

A New Exploration of Generative AI-empowered Continuation Writing Instruction in Senior High School English : A Case Study of Bengbu No. 1 High School

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[**Abstract**] This study focuses on the practical context of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) integrated into senior high school English continuation writing instruction. Taking Grade 1 at Bengbu No. 1 High School in Anhui Province as the practical field, it explores a new path for the organic integration of “teaching-learning-assessment” through a scaffolded instructional model based on “human-machine collaboration”. Grounded in Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory and constructivist learning perspectives, this study positions GenAI as a novel cognitive tool and dialogue partner, rather than an “answer machine” that replaces teachers. Through an in-depth analysis of a complete lesson case, it systematically explains how to utilize AI for goal guidance, process support, and dynamic assessment in real classrooms, while remaining vigilant against its potential risks. The research indicates that the rational use of GenAI can effectively activate students’ plot (conception) and improve the richness and accuracy of their language expression. However, without critical guidance, it can easily lead to student thinking inertia, loss of originality, and academic integrity crises. This study proposes the integration principle of “AI as auxiliary, teacher as lead, and student as center”, providing a forward-looking and reflective practical solution for frontline teachers to reconstruct the continuation writing teaching paradigm in the AI era.

[**Key words**] Generative Artificial Intelligence; senior high school English; continuation writing; integration of teaching, learning, and assessment; human-machine collaboration; educational critique

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1 Introduction

The “General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)” emphasizes that cultivating core competencies in English requires relying on authentic and complex language tasks. As a core question type in the new college entrance examination, continuation writing is an excellent vehicle for integrating language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. However, the dilemma of the disconnection between “teaching-learning-assessment” in traditional instruction remains prominent. Students often fall into the quagmire of “having nothing to write” or “template-based writing” due to a lack of effective support.

The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, etc.) provides unprecedented technical possibilities for solving this dilemma. AI can instantly generate high-quality model essays, provide personalized language polishing, and even simulate multi-angle plot developments, seemingly building a “universal scaffold” for students. However, this technological wave also carries profound educational myths: When AI can easily write a high-scoring essay, do students still need to learn writing? Will the role of teachers be marginalized? Will the core value of writing instruction—the tempering of thinking and the expression of emotion—become an appendage of technology?

Based on the real classroom of Bengbu No. 1 High School, this study attempts to transcend the binary

opposition of “embracing” or “rejecting” and explores the “empowerment” and “traps” of GenAI in continuation writing instruction from a critical perspective. We argue that AI should not be the end of instruction but should become a catalyst for stimulating students’ deep thinking and promoting high-quality teacher-student interaction. This study aims to construct a new instructional model centered on “human-machine collaboration” and framed by the “integration of teaching, learning, and assessment”, providing a prudent yet innovative path for English writing instruction in the AI era.

2 Theoretical framework: the evolution and critique from traditional scaffolding to intelligent scaffolding

The concept of “integration of teaching, learning, and assessment” is rooted in the theories of curriculum alignment (Porter, 2002) and formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998). The five key strategies proposed by Wiliam (2011), especially “providing feedback” and “activating students as instructional resources”, provide a theoretical interface for AI intervention. AI can serve as an efficient feedback tool, but the quality and orientation of its feedback must be checked and designed by teachers.

Scaffolding Instruction, originating from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), was defined by Wood et al. (1976) as a temporary and fading support. Reiser (2004) further distinguished between two types of scaffolding: “structuring” and “problematizing”. In the AI era, the form of scaffolding has undergone a fundamental transformation:

Traditional Scaffolding: Provided by teachers or peers, characterized by high humanity and situational adaptability.

Intelligent Scaffolding: Driven by AI algorithms, characterized by efficiency, massive capacity, and immediacy, but lacking emotional resonance and value judgment.

This evolution brings five core critical perspectives:

Critique 1: Efficiency Supremacy vs. Thinking Depth. AI pursues the “optimal solution” or “high-scoring answer”, while education pursues the “thinking process”. Over-reliance on ready-made ideas and language provided by AI deprives students of the precious opportunity to construct knowledge through trial and error, struggle, and epiphany, leading to the paradox of “knowing the answer” but “not knowing how to think”.

Critique 2: Standardized Output vs. Creative Expression. The training data of AI determines its tendency towards “averaged” output. It excels at imitating the routines of high-scoring model essays but struggles to generate truly unique and personally branded creativity. If teaching goals are hijacked by AI’s “standard answers”, students’ creative thinking will be strangled invisibly.

Critique 3: Instrumental Rationality vs. Subjectivity Dissolution. When AI is regarded as an omnipotent “authority”, students’ subjectivity faces the risk of dissolution. They may regress from active meaning constructors to passive information receivers and instruction executors, losing their sense of control and responsibility over their own learning process.

Critique 4: Data-driven vs. Ethical Blind Spots. AI feedback is based on statistical data, not educational ethics. It cannot judge whether the value orientation of students’ continuation content is correct, nor can it identify the boundary between plagiarism and originality. Without teachers’ ethical guidance, AI may become an “accomplice” to academic misconduct.

Critique 5: Human-Machine Relationship vs. Teacher-Student Relationship. The essence of education is spiritual interaction between people. AI can provide information but cannot replace the teacher’s gaze, encouragement, empathy, and value guidance. Over-reliance on human-machine interaction may weaken the precious emotional connection between teachers and students in the classroom, causing education to lose its warmth.

Therefore, the core stance of this study is: AI is a powerful tool, but by no means the protagonist of education. Teachers must transform from “knowledge transmitters” to “AI collaborators” and “thinking guides”,

ensuring that technology serves the comprehensive development of human beings.

3 Research process: lesson case design and implementation of human-machine collaboration

This study adopted the lesson study method and was carried out in a Grade 1 class at Bengbu No. 1 High School in January 2026. The research team carefully designed a “human-machine collaboration” teaching process, clarifying the auxiliary role of AI and the leading role of teachers.

Phase 1: Instructional Design (Late December 2025)

Selected the 2023 National Volume I “Lily Rescues a Sick Dog” real exam question. Designed three major links:

Goal Anchoring: Teachers and students jointly interpreted the scoring criteria, clarifying the three success standards of “coherent content, authentic emotion, and appropriate language”.

AI Pre-setting: The teacher pre-used AI to generate two continuations—one high-scoring model essay (closely following the original foreshadowing) and one typical problematic essay (abrupt plot, bland language). These two articles served as “problematizing” scaffolds rather than imitation templates.

Assessment Embedding: Designed a peer review checklist including an “AI Usage Ethics” dimension to guide students to reflect on the role of AI.

Phase 2: Classroom Implementation (Mid-January 2026, 45 minutes)

Link 1: Goal Co-construction—Drawing “Ethical Red Lines” for AI Use (10 minutes)

At the beginning of the class, instead of introducing AI hastily, the teacher projected the 2023 college entrance examination continuation writing scoring criteria on the screen. “Class, please think: what are the three most core elements of a high-scoring continuation?” Students answered one after another: “Content must be coherent”, “Language must be advanced”, and “It must have emotion”. The teacher followed up: “If AI can help you write an article with perfect grammar and gorgeous vocabulary, but the story is not your own idea, is that success?”

After a brief silence, a student whispered, “Isn’t that copying?” The teacher seized the opportunity to guide the whole class to discuss the boundary between “AI assistance” and “AI ghostwriting”. Finally, the teacher and students jointly extracted the three success standards for this lesson and wrote them on the left side of the blackboard:

Coherent Content: Must respond to the original foreshadowing (e.g., the collar, car lights, storm);

Authentic Emotion: Character behaviors must conform to their personality and situational logic;

Appropriate Language: Pursue vividness on the basis of accuracy, but reject piling up rhetoric.

The teacher solemnly emphasized: “Today, AI is our ‘thinking partner’, not a ‘ghostwriter’. You can ask it questions and get inspiration, but all text must be processed by your brain, reflecting your understanding. Any act of direct copy-pasting not only violates academic integrity but also wastes this opportunity to exercise thinking.” This opening set the tone for the critical use of AI for the whole lesson, effectively preventing technology abuse.

Link 2: Independent Conception—Preserving the Precious Traces of “Original Thinking” (5 minutes)

Before introducing AI, the teacher required all students to spend 5 minutes quickly writing down their initial conception on the worksheet, including: How did Lily discover the rescue signal? What actions did she take? How did it end? This design was crucial. It ensured that every student entered the human-machine interaction phase with their own “original thinking”, avoiding AI suggestions becoming the sole starting point of thinking. Observation found that although some students wrote only a few words and even had logical loopholes (e.g., “Lily called the police”), these “imperfect” first drafts were precisely valuable materials for subsequent critical reflection.

Link 3: Human - Machine Interaction—From “Soliciting Answers” to “Challenging Assumptions” (15 minutes)

The teacher distributed tablets and guided students to log in to the school’s (unified deployment) educational

version of the AI platform (which had blocked Internet search and direct full-text generation functions, supporting only Q&A interaction). He demonstrated two high-quality questioning examples:

“Based on the original text ‘the dog’s collar has a name’ and ‘there are car lights in the distance’, what are the logical ways to get rescued? Please list 3 possibilities.”

“Please provide 5 English words or phrases that can more accurately describe Lily’s anxious mood in the storm than ‘worried’.”

Subsequently, students began to ask questions independently. The teacher patrolled and found that initial questions were mostly low-order instructions, such as “Help me write an ending”. The teacher immediately intervened, guiding students to “problematize” their questions: “Don’t ask ‘how to write’, but ask ‘why is it reasonable/unreasonable to write this way’.” For example, a student originally wanted to ask “how to describe Lily seeing the owner”, but under the teacher’s guidance, changed it to: “When Lily sees the dog owner, besides ‘happy’, what other words can be used to express her complex mood? Why?”

This transformation was key. AI’s answers were no longer ready-made answers but “triggers” to stimulate critical thinking. When AI suggested “a wave of relief”, student S12 did not copy it but fell into deep thought: “Relief is right, but Lily was so scared before, and now seeing the owner, it shouldn’t just be relaxation, but also grievance, excitement...” He finally combined his own experience to create a more layered expression. This process of “questioning-reconstructing” is the embodiment of higher-order thinking.

Link 4: Group Negotiation—Calibrating “Human-Machine” Output in “Human-Human” Dialogue (10 minutes)

After students completed the human-machine interaction, they discussed in groups of four. The task sheet clearly required:

Share the most inspiring suggestion obtained from AI;

Share one AI suggestion you rejected and the reason;

Jointly judge: Which suggestions truly help with “content coherence” and “emotional authenticity”?

The group discussion was unusually heated. One group had a heated debate on “whether to let Lily actively walk towards the car lights”. AI had suggested “Lily bravely walked towards the car lights”, but a student objected: “The original text says she ‘shivered in the cold rain’, she was very scared, it’s unlikely she would take the initiative to take risks. It’s more reasonable for her to hide and observe first.” Another group focused on language: “AI gave ‘frantically barking’, but the dog was already very sick, can it still ‘frantically’? We think ‘weakly whimpering’ is more realistic.” This peer review based on textual evidence effectively filtered out the “standard answers” in AI output that did not fit the context, highlighting the human advantage in understanding specific situations.

Link 5: Reflective Assessment—Making the “AI Usage Process” Learning Evidence (10 minutes)

During the revision phase, students improved their first drafts based on the group discussion results. The peer review checklist at this time included three dimensions:

Content and Language: Does it respond to foreshadowing? Is the language vivid and accurate?

Originality: What are your unique ideas? (e.g., S33 added “Lily recalled the experience of being helped by strangers when she was lost”.)

AI Collaboration: What did you get from AI? What did you reject? Why?

This checklist incorporated the technology usage itself into the evaluation system, promoting students’ metacognitive awakening. During the teacher’s patrol, he not only paid attention to language errors but also focused on students’ decision-making logic. He said to S33: “It’s great that you rejected the suggestion of ‘call the police’! This shows that you truly understood the quiet atmosphere of the rural night created in the original text, which is a sense of language that AI is difficult to capture.” This feedback reinforced the student’s subject status as a meaning constructor.

Link 6: Classroom Sublimation—Confirming the “Irreplaceability of Humans” (5 minutes)

In the last 5 minutes, the teacher invited several students to share their insights. The student who mentioned “AI doesn’t have my story” triggered a resonance in the whole class. The teacher summarized: “AI is a powerful tool, but it has no childhood, no tears, and no warm memories of being helped by strangers. And these are the most touching power of the Lily under your pen. Writing, after all, is a study about ‘people’. Today we learned how to cooperate with AI, but more importantly, we confirmed that—you are that irreplaceable author.”

This 45-minute lesson had no dazzling technology display but was full of real thinking collisions and value clarification. AI was precisely positioned as a “thinking whetstone” and “language material bank”, while the teacher was always the “value gatekeeper” and “thinking catalyst” of the classroom. This “human-machine collaboration” model not only embraces the technological dividend but also adheres to the true meaning of education, providing a replicable and promotable practical paradigm for continuation writing instruction in the AI era.

4 Teaching case analysis: seeing oneself in the “mirror” of AI

This lesson case vividly demonstrates how human-machine collaboration empowers the “integration of teaching, learning, and assessment.”

Phase 1: Guiding Teaching by Assessment, Defining the “Service” Boundary of AI

By co-constructing success criteria, teachers and students jointly defined the “service area” of AI: It can provide language suggestions and plot brainstorming but cannot decide the emotional core and value orientation of the story. This fundamentally avoids the risk of “subjectivity dissolution.”

Phase 2: Process Construction, AI as a “Thinking Whetstone”

When student S12 was stuck on how to describe Lily’s psychological activity, he asked AI. AI gave multiple options, including “a wave of relief.” S12 did not adopt it directly but thought: “This phrase is very idiomatic, but can it accurately express Lily’s complex mood mixed with grievance, relief, and joy when she saw the owner appear?” Finally, combining his own understanding, he creatively wrote: “A lump formed in her throat, not of sadness, but of a strange, overwhelming relief.” This process perfectly embodies the critical use of AI—AI is the material bank, and the student is the creator.

Phase 3: Embedded Assessment, Incorporating “Ethics” into Learning Evidence

In the peer review checklist, “How did you cooperate with AI?” became a key question. Student S33 wrote in the peer review: “I used the word ‘frantically’ recommended by AI to describe the dog’s state, but I rejected its suggested plot of ‘call the police’ because it did not fit the quiet rural background of the original text.” This reflective assessment turned the technology usage itself into a learning object, effectively promoting metacognitive development.

Phase 4: Reflection and Improvement, Returning to the Original Intention of Education

In the final reflection, a student said: “I used to think AI wrote better than me, and I was very frustrated. Today I found that AI doesn’t have my story. My Lily was so brave because she had also been helped by strangers before. This is something AI doesn’t know.” This sentence reveals the essence of this study: Technology can assist expression but cannot replace experience and emotion.

5 Postscript

This study shows that Generative Artificial Intelligence has great potential in continuation writing instruction, but its value realization depends entirely on how we use it. We should neither give up eating for fear of choking nor blindly worship it. In the future, to truly achieve high-quality instruction empowered by AI, we must adhere to the following principles:

Strengthen the teacher’s “meta-scaffolding” role: The teacher’s core task is no longer to provide content but to design high-quality AI interaction tasks, guiding students to critically evaluate and creatively transform AI output.

Front-load AI literacy and academic integrity education: We must systematically teach students how to use AI responsibly, clearly define the boundary between “use” and “plagiarism”, and cultivate their academic character in the digital age.

Design “Anti-AI” teaching tasks: Consciously design tasks that AI finds difficult to accomplish, such as continuations based on personal real experiences and comments with strong cultural positions, to highlight the unique value of human thinking.

Establish new evaluation standards for human-machine collaboration: The evaluation system should increase the consideration of students’ “AI collaboration ability” and “original contribution”, encouraging students to show their thinking process of interacting with AI rather than just looking at the final product.

In the final analysis, the ultimate goal of education is to cultivate a whole person, not an efficient “human flesh AI”. In the AI era, the true meaning of continuation writing instruction may not lie in writing a perfect article, but in allowing students to confirm their irreplaceability as independent thinkers and emotional expressers in the dialogue with the text, with peers, with AI, and especially with themselves. This is the soul that the “integration of teaching, learning, and assessment” should have in the intelligent era.

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