but also enable them to experience how literature converges with visual, auditory, and sensory dimensions to form a comprehensive artistic expression. Throughout the project process, teachers should consistently emphasize the subjectivity of literary expression, guiding students to regard AI as an assistive tool rather than a primary creator. Genuine literature lies not in technical display, but in the integration of individual experience, emotion, and worldview.

## The Renewal and Challenges of Teacher Competence
### *From Knowledge Transmitters to Meaning Activators*
In the age of AI, teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge. With the widespread availability of tools such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek, students can quickly access plot summaries, character analyses, and even critical interpretations of literary works. This trend toward "decentralization" prompts a reconsideration of the teacher's position and role within the classroom. However, teachers' roles are irreplaceable due to the unique human qualities they bring to the educational process, such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotions (Chan, Tsi, 2023, p. 13).

In the past, teachers in the humanities often positioned themselves as knowledge transmitters, placing emphasis on explanation while neglecting lived experience. In the contemporary context, teachers should instead become meaning awakeners and facilitators of spiritual resonance. By guiding students to pose questions, explore what remains unsaid in texts, and activate emotional channels between individuals and literature, teachers can help establish authentic internal connections between students and literary works. In addition, educators also need to guide students in making rational judgments within information-rich environments, enabling them to identify and deconstruct biases and implicit messages embedded in texts (Guo, 2025, p. 15). This also implies that teachers should shift their focus from instructional pace to instructional depth, from explaining answers to stimulating thought, thereby allowing literary education to return to its essential mission of igniting the soul.

### *Teaching Strategy Design under AI-Assisted Contexts*
At the operational level of teaching practice, educators face the practical challenge of updating traditional pedagogical approaches and integrating technological tools. The following strategies may serve as points of reference in instructional practice:

(1) The "comparative teaching" approach
This approach involves comparing students' original writing with AI-generated texts to guide learners in identifying differences in linguistic style, depth of thought, and emotional tension. Tasks such as "rewriting an AI-generated essay" can be introduced to activate students' capacities for active revision and textual reconstruction.

(2) The "generative adversarial classroom" design
In this design, AI-generated content is introduced into the classroom not as a definitive answer, but as an object of challenge and critique. Students are encouraged to question and contest AI outputs through critical discussions—for example, by debating whether AI can truly

understand irony or whether AI-generated poetry possesses a soul. Such adversarial engagement activates students' literary thinking and strengthens their capacity for independent and critical reflection.

**(3) The "Co-Creative Writing" Task**
Students are encouraged to engage in multi-modal literary creation grounded in their own lived experiences. While AI may assist in generating visual or auditory elements, the textual content and emotional expression remain student-led, thereby realizing a principle of "humanistic priority within human–AI collaboration."

These strategies emphasize not whether AI replaces any particular role, but how teachers can design more dynamic and inquiry-oriented pedagogical processes, enabling students to retain critical thinking and humanistic spirit in the age of AI.

*New Directions in Teacher Professional Development*
The continuous advancement of AI technologies has also placed new demands on teachers' professional development. Literary educators in the new era are required not only to possess solid literary literacy and pedagogical skills, but also to develop several emerging competencies, as presented below:

(1) The capacity for discerning use of AI tools: including familiarity with the basic principles and educational boundaries of various AI applications, such as tools for writing generation, textual analysis, and image creation.

(2) The capacity for cross-disciplinary curriculum integration: the ability to integrate literary instruction with fields such as visual arts, ethical reflection, social issues, and AI technologies.

(3) The capacity for translating teaching research into practice: the ability to begin with concrete classroom challenges, reflect on generative instructional design, and conduct action research or small-scale pedagogical projects.

In addition, instructors should focus more on meta-cognitive skills and higher level of the knowledge domain where generative AI models have limited capabilities to act (Al-Smadi，2023，p. 18). At the same time, educators should cultivate a form of digital humanistic literacy that entails both an understanding of technology and a commitment to humanistic values. Such literacy ensures that literary teachers in the age of AI are not marginalized; rather, they become vital bridges between technology and the humanities, and key agents in guiding students to maintain subjectivity and spiritual independence.

**Summary**
Drawing on educational practice, this study redefines the concept of literary competence in the context of the AI era. Literary competence is no longer narrowly understood as the mastery of reading techniques and writing conventions; rather, it constitutes a composite capacity integrating cultural understanding, emotional resonance, critical judgment, and creative expression. Such competence cannot be readily replicated by AI, as it is rooted in the human pursuit of meaning, the experience of emotion, and ethical judgment about the world.

Looking ahead, AI will continue to reshape the educational landscape, yet the mission of literary education remains unchanged: it is, at its core, a process of helping individuals become more fully human. Hence, with a more open stance and a broader vision, we should work toward constructing a new educational normal, which is technologically empowered yet imbued with humanistic warmth.

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