

# Reading with the Machine: AI as a Pedagogical Partner for Critical Digital Literacy and Human Interpretation in Literature Classrooms

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## Abstract

The study elucidates how Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) in the literature classroom for interpretation can be developed by integrating AI tools. This paper finds that AI can serve as a pedagogical collaborator in Literature classes, particularly for Bangladeshi students from the Department of English. This research paper explores how the integration of AI can enhance human interpretative autonomy in the literature classes without over-reliance on technology assistance. This article argues that undergraduate students can enhance their literary interpretative skills and creativity by integrating AI tools, as in today's fast-paced modern world, AI has become an integral part across various sectors. Employing a mixed-method research design, this study adapts qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the role of AI as a collaborative partner in the literature classroom. Few existing studies have examined AI's contribution to fostering CDL within literature classes. Therefore, the present study addresses the gap by demonstrating how AI can effectively function as a collaborative partner.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has brought a revolutionary change in the educational landscape, necessitating a reconsideration of conventional pedagogical methods across various academic disciplines. The inclusion of AI in literature studies has brought significant challenges and promising possibilities, as interpretation, creativity, and emotional intensity of digital pedagogical tools have brought a swift transition in the education system across the globe. wherein algorithmic systems and machine learning application functions are not just merely supportive tools but are analytical collaborators in the learning process. In this evolving context, the development of Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) and the capacity to critically engage and understand digital tools and algorithmic biases, employ them ethically and responsibly, has become crucial for literature students.

In Bangladesh, undergraduate literature students still adhere to conventional pedagogical practices, focusing on textual analysis, lecturing, and interpretation. Nevertheless, students frequently struggle to balance between traditional methods and the digitalized world where AI is significantly dominant in many aspects, such as communication and knowledge. The integration of AI into the literature classroom develops literary interpretative skill and

analytical ability. It is actually not a threat to human interpretation; rather, it can be used as a collaborative partner, a tool that nurtures critical thinking, creativity, and interpretative autonomy. This perspective aligns with posthuman and postdigital paradigms that challenge anthropocentric hierarchies in the creation of knowledge and instead advocate for a collaborative relationship between humans and intelligent technologies.

Existing research on AI in education has largely focused on science, technology, and language acquisition, while offering little attention to the Humanities while offering little attention to humanities, especially literature students. This gap reflects a broader anxiety that AI might undermine the distinctively human capacity for interpretation. However, instead of replacing human insight, AI can amplify it by offering alternative readings, visual representations, and stimulating critical engagement. Through guiding students to interrogate, evaluate, and contextualize AI-generated content, educators can assist them in cultivating the interpretative reflexes essential for critical digital citizenship in the algorithmic era.

This research, therefore, examines how AI can be reconceptualized as a collaborative partner in the literature classroom, particularly in the Bangladeshi academic context. where students are gradually learning to navigate the challenges of digital literacy, by integrating AI as a collaborative partner, AI can enhance students' critical and creative capacity, allowing them to interpret text with both technological awareness and human sensitivity. This study focuses on undergraduate literature students of the Department of English from Bangladesh. This paper seeks to examine how AI-integrated pedagogy can foster a balance between technological competence and humanistic interpretation. Thereby, preparing students not merely to read literature but to interpret with an intellectual system.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has emerged as an increasingly vital field of enquiry over the past decade. Studies highlight both its potential opportunities and the complex challenges it presents. Initial investigation mainly concentrated on STEM and language learning contexts, illustrating how AI can facilitate personalized learning, automated assessment and enhance students engagement (Luckin et al.,2016; Holmes et al.,2019), such research underscores AI's capacity to function as a cognitive collaborator, offering scaffolding that adapts to learners need while enabling educators to concentrate on higher order pedagogical objectives.

Conversely, research on AI integration in the humanities, especially in literature education, remains limited. According to scholars like Selwyn (2019), humanistic studies rely on interpretative, imaginative, and critical thinking skills that cannot be replaced by algorithms. However, recent studies suggest that AI can enhance these capacities rather than replace human ability. Such as natural language processing, AI-driven text analysis, and generative models have been employed to identify patterns, provide alternative interpretations, and facilitate close and distant reading activities in the literature classroom. (Riedl, 2021). These approaches illustrate AI's ability as a collaborative partner, inspiring students to ethically engage both digital technology and literary texts.

Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) has emerged as an essential Framework for providing the rules of AI in education. According to scholars, CDL is the capacity to critically analyze, evaluate, and responsibly use digital tools while understanding their underlying algorithmic limitations and social implications (Livingstone,2014; Hobbs,2017). In the context of literature education, CDL enables students to challenge AI-generated interpretations, reflect on the influence of digital meditation, and preserve human interpretative agency. Research by Tsai et al.(2020) and Buckingham (2021) suggests that implementing AI in the classroom can foster

reflective thinking and metacognitive awareness, while students are encouraged to critically analyse the outcomes provided by AI systems.

In Bangladeshi higher education, literature teaching has traditionally focused on textual analysis, with limited exposure to digital technologies. Studies demonstrate that students frequently have a limited scope to embrace technology critically, which holds them back from preparing for the digitalised world. The integration of AI into the literature classroom not only brought a significant change in instructional innovation but also enhanced digital citizenship and postmodern literacy. By incorporating AI as a collaborative partner, educators can enable the ability among the students to use AI ethically while maintaining human interpretation to enhance creativity and literary interpretative skill.

Although previous studies offer valuable insight, a notable gap remains. There are limited empirical investigations that have focused on AI's contribution to developing CDL, especially in Literature classrooms in Bangladesh. The present study addresses this gap by investigating how AI can assist undergraduate literary students in developing critical, creative, and collaborative reading practices. By integrating digital technological tools with conventional literary analysis, this study seeks to illustrate that AI can enhance literary interpretative skills rather than diminish humanistic education.

## METHODOLOGY

This study possesses a mixed-method research design by integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the function of AI as a pedagogical collaborator in Literature classrooms. This paper examines the undergraduate students from the department of English in Bangladesh as they use AI as a collaborative partner for literary analysis and interpretation.

### *Participants:*

The study involved 82 students chosen through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of gender and prior exposure to digital tools. Participants had a basic understanding of AI applications, for instance, ChatGPT, text analysis software, and AI-assisted reading platforms.

### *Data collection:*

Data were collected by using two primary methods:

1. Survey: Structured questionnaires were asked to students to measure their attitude towards AI, self-evaluated digital literacy, and their capacity to use AI as a collaborative partner for literary analysis.
2. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 15 students and 5 teachers to understand their deeper experiences, focusing on challenges, opportunities, and approaches to maintain human interpretative autonomy.

### *Data Analysis:*

Data from the Quantitative survey were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify trends and correlations in students' attitudes and digital literacy levels. To identify patterns, challenges, and pedagogical outcomes, Qualitative interviews were conducted. Triangulation of these approaches ensured a robust understanding of AI's functioning in developing Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) and interpretative independence.

### *Ethical Considerations:*

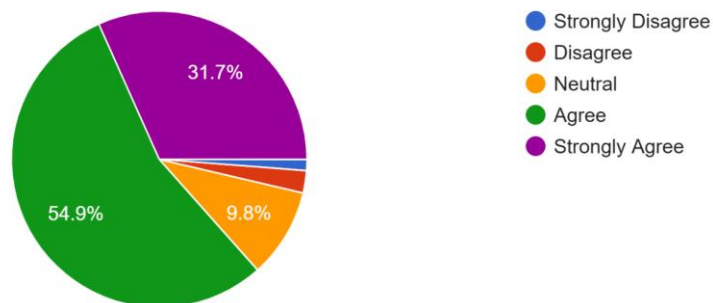
All participants were provided informed consent, and anonymity was maintained throughout the study. It is ensured that AI tools were used by the literary students as their learning assistance, not as a decision-making authority. Hence, it preserves students' interpretative autonomy.

## FINDINGS

The present survey aimed to examine students' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the context of English literature learning. Participants were asked to respond to twenty-one statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The questions addressed their familiarity with AI, its role in enhancing literary understanding, creativity, critical analysis, and ethical awareness. The collected responses were analyzed to identify general trends and attitudes toward integrating AI in literature education.

### 1. I am familiar with Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, etc.

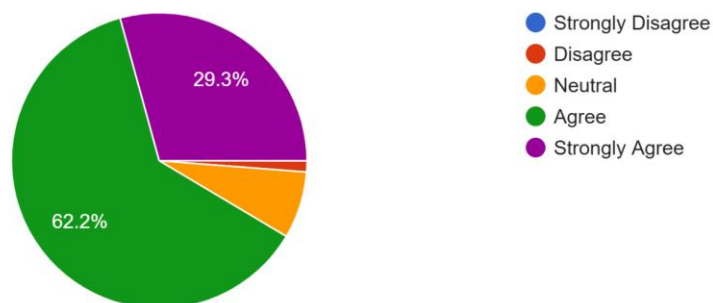
82 responses



For the first item, "I am familiar with Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, etc.," 54.9% agreed and 31.7% strongly agreed, indicating a large number of participants were already acquainted with AI applications, while 9.8% students were neutral. Reflecting that AI literacy is widespread among students. Though few students are still unfamiliar with such AI tools.

### 2. I have used AI tools to assist in my academic studies or writing tasks.

82 responses

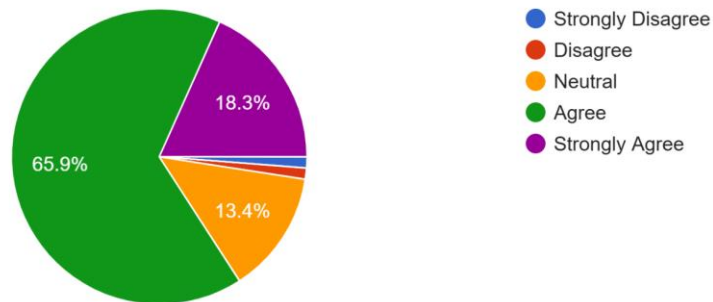


For the second item, "I have used AI tools to assist in my academic studies or writing tasks." 62.2% of students agreed, and 29.3% strongly agreed. Reflecting the majority of the participants

used AI applications for their academic writing and study assistance. Though a few participants mentioned no comments about AI's assistance in academic and writing tasks.

### 3. I understand how AI works at a basic level.

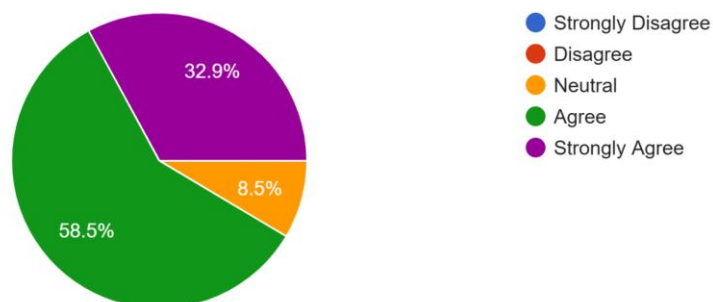
82 responses



For the third item, “I understand how AI works at a basic level.” 65.9% students agreed, and 18.3% students strongly agreed, while 13.4% participants were neutral. Besides, a very small percentage of participants disagreed and strongly disagreed. These answers imply that participants knew about basic applications of AI tools and their utilization.

### 4. I believe AI can play a useful role in educational settings.

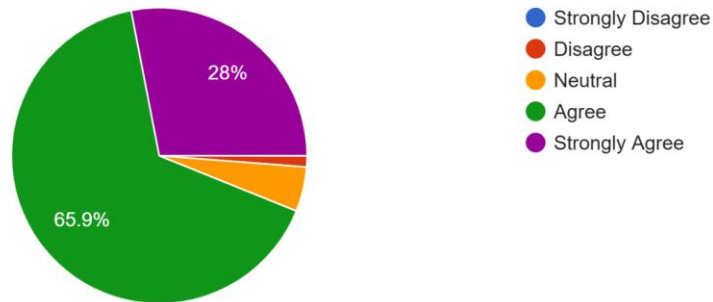
82 responses



For the 4th item, “I believe AI can play a useful role in educational settings.” 58.5% participants agreed, and 32.9% strongly agreed, while 8.5% students were neutral, and a very small proportion of participants disagreed and strongly disagreed. These responses reflect that AI can play a vital role in the educational landscape.

5. AI tools can help me understand complex literary texts.

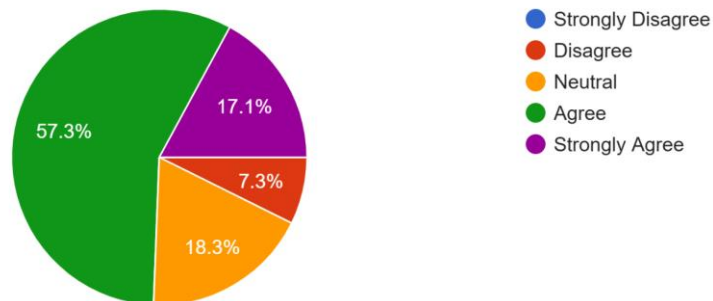
82 responses



For the fifth item, “AI tools can help me understand complex literary texts.” 55.9% students agreed, and 28% participants strongly agreed. Reflecting on AI tools helps students to enhance their understanding of literary texts. While a small proportion remains uncertain about AI’s mechanism.

6. AI can suggest interpretations that I might not have thought of before.

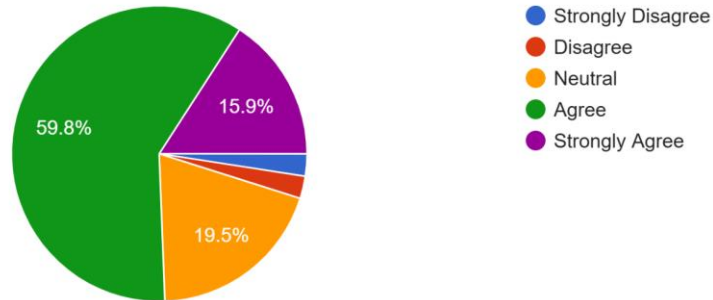
82 responses



For the 6th item, “AI can suggest interpretations that I might not have thought of before.” 57.3% agreed and 17.1% strongly agreed, while 18.3% students remained neutral and 7.3 % disagreed. These responses imply that most students did not know about AI’s interpretation before, while a small proportion of students knew about AI’s interpretation.

7. Using AI in literature classes makes learning more engaging.

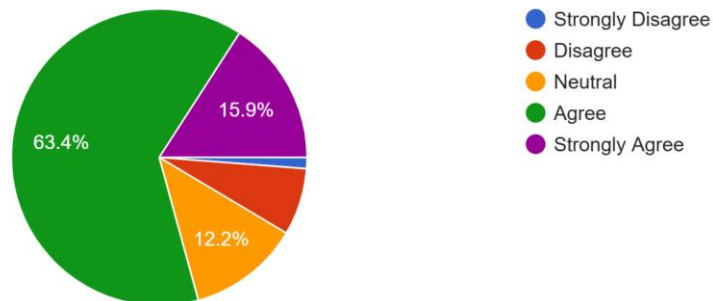
82 responses



For the 7th item, “using AI in literature classes makes learning more engaging.” 59.8% agreed and 15.9% strongly agreed, while 19.5% participants remained neutral. These responses reflect that the use of AI in literature classes makes learning more effective. Though a small number of participants remained neutral about AI’s uses in literature classes.

8. AI can help improve my essay writing and critical analysis skills.

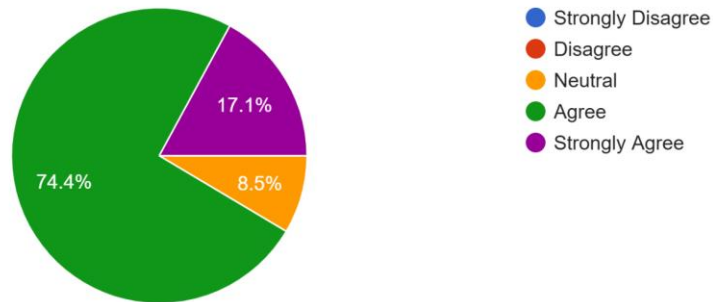
82 responses



For the 8th item, AI can help improve my essay writing and critical analysis skills.” A large number of participants, 63.4% agreed, and 15.9% strongly agreed. However, 12.2% remained neutral. These responses imply that AI helps students to enhance their essay writing and critical analysis skills. Though a small proportion of participants remained neutral about an AI’s ability in essay writing and critical analysis skills.

9. AI can simplify difficult literary theories for better comprehension.

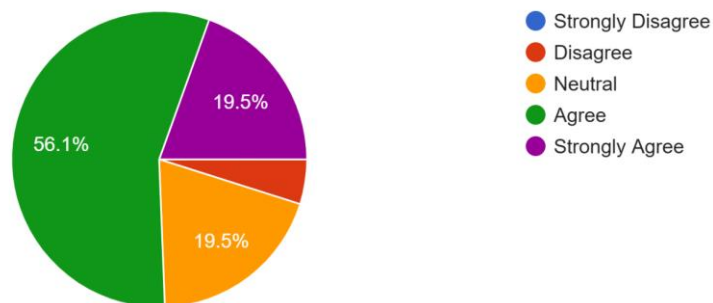
82 responses



For the 9th item, “AI can simplify difficult literary theories for better comprehension.” A large number of students, 71.4% agreed, and 17.4% strongly agreed. On the other hand, 8.5% remained neutral. These responses suggest that AI can make complex literary theories more understandable for better comprehension, while a small number of participants made no comments about AI's assistance.

10. I can identify when AI-generated content lacks originality or human depth.

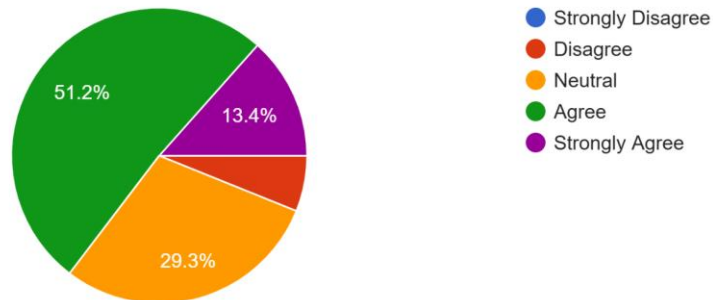
82 responses



for the 10th item, “I can identify when AI-generated content lacks originality or human depth.” 56.1% agreed, and 19.5% strongly agreed, while 19.5% remained neutral. These responses reflect that participants can understand when AI content lacks originality or human depth. Though a small proportion of participants remained uncertain about AI-generated content.

11. I can critically evaluate the accuracy of AI-generated interpretations.

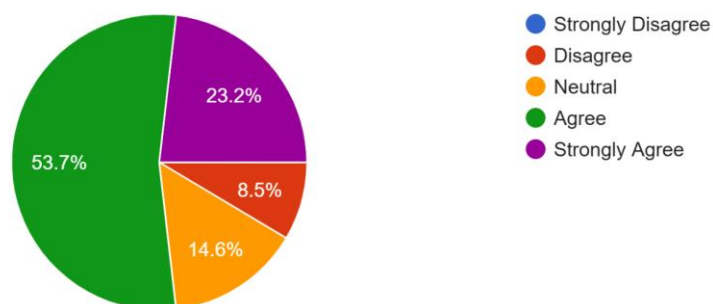
82 responses



For the 11th item, “I can critically evaluate the accuracy of AI-generated interpretations.” 51.2% participants agreed, and 13.4% strongly agreed, while 29.3% remained neutral. These responses reflect that students were able to evaluate the accuracy of AI- AI-generated interpretation. However, a small number of participants made no comments about the accuracy of the generated interpretations.

12. I know how to use AI responsibly to support my learning without depending on it.

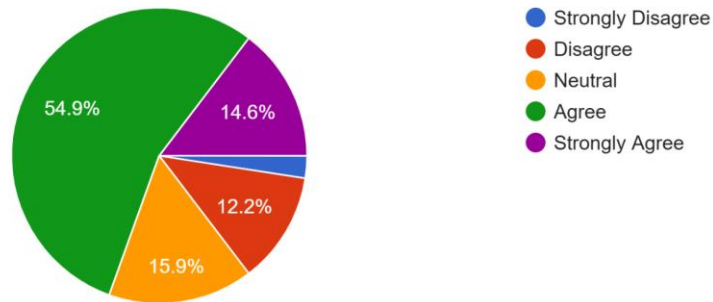
82 responses



For the 12th item, I know how to use AI responsibly to support my learning without depending on it.” The majority of the participants, 53.7% agreed, and 23.2% strongly agreed, while 14.6% remained neutral. However, 8.5% of participants disagreed. These responses reflect that participants are able to use AI effectively without over-reliance on it.

13. AI helps me become more aware of digital ethics and authorship issues.

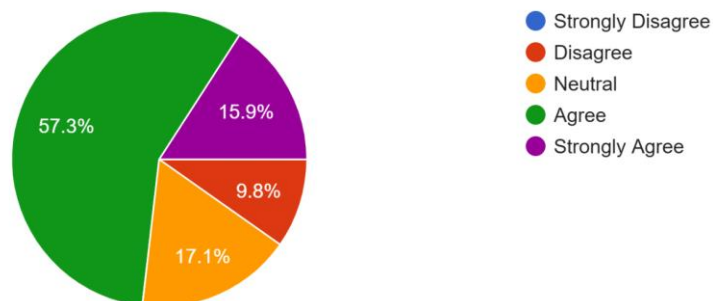
82 responses



For the 13th item, “AI helps me become more aware of digital ethics and authorship issues.” 54.9% participants agreed, and 14.6% participants strongly agreed, while 15.9% remained neutral. In contrast, 12.2% disagreed. These responses suggest that AI makes the participants more conscious about digital ethics and authorship, though some participants were uncertain about it.

14. AI encourages me to think more creatively about literary themes and characters.

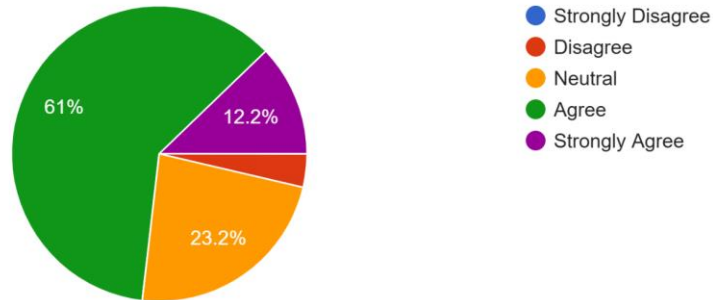
82 responses



for the 14th item, “AI encourages me to think more creatively about literary themes and characters”. 57.3% agreed, and 15.9% strongly agreed, while 17.1% remained neutral. On the other hand, 9.8% of participants disagreed. These results suggest that AI drives the students to think critically about literary themes and characters.

15. I feel confident developing my own interpretations after consulting AI tools.

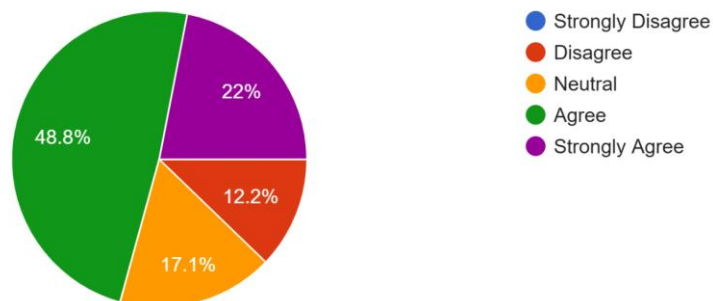
82 responses



For the 15th, “I feel confident developing my own interpretation after confusing AI tools.” 61% agreed, and 12.2% strongly agreed, while 23.2% participants remained neutral. These responses imply that the majority of students feel confident developing their own interpretation when confused about AI applications. Though a small number of participants were uncertain about enhancing their own interpretation after using AI tools.

16. Relying too much on AI reduces my originality in analysis.

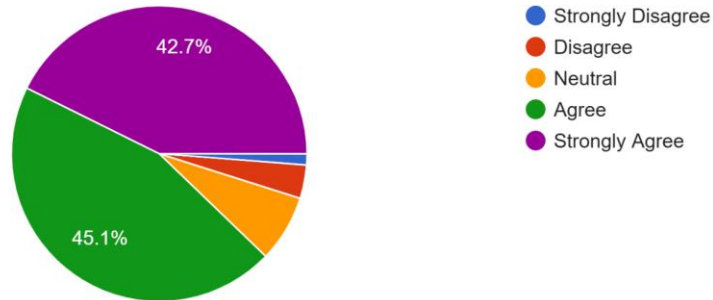
82 responses



For the 16th item, “relying too much on AI reduces my originality in analysis.” 48.8% agreed, and 22% strongly agreed, while 17.1% remained neutral. In contrast, 12.2% disagreed. Consequently, these responses reflect that overdependence on AI can reduce original interpretation.

17. AI inspires new perspectives but cannot replace human imagination.

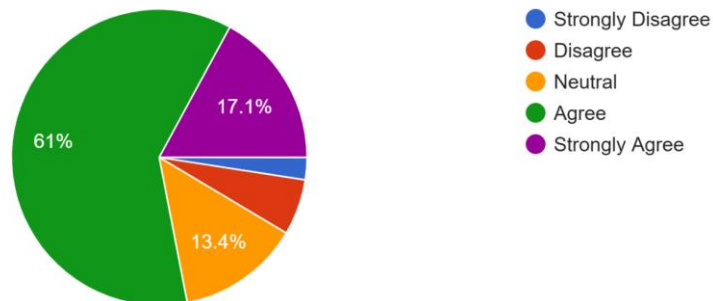
82 responses



For the 17th, “AI inspires new perspectives but cannot replace human imagination.” 45.1% agreed, and 42.7% strongly agreed. These responses imply that participants strongly agreed about AI's role in new perspectives, but AI cannot diminish human imagination. Though a small number of participants are uncertain about AI's assistance.

18. AI can act as a “collaborative partner” in the classroom.

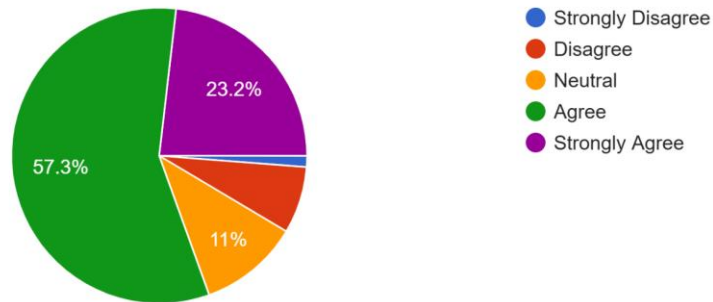
82 responses



For the 18th, AI can act as a “collaborative partner” in the classroom. The majority of the participants, 61% agreed, and 17.1% strongly agreed, while 13.4% remained neutral. Consequently, these responses reflect AI's effectiveness as a collaborative partner in the classroom. Though a small number of participants remained silent about AI's ability in the classroom.

19. Teachers and AI together can provide a more balanced learning experience.

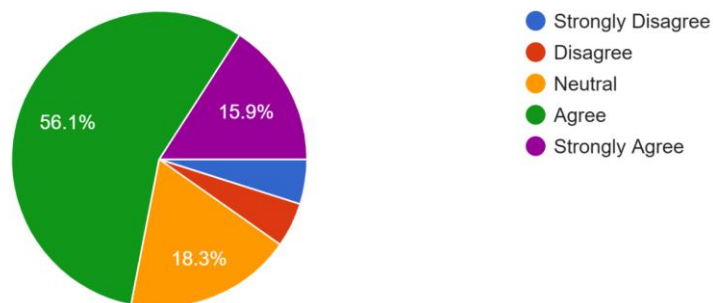
82 responses



For the 19th, Teachers and AI together can provide a more balanced learning experience. 57.3% agreed, and 23.2% strongly agreed, while 11% of students remained neutral. These results suggest that integrating an AI application as a supportive tool for teachers can enhance a more balanced learning experience.

20. AI should be integrated into the English literature curriculum.

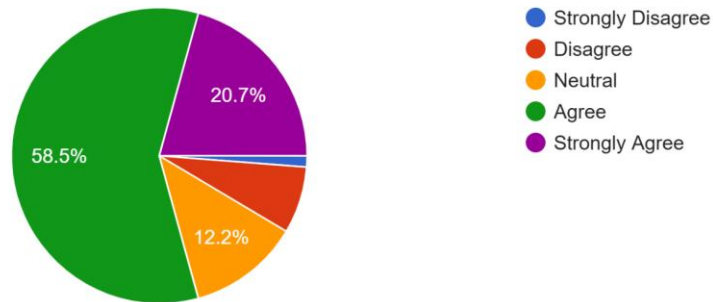
82 responses



For the 20th, AI should be integrated into the English literature curriculum. 56.1% agreed, and 15.9% strongly agreed, while 18.3% remained silent. These responses reflect that AI applications should be integrated into the English literature curriculum. Although a few participants feel uncertain about AI's assistance in the English literature curriculum.

21. I am open to using AI tools in future literature classes.

82 responses



For the 21st, I am open to using AI tools in future literature classes. A large number of participants, 58.5% agreed, and 20.7% strongly agreed. However, 12.2% remained neutral. These answers imply that students will use AI applications in future literature classes as a learning assistance. A few proportions of participants are uncertain about using AI tools in future literature classes.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can act as an effective pedagogical collaborator in literature classrooms, especially for undergraduate students of the Department of English in Bangladesh. These responses normally suggest the positive view of students towards AI applications. For instance, ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot recognize their capacity in enriching literary interpretation, comprehension, and creativity. These responses align with the key argument of this research that AI, when thoughtfully and ethically implemented, enhances the students' interpretative independence rather than diminishing human self-autonomy. Besides, a large number of students, over 80% acknowledged their familiarity and engagement with AI applications in academic contexts, confirming the growing normalization of AI's support in learning and embedding in higher education. This reflects those students are already living in an AI-generated environment where Critical Digital Literacy becomes crucial.

According to the findings, AI is perceived not as a threat to human interpretation or originality but as a scaffold that stimulates participants' interpretative exploration and possibilities. More than 70% participants confirmed that AI can normalize complex literary theories and can suggest new interpretative possibilities, reflecting AI's role as a cognitive scaffold rather than replacing critical thinking.

In contrast, the results also demonstrate the importance of maintaining interpretative autonomy. Approximately half of the participants acknowledged that over-dependence on AI could undermine creativity and originality. This concern aligns with posthuman pedagogy theories, which encourage balanced collaboration between humans and technology. According to the chart, 64.6% students can critically analyze AI-generated outcomes, while maintaining originality, a crucial element of CDL. Hence, students are able to illustrate an understanding of AI epistemic limitations and algorithmic biases.

In addition, the study also found that AI can enhance students' engagement and motivation. Over 75% respondents agreed that AI applications make learning more effective

and assist them to think more imaginatively about literally ideas, themes, and characters. This result collaborates with earlier research ( Tsai et al., 2020; Buckingham, 2021), reflecting that AI-assisted pedagogy represents metacognitive reflection and learner agency. According to this context, AI functions as a dialogue companion that provokes inquiry rather than ready-made interpretations. Demonstrating the Socratic method of teaching, we didn't post a digital learning landscape. Furthermore, more than 80% of respondents agreed that collaborating with AI between teachers and students can enhance learning experiences. This result validates the pedagogical model proposed in this research, a triadic relationship among students, teachers, and AI Applications. After getting enough encouragement and guidance from the educators, students are capable of evaluating and contextualizing AI-generated interpretations, and they cultivate CDL and preserve human interpretative autonomy. This model resists both Reliance on technology and traditional resistance to digital applications, suggesting a hybrid approach where technology becomes a main source for humanistic learning.

However, certain reservations remain. A small number of respondents expressed uncertainty about the ethical and authorship implementation of AI use, reflecting the necessity of explicit instruction in digital ethics and responsible applications. Since algorithmic methods are increasingly being integrated into educational landscapes, embedding AI literacy in the English curriculum becomes crucial. A large number of participants 72% supporting such integration reflect that respondents themselves acknowledge the importance of formalising AI-assisted pedagogy in Literature studies.

Overall, the discussion illustrates that AI, when used as a collaborative partner, can enhance the interpretative experience by promoting critical digital literacy, reflective analysis, and creative autonomy. The results declare that human imaginative power remains irreplaceable, AI's function is not to replace human interpretative independence, but to expand human interpretative possibilities as an assistant. In the Bangladeshi academic context, this companionship holds transformative potential. It bridges the gap between conventional textual pedagogy and the digitalised future, preparing students to read both literature and algorithms critically. Hence, the study demonstrates, AI is not an end but an interpretative assistant that enriches students' capability and creates with both using technological tools while maintaining human interpretative sensitivity.

### **Outcome of the study :**

After going through a rigorous process, the study brings out the results that students feel confident and consider the literature classes more engaging after integrating AI in the Literature classroom as a collaborative partner. To ensure the result, students have been asked twenty-one questions, and it is found that, while using AI in the Literature classroom, students feel motivated as they find information very quickly without facing any kind of destruction. Moreover, AI enhances their literary understanding, creativity, and analytical skills of literary texts, while maintaining their own interpretation. According to this study, it is found that when an AI is used ethically and responsibly, it helps the participants to develop their interpretative potential for literary texts rather than diminishing their autonomy. Since students are familiar with AI applications, for instance, ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, etc. The study further found that AI tools also help students understand critical literary concepts and theories and enhance their writing skills.

In addition, the results also come out from the study that AI can play a significant role in the educational landscape. As students can identify AI-generated content and preserve their interpretative independence and originality. However, from the study, we also find that over-

reliance on AI can undermine the originality in analysis. Most importantly, the study also brings the result that AI can inspire new perspectives but cannot replace human imagination, and AI can make a more balanced learning environment, while using AI as an assistant for the teacher. Hence, AI should be introduced into the English literature curriculum as a pedagogical application because students are more hopeful about the future potential of AI in Literature classes, as it brought a revolutionary change in learning and teaching.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted between teachers and students from different universities of Bangladesh, such as National University, Public University and Private University, and from the interview, it was found that teachers believe that AI tools will help the students to enhance their interpretative autonomy, critical discussion, literary analytical skill, explanation of difficult vocabulary, and understanding complex literary theories and concepts. This develops the students' personalised learning and keeps the students motivated for learning as they get information very easily. In contrast, teachers also mentioned that if the students are over-reliant on AI, it might bring destruction to students' interpretative autonomy, analytical skills, and undermine their original thoughts. Besides, by integrating AI applications with conventional teaching practice, AI might bring a revolutionary change in the teaching and learning process if used ethically and responsibly.

However, the interview mainly focused on students. The results reflect that a majority of the students from the interview agreed with the integration of AI as a collaborative partner in the literature classroom. This study found that AI develops the students' interpretative independence, analytical skill, critical thinking, and comprehension of complex literary theories and concepts. Moreover, students feel interested when AI is integrated in the Literature classroom for better comprehension, and participants can maintain between AI-generated answers and their own interpretative sensitivity. Hence, the results also indicate that students can utilise AI as a collaborative partner without over-reliance on AI, and they are able to maintain their original interpretation and are quite curious about AI's potential in future English literature classrooms. The result illustrates that AI, when used as a collaborative assistant, can enhance the interpretative experience by promoting critical digital literacy while maintaining human imaginative power.

The present study only focuses on the students of Bangladesh, and the data were taken from specific universities. All the universities of Bangladesh are not covered here, and the study does not focus on foreign universities.

There might be a comparative study in the literature classroom by using AI tools and without using AI applications, and the result of this comparative study might be a future research field based on students' performance.

## CONCLUSION

The study illustrates how Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) in literature classrooms can be developed by embedding AI applications for interpretation. This study brings out the results that AI can function as a pedagogical collaborator in Literature classrooms, particularly for the Bangladeshi students from the department of English. Moreover, the integration of AI in the Literature classroom can enhance the students' interpretative independence without over-reliance on AI applications, and by maintaining their critical thinking and interpretative autonomy. Besides, AI applications can help students with literary analysis, apprehending complex literary theories and concepts. From the interview, the results also show that teachers and students are considering AI as a learning assistance in the literature classroom for a balanced learning environment, while using AI applications ethically and thoughtfully. AI is not perceived

as a threat to human interpretation or originality but as a scaffold that stimulates participants' interpretive exploration and possibilities. Consequently, this study finds that AI develops the students' interpretative independence, analytical skill, critical thinking, and comprehension of complex literary theories and concepts. Hence, students are quite curious about using AI applications in future literature classrooms as they are able to strike a balance between AI-generated answers and their own thoughts. From the perspective of participants, AI tools should be integrated into future literature curriculum as they are familiar with ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot, and AI will dominate in the future educational landscape.

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