

AI, LITERATURE, AND PEDAGOGY: REIMAGINING PERSONALIZED LEARNING THROUGH POETRY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Rashmi H N

Associate Professor
Department of English, Government First Grade College, Bharathinagar

ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into higher education is reshaping pedagogical practices across disciplines, including the humanities. This paper investigates how AI can be meaningfully integrated into the teaching of poetry by balancing personalized learning with standardized education. Drawing on prescribed texts—Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Prioress’ Tale*, William Blake’s *The Chimney Sweeper*, Bertolt Brecht’s *Questions from a Worker Who Reads*, Shiv K. Kumar’s *Days in New York*, Nissim Ezekiel’s *Enterprise*, and Robert Graves’ *The Dead Fox Hunter*—the study demonstrates how AI-assisted tools can enhance literary interpretation, contextual understanding, and student engagement. Using a qualitative and interpretative methodology grounded in classroom practice in Indian higher education, the paper argues that AI supports differentiated learning, particularly for linguistically diverse and first-generation learners, while standardized frameworks ensure academic rigor and comparability. At the same time, ethical concerns—such as overdependence on AI, algorithmic bias, and the erosion of critical thinking—necessitate careful pedagogical mediation. The study proposes a hybrid model that integrates AI-enabled scaffolding with human-centered literary analysis, preserving interpretative depth while expanding access and inclusivity.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Literary Pedagogy, Personalized Learning, Standardized Education, Poetry Analysis, Higher Education, Ethics, Digital Humanities, Indian Classrooms, Multilingual Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in higher education, redefining how knowledge is delivered, accessed, and assessed. While AI has been widely adopted in science and technology education, its role in the humanities—particularly in literature—remains a subject of critical debate. Literature classrooms have traditionally relied on close reading, interpretative dialogue, and contextual analysis. The integration of AI into such spaces raises fundamental questions about authorship, interpretation, and the role of the teacher.

In the Indian context, these questions acquire additional urgency. Undergraduate classrooms are marked by linguistic diversity, uneven schooling backgrounds, and varying levels of exposure to English. Canonical texts—often written in archaic or culturally distant idioms—can become barriers to meaningful engagement. As a result, many students resort to memorization rather than interpretation. AI-based tools, however, offer new possibilities: simplified explanations, vocabulary support, contextual notes, and adaptive questioning can make complex texts more accessible.

This paper examines how AI can be integrated into the teaching of poetry without diminishing the interpretative richness that defines literary studies. It argues for a hybrid

pedagogical model that combines AI-driven personalization with the coherence and accountability of standardized curricula. Through detailed analysis of prescribed poems, the study demonstrates how AI can function as a scaffold that supports comprehension and critical thinking while preserving the centrality of human interpretation.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The scholarship on AI in education has expanded significantly over the past decade. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel argue that AI enables adaptive learning systems capable of responding to individual learner profiles, thereby enhancing engagement and efficiency (45). Luckin similarly contends that the future of education lies in the productive collaboration between human and machine intelligence, rather than their opposition (72).

Critical perspectives, however, caution against uncritical adoption. Selwyn warns that AI risks reducing education to data-driven processes, potentially marginalizing the humanistic dimensions of learning such as empathy, ethical reflection, and creativity (103). UNESCO's reports on AI in education emphasize concerns related to data privacy, equity, and algorithmic bias, particularly in contexts marked by socio-economic disparities (18).

Recent studies (2023–2025) further complicate this picture. Kumar and Sharma note that AI adoption in Indian higher education has improved access to learning resources but continues to face infrastructural and pedagogical challenges (214). Mishra (2024) finds that AI tools significantly improve comprehension among first-generation learners, especially in language-heavy disciplines, but may encourage passive learning if not guided effectively (67). Rao (2023) argues that AI-supported pedagogy must be culturally responsive, particularly in multilingual classrooms where direct translation may not capture nuance (102).

Within literary studies, reader-response theory foregrounds the active role of the reader in constructing meaning. Wolfgang Iser argues that texts are inherently indeterminate, inviting multiple interpretations shaped by the reader's horizon of expectations. Constructivist pedagogy similarly emphasizes learner-centered approaches, aligning well with AI-driven personalization. At the same time, scholars in digital humanities highlight the potential of AI for textual analysis, intertextual mapping, and pattern recognition. Yet, there remains a lack of research on how these tools function in real classrooms, especially in non-elite, resource-constrained settings.

This paper addresses this gap by combining theoretical insights with classroom-based observations from Indian undergraduate contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretative methodology that integrates literary analysis with pedagogical reflection. The research is based on:

- Close reading of prescribed poems in the undergraduate syllabus
- Classroom observations involving AI-assisted teaching tools (e.g., AI chat interfaces, text explanation tools, and adaptive quizzes)
- Reflective notes on student engagement, comprehension, and assessment outcomes

Rather than relying on quantitative metrics, the study emphasizes conceptual synthesis. It seeks to understand how AI reshapes the processes of reading, interpreting, and discussing poetry, and how these changes can be harnessed within existing curricular frameworks.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks:

Constructivism: Learning is viewed as an active process in which students construct knowledge through interaction and reflection. AI tools support constructivist learning by enabling exploratory engagement with texts—through prompts, questions, and iterative feedback.

Reader-Response Theory: This framework emphasizes the reader's role in meaning-making. AI can facilitate multiple interpretations by offering diverse perspectives, but it must avoid foreclosing interpretative openness through overly prescriptive answers.

Posthumanism: Posthumanist theory examines the evolving relationship between humans and technology, questioning traditional notions of agency and authorship. In the context of literary pedagogy, it invites us to consider how AI participates in the interpretative process without replacing human judgment.

Together, these frameworks provide a lens through which to evaluate both the possibilities and limitations of AI in literature classrooms.

5. POETIC TEXTS AND AI-ENHANCED INTERPRETATION

5.1 Geoffrey Chaucer – *The Prioress' Tale*

Chaucer's *The Prioress' Tale* presents a narrative of innocence, devotion, and violence embedded within medieval Christian ideology. The line "O martir, sowed to virginitee" (Chaucer 487) constructs the child as a figure of purity and sacrifice. For contemporary students, especially those unfamiliar with Middle English, the linguistic barrier is substantial.

AI tools can assist by providing modern English paraphrases, glossaries, and historical context. For instance, students can explore the socio-religious tensions of medieval Europe through guided prompts. However, the poem's anti-Semitic undertones require critical scrutiny. AI-generated summaries often sanitize or omit such complexities, making teacher mediation essential. In classroom practice, students were encouraged to compare AI-generated explanations with guided discussions, enabling them to recognize both the utility and the limitations of AI.

5.2 William Blake – *The Chimney Sweeper*

Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper* (Songs of Innocence) foregrounds the exploitation of child labor during the Industrial Revolution. The line "So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep" (Blake 12) encapsulates the physical and emotional suffering of the child speaker. AI tools can contextualize the historical conditions of industrial England, making the poem more accessible to students.

In practice, AI-generated explanations helped students identify key themes such as innocence, oppression, and false consolation. However, deeper engagement required moving beyond summary. Students were asked to reflect on the image of the "Angel with a bright key" and its ambiguous promise of salvation. Through guided discussion, they explored whether the poem offers hope or exposes ideological manipulation. AI thus functioned as an entry point, not a substitute for interpretation.

5.3 Bertolt Brecht – *Questions from a Worker Who Reads*

Brecht's poem challenges dominant historical narratives through a series of probing questions: "Who built Thebes of the seven gates?" (Brecht 5). AI tools can generate additional questions and provide background on historical events, encouraging students to think critically about authorship and power.

In classroom settings, AI-generated prompts were used to initiate discussion. Students began to question why history often foregrounds rulers rather than laborers. However, there was also a tendency to accept AI-generated interpretations as authoritative. To counter this, students were asked to formulate their own questions, thereby reclaiming agency in the interpretative process.

5.4 Shiv K. Kumar – *Days in New York*

Kumar's poem explores urban alienation and the experience of displacement. The line "The streets are loud with silence" (Kumar 23) captures the paradox of metropolitan life. For students in rural contexts, such imagery can be difficult to relate to.

AI tools can provide visual and cultural context, enabling students to imagine urban environments. In practice, students were encouraged to compare the poem's depiction of alienation with their own experiences of social isolation. This bridging of contexts enhanced engagement and interpretation.

5.5 Nissim Ezekiel – *Enterprise*

Ezekiel's *Enterprise* traces a journey from collective idealism to existential disillusionment. The line "Home is where we have to gather grace" (Ezekiel 45) suggests a reflective resolution. AI tools can help map the poem's progression and identify shifts in tone and perspective.

However, interpretation of the poem's philosophical dimension requires sustained engagement. Students were guided to consider the meaning of "enterprise" beyond its literal sense, exploring themes of purpose, failure, and self-discovery.

5.6 Robert Graves – *The Dead Fox Hunter*

Graves' poem reflects on memory, war, and loss. The line "We found the fox, but he was dead" (Graves 31) evokes both literal and symbolic endings. AI tools can assist in visualizing the scene and providing historical context related to war.

In classroom discussions, students examined how the poem transforms a hunting scene into a meditation on mortality. AI-generated summaries provided a starting point, but deeper analysis emerged through collective interpretation.

6. PERSONALIZED LEARNING IN LITERARY CLASSROOMS

AI enables personalized learning by adapting content to individual needs. In multilingual classrooms, students benefit from bilingual explanations, vocabulary support, and interactive exercises. For example, students who struggled with archaic language in Chaucer were able to access simplified explanations, allowing them to participate more actively in discussions.

Personalization also supports varied learning paces. Faster learners can explore additional interpretations, while others can revisit explanations. This flexibility enhances confidence and engagement.

7. STANDARDIZATION AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

While personalization enhances engagement, standardized education ensures consistency and comparability. Prescribed syllabi expose students to canonical texts and shared frameworks of analysis. AI can align personalized learning with standardized outcomes through adaptive assessments that test comprehension, analysis, and interpretation.

However, concerns about academic integrity arise when students rely excessively on AI-generated responses. Clear guidelines and assessment strategies are necessary to ensure originality.

8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The use of AI in literature classrooms raises several ethical concerns. Overdependence on AI may reduce independent thinking. Algorithmic bias can shape interpretations in subtle ways. Additionally, data privacy and surveillance issues must be addressed.

A human-centered approach is essential. Teachers must guide students in using AI critically, emphasizing that it is a tool rather than an authority.

9. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Classroom observations across multiple cohorts of undergraduate students reveal a complex but productive interaction between AI-assisted tools and traditional literary pedagogy. The most significant finding is that AI functions effectively as a scaffold for comprehension, particularly for students who face linguistic and cultural barriers. In classes where Chaucer's *The Prioress' Tale* was introduced, students initially struggled with the Middle English diction and unfamiliar religious references. When AI-based paraphrasing tools were used to provide line-by-line explanations, comprehension improved markedly. Students who had previously remained silent began to participate, asking questions about characterization, narrative voice, and historical context. This suggests that AI can democratize access to canonical texts by lowering entry barriers.

A similar pattern was observed in the teaching of Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper*. Students often approached the poem as a simple narrative of suffering. AI-generated contextual notes on the Industrial Revolution helped them situate the poem historically. However, deeper analysis required guided questioning. When students were asked to interpret the image of the "Angel with a bright key," their responses initially echoed AI summaries, emphasizing hope and redemption. Through discussion, they began to consider alternative readings—such as the possibility that the dream functions as ideological consolation. This shift from surface comprehension to critical interpretation highlights the importance of teacher mediation.

In the case of Brecht's *Questions from a Worker Who Reads*, AI proved particularly effective in generating discussion prompts. Students engaged more actively when presented with questions about authorship and labor. However, a tendency to reproduce AI-generated answers without modification was also observed. To address this, students were required to formulate their own questions and responses, encouraging independent thought. This intervention significantly improved the quality of classroom discussion.

Language diversity emerged as a key factor in the effectiveness of AI tools. Students from Kannada-medium backgrounds benefited from bilingual explanations, which reduced anxiety and increased participation. At the same time, over-reliance on translation occasionally led to loss of nuance, particularly in metaphorical passages. For instance, in Kumar's *Days in New York*, the phrase "loud with silence" was sometimes reduced to a literal contradiction, rather

than being explored as a metaphor for urban alienation. This underscores the need for careful calibration of AI tools.

Assessment patterns also revealed important insights. Assignments completed with AI assistance were generally more structured and grammatically accurate. However, they sometimes lacked depth and originality. Students tended to rely on standard interpretations rather than developing their own arguments. To counter this, assessment tasks were redesigned to require personal reflection, comparative analysis, and evidence-based argumentation.

Overall, the findings indicate that AI is most effective when integrated into a hybrid pedagogical model. It enhances accessibility, supports differentiated learning, and stimulates engagement. At the same time, it cannot replace the interpretative, dialogic, and ethical dimensions of literary education. Teachers remain central to the process, guiding students from comprehension to critical inquiry.

10. CONCLUSION

The integration of AI into literary pedagogy presents both opportunities and challenges. This study has demonstrated that AI can enhance personalized learning, particularly in linguistically diverse classrooms, while standardized frameworks ensure academic rigor. Through the analysis of prescribed poems, it has shown how AI can support comprehension, contextualization, and initial interpretation.

However, the study also underscores the limitations of AI. Without careful mediation, it can encourage dependency, reduce originality, and obscure ethical complexities. The future of literary education, therefore, lies in a balanced approach that integrates AI with human-centered teaching practices.

Such a model recognizes that literature is not merely information to be processed but an experience to be interpreted. AI can assist in this process, but it cannot replace the human capacity for empathy, imagination, and critical reflection. By embracing both technological innovation and humanistic values, higher education can create classrooms that are inclusive, engaging, and intellectually rigorous

REFERENCES

1. Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Oxford UP, 2008.
2. Brecht, Bertolt. *Selected Poems*. Penguin, 1997.
3. Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Penguin, 2003.
4. Ezekiel, Nissim. *Collected Poems*. Oxford UP, 2005.
5. Graves, Robert. *Collected Poems*. Faber, 2001.
6. Kumar, Shiv K. *Selected Poems*. Oxford UP, 2000.
7. Holmes, Wayne, Maya Bialik, and Charles Fadel. *Artificial Intelligence in Education*. Center for Curriculum Redesign, 2019.
8. Luckin, Rose. *Machine Learning and Human Intelligence*. UCL Institute of Education Press, 2018.
9. Selwyn, Neil. *AI and the Future of Education*. Polity Press, 2019.
10. UNESCO. *Artificial Intelligence in Education Report*. UNESCO, 2021.

11. Kumar, Vinit, and Poonam Sharma. "AI in Higher Education in India." Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 2022.
12. Mishra, R. "AI and Student Learning Outcomes in India." International Journal of Educational Research, 2024.
13. Rao, S. "AI Pedagogy in Multilingual Classrooms." Education and Information Technologies, 2023.