

Artificial Intelligence and Prose Literature-in-English Instruction: Opportunities and Challenges

Evelyn I. Aiyede, Ph.D

*Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education
University of Ibadan, Ibadan
evelynaiyede@gmail.com*

Mopelola Susan Olakunde, Ph.D

*School of General Studies
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
Olamidemopelola19@gmail.com*



Abstract

This paper discusses the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI technologies into the teaching of prose literature-in-English. The paper identifies the weaknesses of students in prose Literature-in-English which partly accounts for the poor results recorded in Literature in English at public examinations and argues that while scholars have made frantic efforts through research to mitigate the problem, integrating AI to enhance effective prose Literature-in-English instruction, has not been given adequate attention. In trying to explore the option of using AI to teach prose Literature-in-English, the paper reasons that opportunities and challenges of integrating AI should be brought to the fore so that teachers of prose Literature-in-English could adequately prepare for the smooth integration of AI. The paper concludes that integration of AI in prose Literature in English teaching offers both significant opportunities and challenges, therefore, effectiveness of integrating AI in Prose Literature-in-English instruction is contingent on teachers' readiness to seize the opportunities and confront the challenges attending to its use.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, literary teaching, opportunities, challenges, technology integration

Introduction

Literature is a very useful instrument for moral and intellectual growth of an individual and the society. Literature also plays a major role as a subject in the curriculum of secondary and tertiary institutions. It is a humanising subject in the school curriculum that instructs, entertains and helps students' overall development. This shows its importance for students' overall development. Through this subject, students are shown the humanitarian way of testing the views and actions of men. The texts used in the subject enrich the human's thoughts and emotions with special effect from the texts. Literature is therefore, imperative to students since it has the ability to educate, amuse and enhance their ability to communicate effectively.

The concept of literature has remained difficult to define and as such, is imprecise. This characteristic of literature has given rise to several definitions each of which has been found to

be defective. For instance, Wellek and Warren (1963) define literature as great books which (in whatever subject they evolve) are notable for literary form or expression. Stating further, they emphasize that the criterion for these books are either aesthetic worth alone or aesthetic worth in combination with overall intellectual distinction. This definition is considered unsatisfactory because it excludes oratory. Literature exists both in oral and written forms. There is also the issue of aesthetic worth and the degree of literariness. In deciding all these issues, a lot of value judgement is involved. For the purpose of this research, literature is taken to be an imaginative writing that gives expression to various human experiences. It aids as a guide for good writing; it is memorable because it creates a lasting feeling on the reader's emotion. It also helps integrate the rhythm of a language, as well as improving the students' intelligence and sensibility. Literature is also useful in developing the essential communication skills that individuals require to address their growing social and economic needs (Aiyede et al., 2017).

Literature is taught at senior secondary schools as Literature-in-English. Four African and non-African texts (two novels and two drama texts) and 12 poems comprising six African and six non-African are recommended for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO). To excel in examination and appreciate the moral values inherent in the texts, students are expected to read them as many times as possible. Literature-in-English is a subject that is crucial in enabling students come to full actualization of their career aspirations. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria require that students get a credit pass in Literature-in-English to gain admission to study courses like Law, English Language, Theatre Arts, Mass Communication, Linguistics, Classics and other arts-related courses (Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, 2018).

The relevance of literature to the realisation of Nigerian philosophy of education lies in its use to realise the national objective of encouraging people to live peacefully with one another. Literature, a mirror of the people, is contributory to the improvement and progress of the society in all aspects (Ghasemi, 2008; Adekoya, 2011). The different characters portrayed in literary works are reflections of people in true life situations. The experiences of these characters and the way they react to life issues help learners to have a deeper understanding of human nature (Idialu, 2014). Ogunsiji (2013) states that the essence of literature could include education, culture, moral, recreational and socio-political developments of students. This shows that the importance of literature in the academic world, includes, informative and educative. The aim of literature as informative is to expose students to information in a specific text, and being educative is to ameliorate the skills and knowledge of the students on issues that are germane to the author (Ibitola, 2005). This shows how literature could be used to enhance learners' linguistic performance and acquiring appropriate use of the language.

Moreover, through prose, poetry and drama, students are informed about the realities within the society in which they live. This makes them socially conscious as it expresses both pleasant and unpleasant experiences of people. Since imagination and the resources of language are used to present important facts of life to both the present and the future generation (Clandfield, 2011), students acquire broad knowledge in other fields of study because writers serve as

remarkable moral development agents for them especially those in the impressionable years of adolescence seeking role model for adulthood.

In spite of the invaluable contributions of Literature-in-English to the overall development of human beings, the performance of candidates in this subject at the senior school certificate level is not encouraging and this has given students, teachers and school authorities a big cause for anxiety. Report from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) reveals that for seven consecutive years (2014-2020), only about 42.0% of Literature-in-English students who wrote the examinations had credit, 33.0% had a mere pass, while the failure rate is 21.0%. For instance, in 2014, out of 401,890 students that sat for the examinations, only 40.4% had a credit pass, while 15.3% had pass and 38.4% failed the subject. In 2015, out 376,134 students that sat for the examination, 36.0% obtained a credit pass in the subject, 20.0% had a pass and 38.0% failed. The situations were not different in 2016 and 2017, where 41.0% and 40.2% obtained a credit pass respectively and 40.2% and 31% failed the subject. In 2018 and 2019, 19.9 % and 25.5% had a credit pass and pass while 35.8% failed respectively. In 2020, 18.0% obtained a credit pass and 44.5 failed the subject.

These analyses revealed deterioration in the achievement of students in the subject over the years, implying that their desire to be admitted into the university to study the aforementioned courses was not achieved. According to WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports for May/June 2019 and 2020, the poor performance of students in Literature-in English examinations is related to non-reading of the prescribed prose and drama texts. The WAEC Chief Examiner's reports (2019) identified students' failure to read the prescribed texts as one of the factors responsible for their poor performance. The Chief examiner reports that:

A few do justice to the questions A few candidates who were able to glean a few facts on the content were not able to put their points across in concise English. The performance of candidates was poor, but it is obvious from the answers of the candidates that, the literary prescribed texts were not studied for the examination as expected. Teachers should devise various means of encouraging them to read prescribed texts (p.48).

A baseline observation conducted by the researchers reveals that students lack interest in reading the prescribed texts, thereby relying largely on key-points and *Exam Focus* to prepare for examinations. This tendency of not reading the prescribed texts is attributed by Bassey (2021) to the perceived voluminous nature of prescribed literature texts for use in schools. According to Bassey, students still complain that prose literature texts are boring and too long to read. This complaint could be as a result of volume of the text and lack of interest in reading. Other factors identified as being responsible for the negative trend include lack of individual drive on the part of the learners to read the recommended texts (Adegoke, 2015; Ademola, 2015; Amokeodo, 2012). The use of out-of-class informal school clubs in which students are actively engaged with the texts can be a great solution to the problem of lack of interest in reading. Oduwole (2011) identifies non-use of effective instructional techniques and learning environment that are conducive to the teaching of prose such as using informal club activities.

This work focuses on prose as a genre of literature that is meant for learning a language. Among the three genres of literature, prose is considered the more accessible and the most preferred

(Fakeye, 2012), unlike poetry (which involves intense use of language) and drama (which deals with action). Therefore, Kehinde (2012) simply sees prose as any created work, written in paragraphs than the principles of poetry. These views of prose imply that prose presents life-like experiences through vivid description of events, basically for entertainment and it is enjoyed in an intimate reading situation.

Prose, according to Yinusa (2021), is an ordinary language that people use in their writing such as stories, editorials books, among others. Ajagbe (2023) says prose may be said to be everyday language which has been represented or transformed into writing. Prose is that genre of literature that focuses more on reading and comprehension and where the learners are also taught the skill of reading. This is so because drama is meant to be acted or staged, poem is to be chanted or sung while prose is meant to be read. Teaching prose enables the students to comprehend the passage, speed up their reading skills, read fluently, build up the vocabulary as well as enjoy reading and writing. Furthermore, it helps the learners to use their knowledge of vocabulary and structures effectively and to also become more proficient in the four language skills and develop the ability of speaking English well (Ayegeboyin, 2024).

A critical examination of the question pattern of the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) on Prose Literature-in-English (Paper 3) reveals that it is divided into two different aspects, that is, two African and two non-African prose literature texts which are to be studied by the students for the examination. Therefore, students are expected to choose and answer a question on one African text and one non-African text (which will also be adopted in this study). In doing this, they are made to relate with different settings, language and culture which could be problems militating against their achievement in the subject.

The WAEC Chief Examiners' Report (2020) shows that students' inability to read, understand and comprehend the recommended texts led to insignificant responses to questions. Reports indicate that recommended texts were not read by many students, the little knowledge acquired were from notes, abridged texts or keynotes which resulted in presentations of inappropriate and irrelevant answers. Answers to questions were mostly generalized, having no bearing on the questions as most candidates failed to use materials from text to support points made. However, what is visible in these reports is that students' deficiency and lack of interest in reading affect their performance in the subject. Lack of ownership and utilization of the recommended texts made most learners rely on summary notes. What can be gleaned from all these reports is that problems of aliteracy (Abimbola, 2021), absence of enrichment activities in prose Literature-in-English instruction through creating conducive teaching environment (Adebile, 2015), students' perception of the prescribed literature texts (Igubor, 2016) and effectiveness of classroom illocution in the teaching and learning of subjects including prose literature (Basse, 2021) are largely responsible for poor performance in this aspect of literature in English.

Previous research efforts to improve learning outcomes in prose Literature-in-English include, but not limited to, interventions using various interactive instructional strategies (Arawo, 2017; Yinusa, 2021; Ayegeboyin, 2024; teacher-related factors (Olagunju, 2021); text and student-related factors (Ajagbe, 2023). However, little attention has been paid to potentials and

challenges of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance prose Literature-in-English instruction.

AI's revolutionary effects on prose text analysis and interpretation are at the forefront of a paradigm change in today's Literature-in-English instruction. With the use of computational methods like sentiment analysis and natural language processing (NLP), scholars are now able to examine enormous corpora of literary texts with unprecedented speed and accuracy (Hake, 2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms can reveal obscure themes, linguistic subtleties, and hidden patterns that are invisible to conventional literary analysis techniques. This results in fresh perspectives on the composition, style, and meaning of literary works. With technology taking such undeniably giant steps and revolutionising the study of prose Literature-in-English, the teachers too should be groomed adequately to guide students and help them harness the immense potential of Artificial Intelligence that can surmount traditional ICT integration strategies and benefits, for a more effective and beneficial learning outcome. Hence, training of teachers of prose Literature-in-English emerges as an issue of central significance. However, there are challenges as well. This paper explores the new vistas and challenges that AI brings to prose Literature-in-English teaching today.

Prospects of integrating AI into prose literature-in-English instructions

In the context of prose literature-in-English, AI has the potential to enrich instructional practices, improve student engagement, and expand access to literary resources. Rather than replacing the teacher, AI provides a supplementary framework through which the study of literature-in-English can be enhanced. This section examines five major areas in which AI can be meaningfully integrated into prose literature-in-English instruction. These areas include: personalised learning experiences, enhanced assessment techniques, exploration of themes and contexts, access to rich resources, and the encouragement of collaborative learning.

Personalised learning experiences

One of the most promising prospects of AI in prose literature instruction lies in its capacity to personalise the learning process. Adaptive learning platforms powered by AI can adjust reading materials according to students' literacy levels, interests, and learning pace. This has been shown to improve engagement and comprehension, as demonstrated in a systematic review by Hardaker and Glenn (2025), which highlighted the effectiveness of AI in tailoring instruction to individual learner profiles. In literature classrooms, such adaptivity could mean recommending texts that balance accessibility with challenge, ensuring students engage with prose in ways that neither overwhelm nor under-stimulate them.

AI also offers opportunities for personalised feedback on literary analysis. Rather than receiving generalised remarks, students can benefit from detailed, individualised responses that highlight strengths and areas for improvement in their interpretation of prose. In a study by Zhang (2025), AI-generated feedback was found to significantly improve students' organisation and development of ideas in writing. While such systems are not infallible (often struggling with highly creative or unconventional responses), they offer a powerful supplement to teacher feedback, particularly in contexts where large class sizes limit opportunities for individualised attention.

Enhanced assessment techniques

Assessment in literature studies often involves subjective judgements of interpretation, coherence, and style, making it both labour-intensive and prone to inconsistencies. AI presents new prospects in this area by offering efficient and reliable tools for grading and performance analysis. Automated essay scoring has been studied extensively, with promising results. For instance, Alawadh et al. (2024) reported that AI systems using discourse and lexical features achieved high levels of agreement with human raters, suggesting that AI can assist in evaluating students' written analyses of prose. Similarly, Yavuz et al. (2024) demonstrated that large language models, when guided by rubrics, produced grading outcomes consistent with human assessments in English as a foreign language context.

Beyond grading, AI can also analyse student performance data to identify recurring challenges. This analytic capability allows teachers to detect patterns in comprehension or writing difficulties and to design interventions accordingly. A study by Fleckenstein et al. (2023) further supports the effectiveness of automated writing evaluation tools, noting consistent improvements in students' performance across multiple studies. In prose literature instruction, this means educators could gain clearer insights into how students handle aspects like themes, characterisation, or narrative structures, enabling more targeted teaching.

Exploration of themes and contexts

Understanding prose literature requires more than surface-level comprehension; it demands engagement with themes, cultural contexts, and literary devices. AI-based textual analysis tools can support this process by identifying patterns, highlighting devices such as symbolism or tone, and providing contextual information that enriches interpretation. Ved (2025) discusses how digital humanities tools powered by natural language processing have been used to uncover thematic structures and historical allusions in literary texts, offering learners insights that might otherwise remain inaccessible.

These tools hold particular promise in secondary school classrooms where students may struggle to detect subtle narrative techniques. By drawing attention to recurrent motifs or providing background information on cultural contexts, AI can scaffold deeper analysis. However, as Rajlakshmi et al. (2025) caution, such tools should not replace close reading but rather serve as an aid to interpretation. The risk lies in students relying excessively on machine-generated summaries instead of developing their own analytic skills. Nevertheless, when integrated judiciously, AI offers new possibilities for exploring literature with intellectual depth.

Access to rich resources

Another important prospect of AI integration is its capacity to expand access to literary resources. Through intelligent recommendation systems, students can be guided towards texts that are aligned with their interests and reading abilities. This can foster inclusivity and engagement, particularly for students who may otherwise feel alienated from canonical works. Hardaker and Glenn (2025) noted that adaptive recommendation tools were particularly effective in increasing learner motivation by aligning content with personal preferences.

For students learning English as a second language, AI-powered translation and language support tools also present significant opportunities. They enable learners to access complex prose texts without being limited by linguistic barriers. Butarbutar (2024), in their review of AI in language education, reported that such tools enhance inclusivity, allowing diverse learners to participate more fully in literary study. In practice, this could mean providing side-by-side translations or explanatory glossaries that ensure all students can engage with texts in meaningful ways. While the risk of over-reliance on translation exists, the potential for broadening access remains substantial.

Encouraging collaborative learning

Literature thrives on dialogue and shared interpretation, and AI offers new means of facilitating collaborative learning. AI-supported platforms can connect students for peer review or moderated discussions, enriching their capacity to critique and appreciate prose literature. In a study by Guo et al. (2024), the integration of AI into peer feedback processes in university English classes improved both the quality of student feedback and their subsequent writing ability. The researchers found that AI not only scaffolded responses but also encouraged students to engage more deeply with their peers' ideas.

AI can also moderate online discussions, keeping conversations focused and inclusive. A systematic review by Wang et al. (2023) highlighted the role of AI in managing classroom discourse, ensuring equitable participation and maintaining academic relevance in discussions. In literature classrooms, where diverse interpretations are valuable, AI-mediated forums could foster collaborative meaning-making while helping teachers monitor students' contributions.

Challenges of using AI in prose literature-in-English instruction

According to Chowdhury (2024), using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Prose Literature-in-English teaching presents several challenges that need careful consideration. Here are some key challenges:

- i. **Deep literary analysis:** AI can analyse text at a surface level, identifying themes, motifs, and structures. However, literary works often require deep, subjective analysis that depends on the individual teacher's insights, personal experiences, and cultural understanding. AI lacks the nuance and emotional connection that a human teacher brings to discussions.
- ii. **Interpretation diversity:** Literature is often open to multiple interpretations, and AI may struggle to capture or suggest alternative readings of a text. Teachers can guide students to explore and appreciate different perspectives, whereas AI might limit this exploration to its programmed parameters.
- iii. **Historical and cultural context:** English literature often draws on complex historical, political, and cultural contexts. AI may struggle to fully appreciate or convey the significance of these contexts, leading to a reductionist or incomplete understanding of the text.
- iv. **Subtext and irony:** Literary works often use subtle cues like irony, sarcasm, and complex subtext, which can be difficult for AI to fully grasp or convey.
- v. **Dependence on AI for analysis:** If students lean too heavily on AI tools for summarizing or analysing literature, they may not develop their own critical thinking and analytical skills. Over reliance on technology may also inhibit the development of essential skills like argumentation and reflective thinking.

- vi. **Loss of creativity:** Students may miss out on the opportunity to engage creatively with literature. AI tends to present conclusions or suggestions based on patterns in the text, which could stifle individual interpretations and original insights.
- vii. **Character emotions:** AI lacks empathy and the ability to fully understand the emotional depth of characters in literature. Many literary works revolve around complex human emotions that need to be understood in a deeply personal, subjective way - something AI cannot replicate.
- viii. **Many approaches to literature emphasize the personal response of the reader, including how individual emotions and experiences shape their interpretation. AI cannot replicate this personal, emotional engagement, which is central to the study of literature.**
- ix. **Data bias:** AI is trained on existing data, which could include biases or inaccuracies. This might result in AI offering skewed interpretations or failing to provide the most diverse range of perspectives, especially regarding under-represented voices in literature.
- x. **Over-generalisation:** AI systems may rely on algorithms that generalize across works, which may be insufficient when dealing with unique or complex pieces of literature. They may overlook the individuality of certain texts or misinterpret the significance of certain literary devices.
- xi. **Data privacy:** Many AI tools require data input, whether it is students' responses or previous learning materials. This raises concerns about the privacy of students' data, especially in educational settings.
- xii. **Plagiarism and authenticity:** Students may misuse AI for plagiarism, submitting AI generated summaries or essays as their own work. This can undermine the integrity of the learning process, leading to issues around academic honesty.
- xiii. **Digital divide:** Not all students have equal access to the technology required for AI tools, leading to potential inequality in the classroom. This could widen the gap between students who are familiar with and able to use AI tools and those who are not.
- xiv. **Learning styles:** Some students may not learn effectively through AI-based systems, especially those who benefit from hands-on or traditional teaching methods. Relying too heavily on technology may overlook these students' needs.
- xv. **Skill-set of teachers:** For teachers, integrating AI into Literature in English instruction requires additional skills and understanding of the technology. Not all educators may be well versed in using AI tools, or are comfortable incorporating them into their teaching.
- xvi. **Loss of human interaction:** Literature classes often involve dynamic discussions, debates, and exchanges of ideas. AI cannot replicate the back and forth interaction between students and teachers that is essential for fostering critical thinking and deep engagement with texts.
- xvii. **Diminished social learning:** Collaborative learning, where students discuss and debate literature, may be stunted if AI becomes too dominant in the classroom. Students might miss out on learning from their peers or developing essential interpersonal skills.
- xviii. **AI's limitation in creativity:** In English literature, creative writing is a crucial component. AI may assist with grammar and structure, but it cannot replicate the originality and unique voice that human writers develop. It might inadvertently encourage formulaic or derivative writing, rather than fostering truly creative expression.

Conclusion

Integration of AI in prose literature teaching offers both significant opportunities and challenges. AI tools, such as natural language processing, machine learning algorithms, and virtual assistants, have the potential to enhance learning experiences by providing personalised instruction, automating administrative tasks, and offering new ways to engage students. AI can assist in analysing texts, providing immediate feedback, and facilitating deeper exploration of literary themes and contexts. However, while AI can be a powerful resource, it is important to recognize that it cannot replace the essential role of human educators in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and emotional connections with literature. The effectiveness of AI in literature teaching depends on how it is used in conjunction with traditional pedagogical approaches and the careful consideration of ethical implications, such as privacy concerns and bias in algorithms.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are proffered:

1. Educational institutions should incorporate comprehensive training on artificial intelligence tools and methodologies into teacher education programmes. This training will equip future educators with the necessary skills to effectively utilize AI in their teaching practices, enhancing innovative teaching methods.
2. Schools and educational authorities should actively promote and provide access to AI-driven educational resources. This includes implementing AI tools that personalize learning experiences, thereby improving engagement and outcomes for all students while supporting teachers in their instructional strategies.
3. Continuous research and evaluation should be conducted to assess the long-term impact of AI on teaching practices and educational transformation. This will help identify best practices, address challenges, and ensure that AI integration aligns with the evolving needs of educators and students.

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