

AI IN THE TEACHING OF PROSE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The paper analyzed the utilisation of artificial intelligence in the teaching of prose in secondary schools. It identified the various AI tools literature teachers could adopt. Specifically, it dwelt on the use of ChatGPT. The application of ChatGPT in the various stage of literature teaching was made explicit. Some challenges to the use of ChatGPT by secondary school teachers include lack of technical knowledge and skills, lack of funds and computer phobia, inadequate power supply and unreliable internet connections. The recommendations include the provision of AI infrastructure by government, acquisition of computer skill and AI skills by teachers and the imbibing of the ethical use of AI.

Introduction

Literature refers to writings with excellence forms or expressions that presents ideas of value. Nwachukwu-Agbada, Kwami and Ogunsiji (2010) define literature as a subject of study of a creative or imaginative work of art provided by a novelist, poet or playwright in the three forms of prose poetry, and drama. Prose is a long narrative which covers novels, novellas and short stories. It deals with the narration of events with emphasis on causes. The main feature of a novel is that it makes detailed analysis and description of events, setting and character. The author explains everything, leaving the reader to draw his/her conclusions. Literature-in- English language is a discipline and a subject of study - in secondary schools. It refers to works of various cultures written in English language. The main objectives of studying literature among others are to aid the understanding of the language in which the literary work is written and to develop the creative and thinking ability of learners (WAEC Literature-in English- Syllabus 2016 – 2020).

In secondary schools, the teaching of novels provides students with opportunities to become involved with themes, characters, and social realities while improving their language skills (grammar, reading, vocabulary and writing. According to Spanopoulou, Bilali, Stoumpos, Stathea, Donouki and Dourakim (2025) literature, particularly the novel, plays a central role in the development of learners' critical thinking, imagination, and cultural awareness. Literature provides a window into the study of different cultures, historical contexts, and diverse human experiences. It encourages critical thinking by analyzing complex narratives and characters, and promotes empathy by allowing readers to see the world from different perspectives (Wang, 2024).

However, conventional methods of teaching literature in secondary schools often face challenges such as insufficient classroom time, students' declining interest/poor attitude in reading, lack of teaching resources, ineffective teaching methods, teachers' attitude and incompetence and textual difficulties (Fatimayin, 2015 and Spanopoulou, etal 2025). The practice of teaching literature in secondary schools includes giving

students notes in order to cover the texts without actually helping them to enjoy the works of art. According to Uroko in Assimonye (2021) some teachers do the reading and at most would ask few questions and give notes to students to copy. Fatimayin (2015) reported that take-your-book-and-read method was 50% more in use than read-aloud-and-discuss or contextualized method. These teaching approaches have resulted in the inability of students to evaluate literary works, as there is absence of the required learner interaction, which will result to improved understanding and enjoyment of the text. The afore mentioned challenges and crises demand a fundamental rethinking of what it means to teach and learn literature when AI technology is no longer a peripheral tool, but a central force reshaping the classroom (Liangbo and Jing, 2025). To them, literary education should, on the basis of upholding the core value of humanistic spirit, actively explore pathways for deep integration with AI technology. It should attempt to carry out digital-intelligent transformation in aspects such as teaching objectives, teaching content, teacher/student roles, teaching/learning modes as well as evaluation mechanisms, thereby bringing new opportunities and vitality to English literature teaching and achieving innovation and optimization of teaching.

Artificial intelligence is the branch of computer science that develops systems capable of performing tasks requiring human-like intelligence such as reasoning, learning, decision making and problem solving. In other words, artificial intelligence is when computers are designed to think, learn or behave like human beings. In the context of teaching, there is a variety of AI technologies and applications designed to support teaching and assessment. According to Liangbo and Jing (2025), Traditional English literature classes have long been structured around teacher authority, text-centrism and linear interpretation. This stability

Integrating artificial intelligence into the teaching of literature in secondary schools has the potential to transform the way not only for students to learn but also for teachers to teach today. Artificial intelligence processes can provide students with personalized feedback, advice, and recommendations, promoting a more modern, engaging, and effective learning experience (Chen, Xie, Zou, & Hwang, 2020). AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, summarizers, digital annotation platforms, and text-to-speech technologies can support literature teachers in lesson planning, content delivery, and assessment. A clear overview of each or some of the tools can help teachers appreciate how AI can make literature teaching easier and more engaging.

Some AI tools for teaching of literature

1. **Grammarly:** This is an AI writing assistant that checks grammar, spelling, punctuation, choice of words and sentence clarity. Teachers can use it in correcting or reflecting on their writings.
2. **QuillBot:** This is mainly a paraphrasing and summarizing tool. It helps teachers restate complex passages in simpler words, making it useful when they need to understand and teach difficult or old-fashioned novels.
3. **Summarizers:** These are tools that reduce long texts into short summaries while keeping the main ideas. They are especially helpful for revising long chapters of a novel or quickly recalling the key points before class discussions.
4. **Text-to-Speech Technologies:** These are AI tools that can read written texts aloud. They are useful for teaching students who learn better by listening, or for hearing

the rhythm and tone of a literary passage (e.g., poetry, dialogue). They also be used to make literature more accessible to students with reading difficulties.

ChatGPT

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) tool created by OpenAI that can understand and generate human-like text. In simple terms, ChatGPT is like a very intelligent digital assistant that someone can talk to in writing. When a question or instruction is typed, it can respond with explanations, ideas, lesson plans, summaries, examples, or even full documents.

ChatGPT is very beneficial to a literature teacher in the following ways.

- Explain difficult topics in simple language
- Help prepare lesson notes and schemes of work
- Generate classroom activities and assignments
- Draft letters and reports
- Create quizzes and test questions
- Simplify complex texts/theories for students
- Suggest teaching strategies
- Help organize research projects (Open AI, 2026).

Other Benefits of ChatGPT to a Teacher

Planning

ChatGPT can be asked to plan. For instance, it can be asked to prepare a lesson plan on poems for a junior secondary class. The response saves the teacher time and reduces stress.

Professional Development

A teacher can use it to develop himself. For instance, a teacher can ask ChatGPT to explain how to review a novel or how to conduct class discussion on a novel.

Research Assistant

ChatGPT can help a teacher in research by helping to refine the topic, draft research questions, develop questionnaires or explain theories clearly.

Differentiation

A teacher can request ChatGPT to come up with different strategies to apply in situations that require different approaches for better results. For instance, a teacher can prompt it to develop different assessment tasks for different ability students in literature class.

ChatGPT is an AI-powered writing and conversation tool that can answer questions, explain difficult passages, help generate ideas, and even simulate discussions with literary characters. It comes handy to teachers when they are unsure of how to structure lessons, or are pressured by time, in need of fresh ideas or simply overwhelmed with work. It can summarize novels, explain themes, or suggest essay outlines, generate questions (either essay or multiple choice), do character and literary devices analysis etc.

ChatGPT is a teaching companion that helps teachers to plan better, teach better, and grow faster as teachers.

Literature Teaching in Secondary School

Literature teaching involve three sections- pre reading, reading and post reading activities. Pre reading activities include things students and teachers do prior to the reading of the novel that will enhance its understanding. This stage prepares students for the text by activating prior knowledge and building interest. The purpose is to motivate students, create context, and set a purpose for reading. The teacher does this by posing a question that will serve as a hook. Questions can be on the title, background, purpose of reading, writer etc. The teacher can even ask them to skim the beginning and end of a chapter for them to get the idea developed in it and to predict what to expect based on images, title, introducing and explaining key vocabulary words from the text etc. All this helps to activate related knowledge.

The reading stage focuses on comprehension and understanding of important story elements. At this stage, students are expected to read actively. Chunking (breaking stories into manageable size) is a strategy here. Comprehension is achieved by thinking about what is being read, pausing to confirm or adapt the previous predictions or to make more. The active reading strategies (different type of thinking) to check understanding and maintain engagement are as follows:

Connection: This is linking the story contents to what one already knows.

Prediction: This is verifying or adapting initial predictions or making new ones as reading progresses.

Imagination: This is creating mental images of the story's scenes and characters.

Questioning: This is posing questions to clarify confusion and deepen understanding.

Summarizing: This is to briefly retell key ideas to check comprehension.

Evaluation: This involves making judgement about the story.

The post-reading stage involves reflecting, analyzing and extending understanding of the text. The teaching strategies include summary, discussion & analysis where students are expected to discuss themes, characters, devices and language. They are expected to connect the novel to their own lives and knowledge. Creative expression is demanded of students as they could be tasked to create new stories from the novel. This reveals their understanding of the text.

Prescribed School Novel

The West African Examination Council (WAEC) recommended *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) from 2021–2025. The Literature-in-English syllabus had it as an African prose text students must study for the exam. Secondary school students in West African countries preparing for the WASSCE (including Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Liberia) must study this book as part of their Literature-in-English syllabus for exams up to 2025. Candidates are expected to read and understand the novel because exam questions about it can appear in the Literature paper.

National Examinations Council (NECO) usually follows the same literature syllabus as WAEC in practice, so *Second Class Citizen* also appears on the recommended lists for NECO Senior secondary school certificate examination

(SSCE). The novel is used to explicate how teachers can apply ChatGPT in the teaching of literature.

Application of ChatGPT in the teaching of *Second Class Citizen* (Chapter 2) by Buchi Emecheta

1. During Pre Reading, the teacher can prompt AI to

- i. Create context and background, provide simplified explanations of the author's life, times, and cultural background to help students understand the context of the novel.
- ii. Identify the socio-political climate, traditions, and issues reflected in the text. For instance: Question: **Provide a warm up activity to get students set for chapter 2 of *Second Class Citizen*:** Response:
 - Have you ever had to fight very hard for something? What was it?

Generate two guiding questions students will bear in mind while reading the Chapter: Response:

- What challenges does Ada face in her attempt to go to school and how does she respond to it?
- What do Ada's actions in this chapter tell us about her character and future ambitions?

The teacher displays or reads the guiding questions and students read the chapter, keeping those questions in mind.

Reading and Explanation

The teacher can prompt ChatGPT thus:

- i. Summarize Chapter 2 of *Second Class Citizen* in 5 sentences for secondary school students. The teacher then discusses the summary, highlighting important events.
- ii. Rewrite complex passages into simpler language suitable for secondary students.
- iii. Give characters outlines for classroom discussion.

Literary Analysis

The teacher can ask ChatGPT thus:

- i. List the main conflicts in Chapter 2 of *Second Class Citizen*
- ii. Outline the themes in chapter 2
- iii. Identify the literary devices in chapter 2

The teacher displays the responses and guides students in the analysis.

Assessment/Evaluation

The teacher can use ChatGPT to generate class test thus:

- i. Create 5 comprehension questions from Chapter 2 of *Second Class Citizen* Students answer individually. The teacher reviews answers together with class. The teacher can also use ChatGPT to generate multiple-choice items. He/she can also use the tool to prepare model answers and marking guide.

The teacher can utilize ChatGPT in marking especially the multiple choice questions. Once the answer keys and students' answers are keyed in, it can calculate the total scores and the percentages.

Challenges

The effective integration of AI into the teaching and learning of literature has several challenges. According to Osato (2025) the challenges of lecturers using artificial intelligence include technical issues, inadequacy of power and powering system; cost of data and internet facilities, inadequate infrastructure, poor basic digital literacy skill and poor funding of the system. Secondary school teachers also face the same challenges especially lack of technical knowledge and skills, lack of funds and computer phobia, inadequate power supply and unreliable internet connections. Access and infrastructure issues are also significant. There is still a digital divide in many rural and underdeveloped regions, where access to high-speed internet, modern devices, and AI-powered platforms is limited. This could hinder the widespread adoption of AI-based learning tools in English literature classes, particularly for students and teachers from disadvantaged area. Spanopoulou, etal (2025) while acknowledging the potential benefits of AI also noted these challenges to its application in the classroom as need for technical expertise, limited resources, and ethical issues arising from the application.

Another constraint according to Lal (2025) is over-reliance on technology. While AI can significantly enhance learning, there is also a concern that over reliance on it may reduce physical interactions between teachers and students, which are crucial for the development of critical thinking and debate. AI tools are designed to complement, not replace, traditional teaching methods. Teachers must strike a balance between using AI tools and fostering human connections in the classroom.

Recommendations

Education does not concern only teachers. It is the business of every member of society. According to Enang (2022) in Spanopoulou (2025), issues in education must be tackled by the government, ministry of education, stake holders, teachers, curriculum planners, and even students. Therefore, the following are recommended for all to work together to overcome the above challenges.

1. The government through the ministries of education should provide internet and AI facilities to schools in order to enable their usage.
2. The quality of power supply also must be improved and funds should also be made available for schools to be able to meet the demands of AI.
3. For teachers to adopt AI in the classroom, they must have learned how to use and integrate it into the literature curricula. The onus lies on teachers and students to develop themselves for AI technology. The government should also join by providing further training and infrastructure.
4. As teachers engage in professional development in order to utilize the amazing AI resources, they should be trained on the ethical use of AI. The use of AI does not replace teachers' intelligence or creativity. Teachers remain the professional in charge. Instead, AI supports and strengthens teachers' teaching effectiveness. ChatGPT, for instance, is a tool, not a substitute for professional judgment or replacement of thinking. There should always be a critical evaluation of AI output. This enables the identification of errors, bias, or insufficient analysis. As

regards ChatGPT, teachers should learn to review what ChatGPT produces, adapts it to the learning context and ensures their accuracy and relevance.

Conclusion

AI can be applied in the teaching of literature at different stages from lesson introduction to its conclusion. It can serve as a teaching aid, assessment tool, and creativity booster in teaching prescribed novels. For instance, AI can generate discussion questions, simplify complex passages, create multiple summaries at different reading levels, analyze themes, characters and devices or provide feedback. By using AI tools, teaching literature can be easier, effective and more engaging. It makes the learning process more interactive, personalized, and resourceful. There are many AI tools that teachers can utilize in the teaching of literature. ChatGPT could be adopted by teachers as a teaching assistance but not to replace their intellect or judgement. There should be a critical evaluation of ChatGPT output to ensure validity.

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