

Feasibility of AI-Assisted Literary Comprehension in International Chinese Teaching

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Abstract: The integration of literary works into international Chinese teaching (ICT) faces ongoing educational difficulties; genuine literary language contains abundant culture and language materials, but its complex meanings and implicit culture often exceed the comprehension limits of advanced second-language (L2) students. Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has some relatively under-explored potential in managing the above-mentioned problem of diversity and individuality. Through a two-way lens analysis, this study explores the practicability of using AI to assist in literature understanding for Chinese-as-a-foreign-language learners at present. Based on recent empirical studies and L2 reading theories, this paper identifies specific AI affordances (i.e., pre-reading scaffolding, semantic disambiguation, etc.) alongside some inherent weaknesses in pragmatic sensitivity, aesthetic perception, etc. Based on these findings, the paper presents a scaffolded-critique teaching mode in which AI-generated interpretations function as approximate references instead of true texts. Based on this conclusion: AI-assisted literary comprehension is pedagogically feasible when it integrates into an effectively mediated critical-dialogical teaching system that maintains the cognitive and interpersonal nature of literary reading.

Keywords: AI-Assisted Language Teaching; Chinese as a Foreign Language; Literary Comprehension; Scaffolding; Generative AI; L2 Reading

1. Introduction

For a long time, including literary works in the ICT course content aims to foster students' linguistic skills along with their cultural awareness and aesthetic tastes. However, this educational goal often faces a structural

contradiction due to the language density of literature, cultural depth, and pragmatic ambiguity that exceed students' current cognitive ability limits. Since instructors have limitations due to constraints on class size and institutional resources in providing the required personalised guidance for authentic literary engagement. The discrepancy between the education in literary works and what is actually found at the Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) stage has led to ongoing exploration of technology-based reading aids.

Generative artificial intelligence, such as large language models (LLMs) like chatbots for complex reading tasks for L2 learners, is presented here. Fang and Han (2024) comprehensively reviewed 71 papers published between mid-2023 and late 2024 on the application of large language models in foreign language learning scenarios [1], including personalisation support systems, interactive feedback mechanisms and dialogical semantic explanation. Zhang et al. Quasi-experimental research on the impact of a ChatGPT-driven reading platform on EFL learners' motivation for reading and their academic performance [2]: A case study in high schools in Zhejiang Province. Pan et al. [3] also found that GenAI-enabled interactive support improves the metacognitive and motivational self-regulated strategies of university students' reading activities; thus, it is presented as a cooperative-dialogic assistant rather than merely an information-delivery device.

Although these achievements have been made in this area, it is still lacking. Fang and Han [1] found that Chinese as a foreign/second language and L2 reading generally have been less studied among the fields examined by the ChatGPT-and-education literature. Furthermore, literary works present a more challenging case compared to general texts; they contain particularly complex linguistic characteristics,

such as culture-specific nuances and pragmatic layers that exhibit strong ambiguity. Therefore, the issue of whether AI-assisted literary comprehension can be carried out under the context of CFLs is both theoretically significant and practically urgent.

Using a structured two-angled method for exploring the above problem. Systematically assesses the existing affordances of modern large language models in CFL literary reading and identifies their shortcomings as a limitation. Based on the above analyses, a scaffolded-critique mode is proposed for AI-assisted literary instruction that identifies its function at three levels: as an explanatory tool with limitations; As a verification instrument with ambiguity and as a prompt generator with openness. Throughout this argument, I will argue that it does not depend on any specific technical ability but rather how to set up a pedagogical system for the preservation of dialogue and cognition in literary appreciation.

2. Theoretical Framework

The concept architecture of this study integrates three related theories: the sociocultural theory (SCT) and its implementation through L2 reading studies; cognitive-linguistic models for reading comprehension with Chinese-specific features; and recent frameworks for human-AI collaboration in language education.

SCT posits that reading comprehension constitutes an active interpretation process occurring under specific conditions beyond an individual's inherent capacity. The quality of support from a more proficient reader will determine how far this constructive work goes. Cognitive science evidence about LLMs' ability in literary creation is presented by Ichien et al. [4]; GPT-4 has an emergent capacity to interpret new forms of literature, such as metaphorical constructions not present in the training materials, with a blind-rating performance better than college student levels. Based on the above results, we can conclude that large-scale language models have some credibility as intermediaries for analysing literary meanings; however, their performance is directly dependent on new stimuli, which is particularly evident in the context of traditional Chinese literature and a well-developed system of interpretation.

Kushki and Nassaji [5] extend the sociocultural scaffolding perspective to formalise the

relationship between ZPD, mediation, and dynamic assessment (DA) in the context of L2 reading. Based on the Aljaafreh-Lantolf model of graduated, contingent and dialogic help, their framework proposes that AI can become an emerging mediator in the DA protocol – to deliver precise-calibrated, learner-responding interpretive prompts instead of uniform text comments. To provide a fundamental basis for positioning LLM-based tools within this theoretical system to integrate AI technology into current research on media-supported second-language reading acquisition.

The Chinese-specific dimension of the theoretical framework is based on empirical studies of text processing in context-of-use scenarios. Wu and Lin [6] have shown through comparative corpus analysis that GPT-4o has systematically defaulted to deleting or compressing when handling culturally loaded and pragmatically complex materials, which is precisely the texture of the register in literary Chinese. This phenomenon sets up an empirically supported upper limit of aidlessness in LLMs based on literary works, establishing the primary issue to be addressed by the Scaffolded-Critique model. Based on this foundation, combined with these three theoretical directions, conduct a feasibility analysis within the confines of restricted conditions: AI aids in improving the cognitive support system for CFL literature reading.

3. Affordances of AI-Assisted Literary Comprehension in CFL Contexts

Research over three years has identified a consistent set of features provided by LLMs for CFL literary reading. Based on learner-perception studies, corpus comparisons, and reading-strategy research, the following four main affordances are proposed: pre-reading cultural stimulation, semantic disambiguation, discourse coherence promotion, and strategy exemplification. Table 1 shows the mapping of all affordances to their main empirical bases as follows:

Regarding pre-reading cultural activation, a study of CFL learners' adoption intentions and perceptions of ChatGPT reveals that learners value AI most highly when it provides culturally contextualised, scenario-rich explanations rather than decontextualised definitions and that a growth mindset orientation significantly moderates the relationship between perceived

usefulness and behavioural adoption intention [7]. Based on this, we can conclude that in situations where LLM prompts activate cultural, historical or textual interconnections to reduce readers' initial inferential burden in literary Chinese, it serves best as a reading support tool

for pre-reading activities. Upon entering a literary work after prior interaction with the AI-generated contextualisation, learners can apply their interpretative ability to aesthetic and practical issues that were initially difficult for them as cultural references.

Table 1. AI Affordance in CFL Literary Comprehension.

Affordance	Description	Empirical Support
Pre-reading activation	Generates cultural/historical backgrounds, thematic frames, and anticipatory comprehension questions prior to text engagement	Sun & Wang [7]; Lin et al. [8]
Semantic disambiguation	Explains polysemous or archaic vocabulary in literary context, distinguishing denotative and connotative dimensions of meaning	Wu & Lin [6]; Lin & Yang [9]
Discourse-cohesion support	Identifies topic chains, zero anaphora, and parallelistic structures that organize literary text coherence above the sentence level	Lin & Yang [9]
Strategic modeling	Demonstrates genre-appropriate top-down reading strategy clusters calibrated to the learner's proficiency level and text type	Lin et al. [8]

At the level of reading strategy, Lin et al. [8] report that experienced CSL learners employ top-down reading strategies such as previewing, anticipating, and selective attention in genre-sensitive groups; the effect of strategy coordination is greater than that of individual strategies' prevalence. The AI interlocutor can build this kind of strategic clustering in the preparatory reading stage to generate anticipatory frames for a literary work that helps learners activate prior schemas and form interpretive assumptions before directly interacting with the target language. Given that some literature at these times spans different genres or has undergone various stages of history change, this function is very important for them.

Further affordances are concerned with the sub-knowledge hierarchy of Chinese L2 reading. Lin and Yang [9] build, based on the structural equation model, rated experienced CSL teachers' grammatical knowledge and discourse-level coherence as more significant factors driving Chinese reading comprehension than lexical knowledge—reversing what is assumed in alphabetic-language L2 reading studies. Due to its dependence on topic chains, absence of anaphora and parallel structure in Classical syntax, Literary Chinese displays the most rigorous condition for presenting a hierarchy. AI tools can help students learn more accurately in terms of grammar and language use by breaking down complex sentences, clarifying the relationship between text units, identifying allusions and reference chains in literature, etc., at a specific level.

4. Limitations of AI-Assisted Literary

Comprehension in CFL Contexts

We must also consider the corresponding limitations of the affordances clearly demonstrated above. There is no issue arising from technical flaws; these phenomena are manifestations of how LLM processes language input in some situations, such as literary Chinese studies, where cultural resonance, practical effects and aesthetic nuances are prominent features that need to be understood.

The culturally specialised part is the least permissible. Wu and Lin [6] empirically verify that language models (LLMs) precisely remove this material when condensing or truncating literature. According to Marin-Lacarta et al. [10], their analysis of 411 student answers from a translation-challenged Chinese-language school contest involving 12 Barcelona schools reveals that, although teachers provide guidance and support, intercultural reflection remains the most lacking element among all participants in literary exposure teaching. Cross-cultural communication fails significantly because literary reception, which is passive and shallow, does not address deep reflection on cultural differences or ideational conflicts. When the LLM provides a structure-parallel explication of a classic Chinese poem or a short novel, although it can clearly elucidate its superficial meaning, these works usually possess more profound layers, such as intertextuality and historical irony, in addition to ideological connotations.

There is a problem of pragmatic vagueness as well. In literary language use, implicature, irony, understatement, and other reader-positioning effects go beyond what Gricean pragmatism can explain for GPT-4 under control experiments by

Ichien et al. [4]. In real-world classrooms focused on authentic text selection for culture-specific depth and aesthetics in reading, AI tends to produce interpretations that are surface fluent but devoid of interpretive richness; such output may not only mislead students into believing there is no interpretation available but also undermine the need for deeper thinking among readers.

Also lacking is what reader-response theory perceives as the transactional side in literary reading. Bist and Kandel [11] provide evidence in their research on EFL contexts showing that stimulating learners' L1 cultural schemata and personal emotional responses is necessary for true literary engagement; moreover, these activations require facilitating human assistance to recognise when a learner's interpretation deviates positively from the standard reading and prompt such deviation instead of correcting it. At present, LLMs are primarily based on consensus interpretative corpora and often converge on traditional interpretations; they do not have the pedagogical sensitivity to identify meaningful interpretative agency in students' understanding failures—a differentiation that makes human teacher intervention essential for any AI-powered literature-based reading platform.

5. The Scaffolded-Critique Model: Design and Implementation

Based on the above-mentioned affordance-and-deficiency conditions, we can deduce a particular educational structure. Scaffolded critique is based on the following three design principles: Provisional authority, dialogical validation and graduated independence. Assemble an implementation of the framework that turns the AI-produced literary interpretation into a starting point for a joint venture of inquiry and dialogue among readers. As shown in Figure 1, the model places the Chinese literary work at the core of a triangular interaction among teachers, the AI reading aid and students.



Figure 1. The Scaffolded-Critique Model for AI-Assisted CFL Literary Comprehension

As shown in Figure 1, the AI reading assistant operates most closely to the pre-reading and sentence-level understanding stage, generates cultural explanations, and provides syntactic comments and rough explanatory frameworks. The learner closely reads and writes a self-interpretation that can serve as a separate point of view against the AI's preliminary opinion. The teacher provides prompts for making essential comparisons, exposes cultural defects in AI-generated content, and guides an even more profound understanding than that which could be achieved by either the artificial intelligence itself or individual learners through self-reliance exploration. The iterated improvement process demonstrates that understanding is developed through multiple encounters with this triad, rather than by consulting the AI just once.

The first design principle is provisional authority, which states that the interpretation generated by AI is a textual hypothesis that must undergo the same rigorous close reading examination. Cohen and Wang [12] show that the Think-Aloud Protocol (TAP) is an effective means to externalise, model, and evaluate learners' metacognitive processes when reading L2 texts. Scaffolded-Critique is an extension of the TAP-reflection approach that introduces AI-generated outputs into this research; thus, students are required to make a clear judgement about accepting, modifying, or rejecting these interpretative results. This approach will help build students' metalinguistic awareness, encouraging them to think more deeply about understanding literary works; at the same time, it will demonstrate that AI can facilitate discussions in the classroom.

Systematic organisation of classroom discussions on students' understandings, AI-generated text, and teachers' analysis can realise the second rule of dialogical validation. Liu [13] systematised synthesised teacher-ChatGPT cooperation studies and identified that, through a Socratic-discussion mode with ChatGPT, which can produce counterarguments as needed, this is among ChatGPT's most important educational capabilities. During this time, teachers can assist the model in conducting its arguable activity concerning diverse understandings of a piece of literature by acting as one's constant dialogue partners; there is no need for these two sides to be restricted within certain disciplinary boundaries in this situation.

The graduated independence principle governs the time schedule for a full-term course. Early stages have larger scaffolds of artificial intelligence: cultural introductions, preliminary linguistic annotations, and some basic explanatory frameworks are given to students before they start reading the original text independently. In subsequent units, learners establish their own interpretative systems in advance and consult the AI's responses; henceforth, they view the AI's viewpoint as an object of critique rather than its starting point.

Wang and Wang [14] present a three-level development model of critical AI literacy: awareness, positionality and strategies; evaluation is considered an essential system underlying this graduation. As learners' ability to pay attention, perceive, store information, and explain concepts improves, their initial assistance with learning evolves into essential participation, allowing them to achieve independence after receiving explanations through self-monitoring within the scaffolded-critique structure.

Table 2. Instructional Phases of the Scaffolded-Critique Model

Phase	Teacher Role	AI Function	Learner Activity	Assessment Focus
Pre-reading (Wks. 1–3)	Contextualizing author, period, and genre; modeling critical interrogation of AI output	Generating cultural/historical context; vocabulary and thematic frames	Reviewing AI briefings; formulating close-reading questions	Schema activation; critical questioning
Guided close reading (Wks. 4–8)	Facilitating TAP discussion; highlighting AI–learner interpretive discrepancies	Providing syntactic and cohesion-level annotation; multiple interpretive perspectives	Annotating texts; documenting AI–learner divergences in reading journals	Interpretive reasoning; textual evidence use
Critical dialogue (Wks. 9–12)	Orchestrating Socratic discussion; supporting intercultural reflection	Generating competing interpretations on demand; flagging cultural allusions	Drafting comparative interpretive essays; peer review of classmates' responses	Critical AI literacy; intercultural depth
Independent response (Wks. 13–15)	Assessing interpretive autonomy; providing formative and summative feedback	Serving as on-demand reference; no longer primary scaffold	Producing independent literary analyses; explicitly evaluating AI output quality	Aesthetic judgment; reader-response quality

Table 2 arranges an instructional sequence over one semester and records teachers' positions, AI functions, students' activities, etc., in different stages of this sequence. The phased structure embodies the graduated-independence principle and serves as a reference plan for building an excellent CFL literary course.

6. Discussion

Based on the foregoing, an evaluation of its practicability is deemed to be acceptable; in fact, artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted literary comprehension in CFL-based training should neither replace nor take over guidance functions outright but operate as part of a critically mediated educational framework. This position is empirically supported by Shafiee [15], whose experimental study on L2 learners shows that AI-based interventions are significantly related to improvement of reading comprehension ability, with effects extending beyond individual skill variables when AI literacy is incorporated as a core component of the learning model. In

this regard, the research problem is no longer about whether the AI can do it well but rather how capable these learners are of becoming more self-learners with AI. It considers AI literacy not to be an auxiliary tool in preparing for reading but part of the structure itself; it needs to be introduced explicitly into the teaching process.

The scaffolded-critique approach addresses both aspects of this rephrasing. Integrating artificial intelligence technology into a prescriptive teaching model is to add progressive provisions for temporary assistance, interaction checks, and graduated self-reliance in its structure design while exploiting LM functions at the pre-reading level for preliminary grasp before gradually increasing proficiency through release of tasks as learners develop their abilities. There is a productive contradiction in the generation of reading experiences through AI and learner construction; when guided by a teacher who knows both literary works and AI interpretation styles, this conflict results in an engaging form

of cognitive inconsistency that reader-response teaching and dynamic assessment theory continuously emphasise to stimulate deeper understanding. So, this model shows that artificial intelligence is more active rather than auxiliary to people.

As a result, teacher development work suffers significantly. Liu [13] proposes that a good teacher's artificial intelligence literacy requires not only technical proficiency but also the ability to critically assess AI output, be ethically responsible when using learners' AI tools, and have pedagogical skills for designing learning activities that make AI a dialogue partner instead of an authority figure. A CFL instructor who uses literary works should have certain abilities to identify which LLM interpretative conclusions are valid and which ones may be cultural insensitivity or factual errors. In other words, how do we view this technology as a tool that has limitations when teaching? From the perspective of feasibility, both teachers' expertise and technical abilities may be factors; therefore, they cannot be said to have been technically implemented – rather, an educational one.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the feasibility of AI-assisted literary comprehension in international Chinese teaching through an analysis of recent empirical evidence and an integrative pedagogical model. The evidence supports a cautious but substantive affirmative verdict: LLMs offer meaningful affordances for CFL literary reading that address genuine pedagogical gaps in ICT, and the limitations that qualify those affordances—while real and consequential—are manageable through deliberate instructional design.

Scaffolded critique operationalises the above view by reorganising AI-generated literary interpretation as an additional party in a three-party conversation between teacher, learner, and text. This approach is grounded in the three design principles of provisional power, interactive verification, and incremental autonomy, which are drawn from L2 reading theory, sociocultural mediation research, and critical AI-literate frameworks. As shown in Table 2, the instructional plan that conforms to the aforementioned guidelines is structured according to this course arrangement for intermediate-level advanced Chinese courses.

Empirical research in the future might investigate to what extent each condition influences a learner's change of intercultural awareness and interpretation ability, as well as determine which prompts have a significant effect on AI-mediated cultural Chinese language material interactions. Different LLMs' performances in comparison with traditional and modern Chinese literary works are worth exploring separately. What this study has demonstrated is the theoretical feasibility of an educational model where artificial intelligence supports but does not replace. That is to say, the educational significance of such support arises directly through the interplay between learners' interpretations and AI outputs, which can enhance critical thinking and engagement with the texts. Ultimately, the feasibility of AI-assisted literary reading through ICT is first and foremost a problem within pedagogy rather than technology, as it requires educators to effectively integrate AI tools into their teaching methods while considering the diverse needs and interpretations of learners.

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