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## **Integration · Multimodality · Cross-disciplinary Thinking: A Paradigm Shift in Writing Education in the Digital Intelligence Age: A Review of *Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook* by Ling Yu, He Liping and He Xuming**

**Liu Huanhuan, Zhang Yu**

**Abstract:** *Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook* addresses the question of how to reconstruct the paradigm of writing education in the digital intelligence age from three key aspects. First, it introduces cross-disciplinary theory, establishing the core context of “time-space travel” and five major writing tasks—spanning time and space, crossing the five senses, blending genres, integrating disciplines, and traversing media—to innovate the paradigm of writing instruction. Second, it creates a new model of multimodal writing, activating the expressive advantages of digital natives comprehensively through multi-agent co-creation, multi-genre integration, and multi-form presentation. Third, it adopts a competency-oriented approach to cultivate students’ higher-order thinking for the digital age: cross-disciplinary thinking. The book provides students with a set of future-oriented “cross-disciplinary mental models,” enabling them to establish their irreplaceable value as creators in the new landscape of human-machine collaboration.

**Keywords:** *Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook*; creative writing; cross-disciplinary thinking

**Author Biographies:** **Liu Huanhuan**, Graduate student at the School of Chinese Language and Literature, South China Normal University. Research Interest: Curriculum and Teaching Methodology. E-mail: liuhuanhuan202510@163.com.

**Zhang Yu**, Associate Research Fellow and Master's Supervisor at the School of Chinese Language and Literature, South China Normal University. Research Interest: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature. E-mail: zhangyu.nju@foxmail.com.

**标题:** 融界观·多模态·跨界思: 数智时代写作教育的范式重构: 评凌逾、何丽萍、陈绪明主编的《跨界创意写作教程》

**摘要:** 《跨界创意写作教程》从三个方面回答了数智时代的写作教育范式如何重构这一问题: 其一, 引入跨界理论, 创设“时空穿梭”的核心情境以及“跨时空”“跨五感”“跨文体”“跨学科”“跨媒介”五大写作任务, 实现写作教学范式的革新; 其二, 打造多模态写作新样态, 以“多主体共创、多文体贯通、多形式呈现”全方位激活数字原住民的表达优势; 其三, 以能力培养为导向, 培养学生在数智时代高阶思维——跨界思维。该书为学生提供了一套面向未来的“跨界心法”, 使学生在人机协作的新格局中, 确立自身不可替代的创造者价值。

**关键词:** 《跨界创意写作教程》; 创意写作; 跨界思维

**作者简介:** 刘欢欢, 华南师范大学文学院研究生, 研究方向: 课程与教学论。电邮: liuhuanhuan202510@163.com。张宇 (通讯作者), 华南师范大学文学院特聘副研究员, 硕士生导师, 研究方向: 中国现当代文学。电邮: zhangyu.nju@foxmail.com。

Writing has always been a major focus and a persistent challenge in language education. Current rigid composition teaching stems from three conceptual misunderstandings: inauthentic motivation for writing, distorted writing thought processes, and a flawed understanding of “narrative.” These misconceptions directly lead to students’ low enthusiasm for writing and difficulties in improving their writing skills (Li Ren, 2020). In today’s era of rapid artificial intelligence development, this persistent “chronic problem” of writing is being pushed to a critical point. The legitimacy of writing education is facing unprecedented questioning: if machines can write faster and better than humans, why should we still teach students to write?

It is precisely within this context of crisis that *Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook* (hereinafter referred to as *Coursebook*) provides an excellent response. “Interdisciplinary creative writing” is the product of integrating cross-disciplinary thinking with creative writing. “Crossing boundaries ultimately means being unbounded. Within this unboundedness lies the essence of writing” (Ling Yu, 2018, p.5). Versatile talents equipped with cross-disciplinary thinking can navigate the waves of technological innovation with ease. Therefore, cultivating students’ cross-disciplinary thinking is a necessary step in keeping pace with the times. Creative writing differs from traditional stylistic training; it emphasizes “author development” and “work generation,” encourages students to explore and express themselves, focuses on creativity in expression, and advocates breaking conventions (Ge Hongbing, 2024, p.34). *Coursebook* organically integrates cross-disciplinary thinking with creative writing through its scientific, systematic, engaging, and practical approach, opening up a new paradigm for current writing instruction.

### **1. The Cross-disciplinary Framework: A Core Context Leading Five Major Writing Tasks**

Different from the “author-centric system” of Western creative writing workshops, the core

proposition of cross-media theory lies in the shift of the essence of literary and artistic creation from the “deep refinement” of a single medium to the “relationship weaving” of multi-media collaboration. Ling Yu has deeply cultivated cross-media theory for many years, with substantial academic achievements. She has authored several works, including *Cross-Media Narration* (2009), *The Cross-media Culture in Hong Kong* (2015), *Crossover Creativity* (2018), and *Research Library of Global Chinese Literature* (2023). She also curates the academic public account “Crossing Boundaries” and serves as the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Integrated Cultural Studies*. Professor Wang Ying, during a seminar on “AI-assisted Writing,” called Ling Yu the “pioneer” of cross-disciplinary research in China. Introducing cross-disciplinary theory into primary and secondary school writing classrooms is the fundamental distinguishing feature of the Coursebook compared to existing creative writing textbooks.

Ling Yu (2018) points out that the path to interdisciplinary literature can be achieved through “methods of integrating arts and sciences, external cross-media methods, and internal cross-disciplinary integration methods within texts” (pp. 9-12). *Coursebook* creatively adapts cross-media methodology into the context of primary and secondary school creative writing, constructing an interdisciplinary creative writing system composed of “one context” (time-space travel) and “five tasks” (spanning time/space, crossing senses, blending genres, integrating disciplines, traversing media).

The book opens with an imaginative and engaging “context” that runs throughout: a programmer from the future coincidentally makes contact with a musician from the 21st century. The programmer wishes to meet the musician across time and space and seeks methods to do so, thus introducing the first writing task—spanning time and space. After they meet, they lead the reader on a wonderful journey of interdisciplinary creative writing, with the remaining four tasks emerging sequentially along their journey. This character setup is not merely a decorative narrative shell but a carefully designed cognitive metaphor: the programmer represents logic, algorithms, and the future timeline, while the musician represents sensibility, rhythm, and humanistic accumulation. Their very encounter is an embodied demonstration of “crossing.” When students immerse themselves in this context, they are not just learning a method; they are entering a mode of being—which is precisely the deepest mechanism of integrated media learning.

This overarching “macro-context” provides a unified “problem awareness” and “meaning orientation” for the five writing tasks, ensuring they collectively serve the cultivation and exercise of interdisciplinary creative writing abilities, achieving deep learning driven by context and integrated understanding.

Beyond this macro-context, *Coursebook* also creates numerous smaller contexts. These include social life contexts, such as a school club inviting students to create a guidebook for the campus, requiring collaboration with peers; disciplinary cognitive contexts, like imagining a scenario where Tao Yuanming’s “Peach Blossom Spring” collides with modern life; and personal experience contexts, such as attempting cross-genre writing through rewriting or expansion. These contextual tasks, rooted in real society, personal experience, and disciplinary cognition, also incorporate familiar contemporary cultural elements like artificial intelligence and talk shows, aligning with Ling Yu’s emphasis on “interactivity” and the “online + offline” ecosystem (Ling Yu, Zhong Jiani, 2025).

The five tasks—spanning time/space, crossing senses, blending genres, integrating disciplines, traversing media—originate from the core context and collectively serve the enhancement of writing abilities. Internally, they subtly trace a progression from basic “crossing” to advanced “fusion”, outlining a competency development roadmap for “integrated media”.

The “Spanning Time/Space” and “Crossing Senses” units can be viewed as foundational training for students to construct a story world, focusing on training them in the multi-dimensional

expression of a single story. First is the “Spanning Time/Space” unit. Grounded in Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope, Genette’s narrative time theory, and Long Diyong’s spatial narratology, it designs a writing lesson on traveling through time and space. The latter unit opens up students’ sensory experiences, expanding the boundaries of imagination—a concept derived from Ling Yu’s theory of “synaesthesia integration” (Ling Yu, 2015, p.33). Besides providing these two writing perspectives, the opening units build a foundational framework for student writing: the “Spanning Time/Space” unit inspires students to consciously structure their articles, while the “Crossing Senses” unit helps them continuously enrich and refine details.

Once students can write competent single articles and within single genres, they are challenged in the “Blending Genres” “Integrating Disciplines” and “Traversing Media” units to narrate within created story worlds using different genres, integrating multi-disciplinary elements, and expressing through multiple media. The “Blending Genres” unit guides students to understand the characteristics of different genres and then achieve mastery through comprehensive application, training imagination and logical thinking in their exercises. The “Integrating Disciplines” and “Traversing Media” units enable students to learn how to achieve integration and transfer between different disciplines in writing, and how to absorb and apply inspiration from different media, thereby cultivating the media literacy and cross-disciplinary awareness essential for the information age.

The *Coursebook* stratifies interdisciplinary creative writing competencies into a foundational construction layer (Spanning Time/Space, Crossing Senses) and an advanced integration layer (Blending Genres, Integrating Disciplines, Traversing Media). In the foundational layer, students need to train their ability to navigate a single story through diversified expression in temporal/spatial and sensory dimensions. In the advanced integration layer, students need to center on a core story world, produce texts in different genres, incorporate logic from various disciplines, and finally choose different media channels for expression, achieving the creative sublimation of “one story world, multiple stories, multiple forms, multiple channels.”

Thus, the *Coursebook* constructs a “cross-disciplinary creativity” writing system. As Chen Jun stated at the “AI-assisted Writing Seminar”, the *Coursebook* proposes five practical pathways: spanning time/space, crossing senses, blending genres, integrating disciplines, and traversing media. The book opens up a new path for implementing creative writing in primary and secondary education and offers a new possibility for writing education in the age of artificial intelligence.

## **2. Multimodal Expression: Constructing a New Paradigm of Writing in the Digital Intelligence Age**

“Each dominant medium has its most suitable ‘natives’ for that media civilization” (Ling Yu, Zhong Jiani, 2025, p.25). With the iterative updating of artificial intelligence and augmented reality technologies, new media such as generative large language models, intelligent agents, and digital humans are entering human daily life at an unexpected speed and manner, gradually becoming the dominant media of the present era. Today’s students are precisely the “digital natives” cultivated by this new AI media civilization. They are not satisfied with traditional paper reading but are more accustomed to receiving “hypertext” composed of text, images, videos, and even 3D models. Similarly, as a generation growing up amidst diverse symbols like short videos, games, and emojis, digital natives’ expression and writing methods are “multimodal.” They are accustomed to simultaneously coordinating multiple media such as images, sounds, and text to construct meaning, no longer confining themselves solely to the medium of text.

*Coursebook* deeply understands digital natives’ cognitive characteristics and thinking patterns of “hypertext reading” and “multimodal expression,” advocating for viewing writing as an integrated creative process involving multiple media, transforming their cognitive traits into

writing advantages.

Multi-agent co-creation in creative writing workshops is the primary method for achieving interdisciplinary creative writing. Multi-agent co-creation in workshops can be summarized as student-text co-creation, student-student co-creation, and teacher-student co-creation. Taking the “Celebrity Series Mobile Interview” activity as an example, this activity connects with students’ in-class texts such as recollective essays like *Mr. Fujino* and *Leo Tolstoy*. Students are divided into groups to transform into journalists for in-depth dialogues with the “celebrities” in the texts, filling out lists of questions for the subjects and authors, capturing the noble qualities of the “celebrities”, and finally producing an introductory speech for the “celebrity”. The teacher acts as a facilitator throughout the activity. In this activity, students engage in “dialogue” with characters from classic texts, collaborate within groups to complete tasks like filling out the lists, and the teacher, as the workshop host, helps students interpret the texts, deeply understand character traits, and conducts process-oriented and multi-agent evaluations. The text, students, and teacher form a trinity, collectively constituting the operational mechanism of the multi-agent co-creative writing workshop.

The multi-genre writing training advocated by *Coursebook* aims to train students’ ability to choose the most appropriate genre for expression in different contexts, rather than limiting them to mastering the writing norms of a single genre, emphasizing the applicability of writing. The book designs various applicable writing contexts, such as the “Ancient and Modern Mailbox” activity where students need to, based on a deep understanding of the thoughts and feelings in Liu Yuxi’s poem “The Stone City,” write letters from the perspectives of a Tang Dynasty garrison soldier, a Ming Dynasty craftsman, and a modern tourist, enabling these three subjects to engage in dialogue across time and space and thus explore universal human emotions. Letter writing, this traditional media activity, allows students to adopt different perspectives and understand the work’s emotions multi-dimensionally.

Finally, *Coursebook* encourages students to present their writing outcomes in multimodal forms. It guides students to view their writing results as a “creative prototype” that can be interpreted, carried, and disseminated through multiple media. The form of the writing outcome transforms from static “compositions” to dynamic “works”. For example, in the “Crossing Senses” unit, after watching a film exploring the senses (such as *Ninety-five Senses*), students need to use mind maps to present their understanding of the five senses, achieving visual thinking. Then, they engage in creative writing on the theme of “The Wonderful Experience of Crossing the Five Senses”, with the outcome including both a short essay and an AI-generated image based on the essay’s content. In this activity, the presentation forms of students’ writing outcomes encompass paper-based essays, mind maps, and AI images, achieving multi-form presentation.

The multimodal writing system constructed by *Coursebook* provides teachers with a “microscope” to observe students’ writing processes. But its value extends beyond the level of teaching tools. At a deeper level, it responds to the fundamental proposition of “what is the value of writing in the AI era.” Students no longer learn how to produce correct texts but learn how to coordinate multiple media for meaning construction. This is a paradigm shift from “composition teaching” to “literacy education.” Text, images, sounds, and other semiotic resources provide writers with modes of meaning-making that transcend the single modality of language (Bezemer & Kress, 2008), endowing traditional writing practices with new connotations (Shin et al., 2020). The influence of media interaction and modal integration on writing teaching is continuously increasing, making traditional stylistic training difficult to adapt to the needs of the times. The multimodal writing promoted by *Coursebook* is precisely the new writing paradigm suited for the digital intelligence age, which will bring about medium conversion and narrative reconstruction (Mu Xiaoyu, 2025).

### 3. Cross-disciplinary Thinking: An Essential Higher-Order Thinking Skill for Future Citizens

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, large language models like ChatGPT and DeepSeek can easily produce text in an extremely short time. Repetitive and formulaic writing products are rapidly depreciating. Today's writing demands not the ability to optimize the arrangement and combination of words, but the capacity for "insight" – the ability to establish new connections between seemingly unrelated things and generate new meanings. "Crossing boundaries is a form of higher-order thinking; interdisciplinary creative writing is a high-level mental training" (Ling Yu, He Liping, Chen Xuming, et al., 2025). This judgment elevates *Coursebook* beyond the functional positioning of a general writing textbook, making it a systematic thinking development solution spanning primary school, secondary school, and university levels—it is not a "dimensionality reduction output" of university theory, but a systematic design rooted in the cognitive laws of primary and secondary schools and connecting upward with the cultivation of innovative talents in higher education.

The primary manifestation of cross-disciplinary thinking in *Coursebook* is the ability to construct a unified story world and utilize multiple media forms for three-dimensional narrative. *Coursebook* carefully designs complex writing situations and tasks, allowing students to exercise cross-media narrative abilities in the process of completing tasks and solving problems. Students need to enter the context of the programmer and the musician: their different identities determine their distinct media expression channels—the programmer uses code and computers as media, representing rational thinking; the musician uses musical notes and physical movement as media, representing perceptual thinking. Integrating the two is itself a practice of "crossing." In addition to the "crossing" context, students also need to complete "crossing" tasks, such as multi-genre creation and human-machine collaborative creation, achieving thinking leap and creative burst in the process of task completion.

Creative translation between heterogeneous semiotic systems—converting between different sign systems like text, image, and sound—is also an important manifestation of cross-disciplinary thinking. *The Coursebook* designs numerous tasks involving the translation of heterogeneous signs. For example, in the "Traversing Media" unit, using the dance drama *The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting* as an introduction, students are guided to convert symbols such as the dancers' body movements, music, and stage imagery into textual narratives, translating dynamic audiovisual signs into static linguistic signs. Students experience the power of the "repetition" technique through dance and apply it to programming a performance for the "Campus Arts Festival," writing a short story or story outline based on the dance, "using the recurring dance movements to construct a clear emotional thread and plot development path" (Ling Yu, He Liping, Chen Xuming, 2025, p.280). This achieves the cross-media translation of art. The translation between heterogeneous signs requires students not only to understand the unique semiotic functions of different sign systems but also to establish creative links between different signs during the perceptual process. This translation process effectively trains students' higher-order thinking and is a key mechanism for cultivating interdisciplinary creative expression abilities.

Finally, *Coursebook* uses project-based learning to guide students in practicing the "ability for cross-media integration," that is, in the context of multiple media coexistence, organically integrating heterogeneous signs such as text, image, and sound to form a cohesive multimodal expression. The creative writing case study "Thousands Shapes of Society , Myriad Forms of Life" micro-fiction in the "Traversing Media" unit serves as an example: the introductory phase guides students to capture social hotspots through different media, stimulating creative interest; then, comprehensively using signs like text and images, it demonstrates how classic literary works

critique social phenomena and extract the six key characteristics of micro-fiction writing; the evaluation phase introduces AI as one of the evaluation agents, with teachers, students, and AI jointly forming a multi-subject evaluation system; finally, students produce multimodal outcomes of their writing, compiled into an e-magazine. Through this complete project-based learning process, students not only master the core skills of cross-media narrative but also deepen their understanding of multimodal expression in practice, achieving a transformation from single-medium thinking to integrated media thinking, truly possessing the comprehensive literacy needed to handle complex expression demands in the digital age.

As Professor Yu Bin commented: “*Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook* perfectly responds to the new liberal arts construction advocated by the current Ministry of Education. Cross-disciplinary integration means breaking down professional barriers and cultivating versatile talents.” *Coursebook* distinguishes itself from popular books that merely “downgrade university theories,” becoming a thinking development solution truly rooted in the context of China’s basic education. What *Coursebook* cultivates are not “writing machines” proficient in exam-taking skills, but future creators equipped with a “cross-disciplinary mindset” capable of adapting to the future, and even more so, a contributor to “Cross-media China” (Shi Chang, 2025). They will definitely “create new possibilities” (Lou Xuejing, 2025, p.208).

## Conclusion

*Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook* is grounded in integrated media theory, aiming to cultivate students’ cross-disciplinary thinking and train their creative expression. It is a product born from the context of the rapidly developing artificial intelligence era, constructing an interdisciplinary creative writing system of integration, multimodality and cross-disciplinary thinking. It is dedicated to guiding students to break cognitive barriers with an integrated view, express three-dimensionally through multimodal methods, and ultimately generate insights with cross-disciplinary thinking. “When literature meets science, when text collides with symbols, creativity blooms like an oasis in the desert, in the most unexpected places” (Ling Yu, He Liping, Chen Xuming, 2025, p.235). The writing paradigm constructed by *Interdisciplinary Creative Writing: A Coursebook* aligns with the cognitive characteristics and thinking patterns of digital natives growing up in the digital intelligence age, setting a beacon for the practical exploration of creative writing in primary and secondary schools, and guiding a new paradigm for language education in the digital age, “playing beautiful notes amidst infinite creativity” (Ling Yu, He Liping, Chen Xuming, 2025, p.1).

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## ORCID

**Liu Huanhuan** <sup>ORCID</sup> <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9175-4437>

**Zhang Yu** <sup>ORCID</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3855-3711>

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