Lingua Technica, 1(1), 2025, 37-48

List of contents available at Lingua Technica

Lingua Technica:
Journal of Digital Literary Studies

homepage: https://journal.arjunu.org/index.php/lingtech



Multimodal poetics in digital literature: a corpus-based analysis of visual-verbal design, screen-based textuality, and reader interaction

Ridhatullah Assyabani [1*]

[1] Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Qur'an (STIQ) Amuntai, Indonesia
** Corresponding author. Email: ridha@stiq-amuntai.ac.id*

Article history:
Received Dec 15, 2024
Revised Dec 25, 2024
Accepted Jan 25, 2025
Published Jan 30, 2025

Keywords:
digital literature;
interactivity;
multimodality;
reader navigation

A B S T R A C T

Background: Digital literature has transformed literary experience by shifting reading from a page-bound encounter with verbal text into a screen-based engagement with visual design, textual movement, interface structure, and reader participation. **Objective:** This study aims to examine how selected digital-born literary works construct meaning through the integrated operation of verbal, visual, and interactive forms. **Method:** Using a qualitative interpretive design, the study analyses works drawn from recognized electronic literature archives through Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Digital Poetics Analysis, and Interface and Interaction Analysis. **Results:** The findings show that visual-verbal configuration functions as a core poetic mechanism, in which typography, layout, image, colour, spatial arrangement, and screen composition actively reshape verbal meaning. The study also finds that fragmentation, movement, and screen-based textuality expand poetic form beyond stable printed structures by making language dynamic, procedural, and temporally organized. **Implication:** Reader navigation further emerges as a crucial mode of meaning-making, as clicking, scrolling, selecting, waiting, observing, and activating textual elements transform reading into a performative negotiation between agency and constraint. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in its corpus-based multimodal poetics framework, which integrates visual-verbal design, digital textual dynamics, and interactive readerly performance into a single analytical model for examining digital-born literature.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64595/cy0q2n14

*) Copyright © 2026 Ridhatullah Assyabani
This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License which permits use, distribution, reproduction, and adaptation in any medium, provided that the original work is properly cited and any adapted material is distributed under the same license.

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital culture has transformed literary experience from a page-bound act of reading into a screen-based encounter with text, image, sound, interface, and user action. With more than six billion people now connected to the internet globally, cultural production and literary reception increasingly take place within networked, screen-mediated environments. This condition makes digital literature an urgent object of inquiry because it does not merely relocate printed texts into electronic formats, but redefines the material, sensory, and participatory conditions of literary meaning. Works archived in the Electronic Literature Collection, ELMCIP Knowledge Base, The NEXT, and Pathfinders show that contemporary literary practice includes hypertext fiction, kinetic poetry, interactive narrative, generative writing, and screen-based textual performance. The corpus examined in this study is therefore situated within a growing transnational field of born-digital literary production, where reading involves not only interpretation of verbal language but also attention to visual design, interface structure, and readerly action.

Previous scholarship has established strong foundations for understanding electronic literature through concepts such as hypertextuality, cybertext, digital materiality, remediation, procedurality, literary gaming, and interactive fiction (Alagiya, 2023; Fawaid et al., 2024; Joshwa, 2023; Kucirkova, 2019; Lagerkvist & Ghajargar, 2020). Recent scholars have demonstrated that digital-born works depend on computation, navigation, interface, and media-specific textuality (Adhikary, 2025; Burin et al., 2015; Qin & He, 2011). These studies have shown that digital literature must be read in relation to its technological environment, yet many analyses still tend to privilege one dimension at a time: textual structure, technological form, or reader participation. Less attention has been given to how visual design, verbal configuration, screen movement, and interactive mechanism operate together as an integrated poetic system. This gap is methodologically important because digital literature produces meaning through the coordinated relation among words, images, layout, motion, links, and user decisions rather than through verbal language alone.

This study aims to examine how digital literature constructs meaning through the integrated operation of visual, verbal, and interactive forms. It addresses three interrelated questions. First, how do visual and verbal elements—such as typography, color, image, layout, spatial arrangement, and textual fragments—collaborate in shaping literary meaning? Second, how do digital poetic strategies such as fragmentation, movement, repetition, hyperlinking, screen transition, and non-linear sequencing produce new forms of textuality? Third, how does reader interaction through clicking, scrolling, choosing pathways, opening nodes, and navigating interfaces participate in the production of narrative and poetic experience? To answer these questions, the study analyses selected digital-born works from recognized electronic literature archives by combining Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Digital Poetics Analysis, and Interface and Interaction Analysis. This methodological combination allows the study to examine digital literature at the level of screen composition, textual dynamics, and readerly performance.

The central argument of this study is that digital literature should be understood as a multimodal poetic event rather than as a static textual object. Its meaning emerges from the dynamic relation between what is written, what is seen, and what is performed by the reader within the interface. Visual forms do not merely decorate verbal texts; they organize attention, rhythm, mood, emphasis, and interpretive hierarchy. Likewise, interactive forms do not simply provide technical access; they shape narrative temporality, agency, uncertainty, and the reader's embodied experience of movement through the work. By proposing a multimodal poetics framework, this study contributes to digital literary studies by integrating visual-verbal design, screen-based textuality, and interactive meaning-making into one analytical model. The implication is that literary interpretation in digital environments must move beyond print-centered assumptions and account for how aesthetics, media, interface, and reader action jointly produce meaning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital literature

Digital literature refers to literary works that are created for, circulated through, and experienced within computational environments, rather than works that are merely transferred from print into digital format (Sastre & Garcia, 2022). Unlike digitized literature, which preserves the logic of the printed page in electronic form, digital literature is born from the affordances of code, screen, database, hyperlink, animation, and user

interaction. Some scholars define electronic literature as "digital born" writing that takes advantage of the computer as a medium (Höglund, 2022; Petrenko et al., 2024), while others approach it as cybertext, emphasizing the reader's operational role in traversing textual structures (Busareva, 2024; Loh et al., 2021). These two perspectives mark an important distinction: digital literature may be understood either through its media-specific materiality or through the ergodic actions required from the reader. Together, they establish digital literature as a literary form inseparable from technological mediation.

Digital literature can be identified through several interrelated aspects: digital-born textuality, media-specific materiality, programmability, and reader participation (Mustofa & Lestari, 2023). Textuality refers to the verbal and narrative components that remain central to literary interpretation. Materiality concerns the screen, software, platform, archive, and interface through which the work becomes perceptible and accessible. Programmability refers to code-based procedures, algorithmic behavior, generative structures, or conditional pathways that influence how the text appears and changes. Participation involves the reader's actions, including clicking, scrolling, selecting, navigating, waiting, or manipulating the work. These aspects are important for the present study because they clarify why electronic literature cannot be analysed only through plot, theme, diction, or genre, but must also be examined through its computational, visual, and interactional conditions.

Multimodal poetics

Multimodal poetics concerns the ways literary meaning emerges from the coordinated interaction of multiple semiotic modes within a specific medium (Liu, 2024). In digital literature, words rarely function alone; they interact with image, color, typography, sound, movement, spatial arrangement, and interface design (Long, 2024). Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of multimodality is useful because it treats meaning as distributed across visual, verbal, and spatial system (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). However, in literary studies, multimodality must also be read aesthetically, not merely communicatively. This means that multimodal analysis should not stop at identifying modes, but should explain how those modes generate rhythm, tension, fragmentation, ambiguity, atmosphere, and affect (Prozorova, 2024). Digital poetics therefore extends multimodal analysis by asking how screen-based modes produce literary experience.

The main indicators of multimodal poetics in digital literature include visual-verbal relation, spatial composition, kinetic arrangement, and semiotic hierarchy (Loh et al., 2021). Visual-verbal relation examines whether images illustrate, contradict, intensify, or destabilize textual meaning. Spatial composition concerns the organization of text, image, and empty space on the screen. Kinetic arrangement refers to movement, transition, animation, or temporal sequencing that shapes the reading process. Semiotic hierarchy examines which mode dominates meaning at particular moments: word, image, interface, sound, or reader action. These indicators provide an operational basis for analysing the corpus because they translate the broad concept of multimodality into observable textual and screen-based features. In electronic literary works, poetic effect is distributed across layout, movement, and screen perception.

Interface and interactivity

Interface and interactivity refer to the mechanisms through which readers encounter, navigate, and act upon digital texts. An interface is not a neutral technical surface; it mediates access, attention, sequence, temporality, and interpretation (Busareva, 2024). Some scholars understand the interface as a cultural form (Morris, 2024; Nag, 2024), while others connect interactivity to immersion, agency, and narrative participation (Aliagas et al., 2024; Höglund, 2022). In digital literature, interactivity may be minimal, such as clicking a hyperlink, or complex, such as choosing narrative paths, activating media layers, or influencing textual generation. Different understandings of interactivity therefore range from technical input to interpretive participation and embodied performance within a programmed environment (Adawiyah, 2024; Skains, 2023). This distinction is necessary because reader agency in digital literature is always shaped by designed constraints.

The indicators of interface and interaction include navigational structure, reader agency, procedural response, temporal control, and experiential involvement (Atzenbeck, 2024). Navigational structure refers to how readers move through nodes, lexia, screens, menus, hyperlinks, or generated textual sequences. Reader

agency concerns the extent to which the reader can influence sequence, emphasis, access, rhythm, or narrative development. Procedural response examines how the system reacts to user input, whether through textual replacement, visual distortion, animation, or algorithmic variation. Temporal control concerns whether reading pace is determined by the reader, the program, or both. Experiential involvement refers to the affective and cognitive consequences of interaction, including immersion, uncertainty, frustration, suspense, and disorientation. These indicators show how meaning is co-produced through design, code, and readerly action.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of selected digital-born literary works that integrate verbal, visual, and interactive forms within screen-based environments. The material objects are drawn from recognized electronic literature archives, including the Electronic Literature Collection, ELMCIP Knowledge Base, The NEXT, and Pathfinders. The corpus was selected to represent four major forms of digital literature: hypertext fiction, visual-verbal electronic literature, kinetic or typographic digital poetry, and interactive screen-based narrative. The analytical units include words, phrases, fragments, lexia, screens, hyperlinks, interface elements, visual composition, animation, navigation routes, and reader-triggered responses. These units were chosen because they allow the study to examine digital literature not only as verbal text, but also as a multimodal artefact organized through layout, movement, interface, and reader action.

Tabel 1. Research corpus

No	Corpus Category	Corpus Focus	Analytical Unit	Main Source
1	Hypertext fiction	*Patchwork Girl*, *afternoon, a story*, and comparable hypertext works	Lexia, node, hyperlink, narrative path	Pathfinders; The NEXT; ELMCIP
2	Visual-verbal hypertext memoir	*My Body—A Wunderkammer* and body-based screen narratives	Body-map interface, autobiographical fragments, visual-verbal relation	ELC; ELMCIP
3	Kinetic digital poetry	*The Dreamlife of Letters* and other animated typographic works	Moving letters, typographic rhythm, transition	Electronic Literature Collection
4	Flash-based digital poetry	*Dakota* and screen-timed textual works	Full-screen text, pacing, rhythm, cinematic typography	ELC; The NEXT
5	Recombinant interactive fiction	*The Jew's Daughter* and text-mutation works	Replacing text blocks, semantic drift, recombination	ELC; ELMCIP
6	Hypermedia fiction	*These Waves of Girls* and image-text memory narratives	Image-text relation, memory fragment, associative link	ELC; ELMCIP
7	Interactive digital narrative	*Inanimate Alice*, *Loss of Grasp*, *Tailspin*	Click, scroll, task, response, interface behavior	ELC; The NEXT
8	Generative digital poetry	*Taroko Gorge* and procedural poetic works	Algorithmic repetition, scrolling text, generated sequence	ELC; ELMCIP
9	Archival metadata	Work description, author, year, platform, genre	Metadata and paratextual information	ELMCIP; ELO; The NEXT
10	Critical documentation	Curatorial notes, interviews, preservation notes, technical descriptions	Contextual and interpretive support	Pathfinders; ELMCIP; ELO

This study employs a qualitative interpretive design situated at the intersection of digital literary studies, multimodal discourse studies, and interface analysis. The design is appropriate because the research does not seek to quantify reader responses, but to interpret how literary meaning is produced through the interaction of verbal fragments, visual composition, screen behavior, and reader navigation. A corpus-based qualitative strategy was used to identify recurring patterns across selected works while still preserving the media-specific and aesthetic uniqueness of each digital object. Each work was treated as a multimodal artefact whose meaning emerges from the relation between linguistic form, spatial arrangement, programmed movement, and user action. This design enables the study to connect close reading with digital-material analysis.

The sources of information consist of primary digital works and secondary archival or scholarly materials. Primary sources include selected digital-born literary works archived in the Electronic Literature Collection, The NEXT, Pathfinders, and related repositories of electronic literature. Secondary sources include metadata entries, author notes, curatorial descriptions, technical documentation, preservation records, interviews, and scholarly essays available through ELMCIP and other academic platforms. These secondary materials were used to verify authorship, publication context, platform, genre classification, technical features, and preservation status. They were not treated as replacements for textual analysis, but as contextual evidence that supports interpretation. The combination of primary works and archival documentation strengthens the traceability, validity, and transparency of the corpus.

Data were collected through purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria. First, the work had to be digital-born rather than merely digitized from print. Second, it had to contain identifiable verbal, visual, and interactive components. Third, it had to be accessible through a recognized archive or supported by reliable scholarly documentation. Each selected work was examined through repeated screen-based close reading, in which the researcher documented textual fragments, visual layouts, interface structures, hyperlink patterns, navigation routes, motion sequences, and reader-triggered responses. Screenshots, reading notes, and analytical matrices were used to record observable features. The collected data were then organized into four coding categories: verbal form, visual design, digital movement, and interactional mechanism.

Data analysis was conducted in three interconnected stages to ensure consistency between the corpus, analytical tools, and research questions. First, Multimodal Discourse Analysis was used to examine how typography, color, image, spatial layout, screen composition, and verbal fragments collaborate in producing meaning. Second, Digital Poetics Analysis was applied to identify poetic strategies such as fragmentation, repetition, movement, hyperlinking, transition, screen sequencing, and procedural variation. Third, Interface and Interaction Analysis was used to interpret how clicking, scrolling, selecting, waiting, opening nodes, and triggering responses shape reader agency and narrative experience. The results of these stages were compared across the corpus to identify recurrent patterns, divergences, and representative cases. This analytical procedure allows the study to explain digital literature as an integrated multimodal poetic system.

RESULTS

Visual-verbal configuration in digital literary works

The first stage of analysis examines how digital literary works construct meaning through the configuration of verbal fragments, visual design, and screen composition. Rather than treating images, typography, layout, and screen movement as supplementary features, this section reads them as constitutive components of literary form. Figure 1 shows that verbal meaning is frequently reorganized by its visual placement, spatial segmentation, typographic behavior, and relation to images or screen fields. In this sense, digital literary works do not simply present stories or poems on a screen; they transform the screen into a semiotic environment where words, images, layout, rhythm, and visual hierarchy collaborate. The analysis therefore focuses on observable visual-verbal features, including textual fragmentation, typographic emphasis, image-text relation, spatial arrangement, and the distribution of attention across the screen.

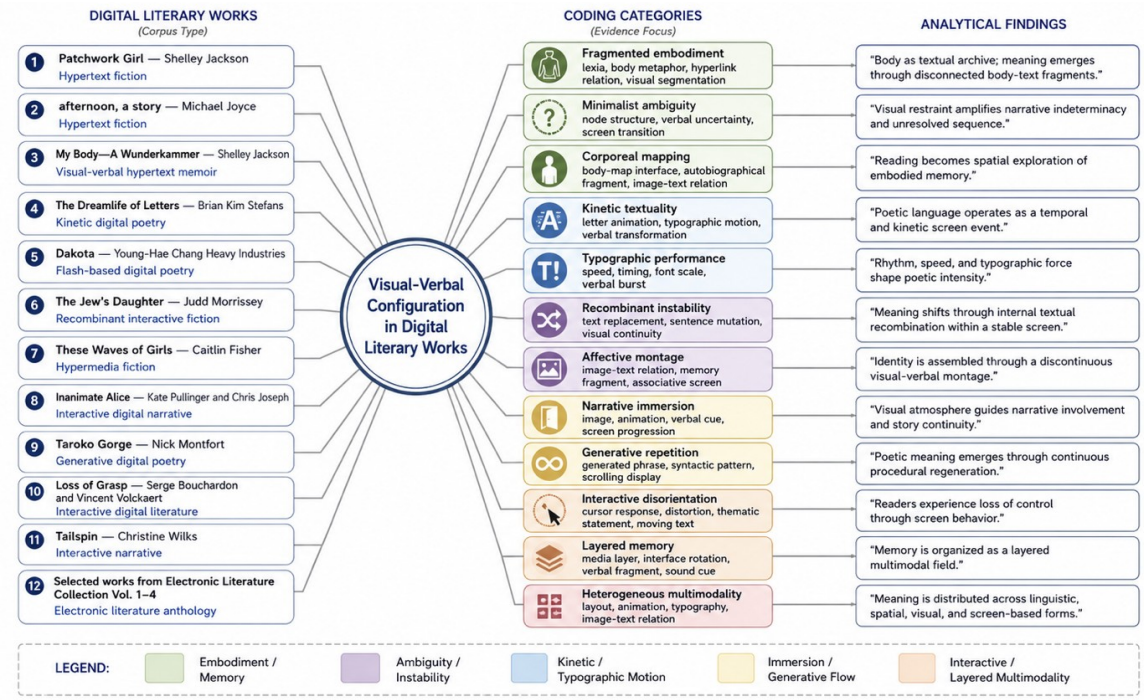

Figure 1. Multimodal network of visual-verbal configuration in digital literary works

Figure 1 shows that visual-verbal configuration appears in several recurring patterns across the corpus: fragmented embodiment, minimalist ambiguity, corporeal mapping, kinetic textuality, typographic performance, recombinant instability, affective montage, narrative immersion, generative repetition, interactive disorientation, and layered memory. Hypertext works such as *Patchwork Girl*, *afternoon, a story*, and *My Body—A Wunderkammer* rely on lexia, nodes, body maps, and segmented screen spaces to connect verbal discontinuity with visual fragmentation. Kinetic and typographic works such as *The Dreamlife of Letters*, *Dakota*, and *Taroko Gorge* foreground motion, repetition, speed, and textual flow as part of poetic expression. Interactive narratives such as *Inanimate Alice*, *Loss of Grasp*, and *Tailspin* combine visual atmosphere, screen response, sound, and concise narration to produce immersion, uncertainty, or affective memory.

These findings indicate that visual form in digital literature functions as an active component of literary meaning rather than as a decorative supplement to verbal language. In the corpus, typography controls rhythm, layout organizes attention, image constructs atmosphere, and screen segmentation materializes fragmentation. This means that digital literary interpretation must account for the way meaning is distributed across verbal signs and visual arrangements. The relation between word and image is not uniform; in some works, visual design supports verbal narration, while in others it disrupts, delays, intensifies, or transforms textual meaning. Therefore, digital literature requires a reading practice that can identify how screen composition shapes interpretation, affect, temporality, and reader attention within a multimodal environment.

Digital poetics of fragmentation, movement, and screen-based textuality

The second stage of analysis examines how digital literary works produce poetic effects through fragmentation, movement, and screen-based textual organization. In this section, digital poetics is understood not only as verbal experimentation, but as the behavior of language within computational and screen-based environments. Figure 2 shows that poetic meaning is shaped by broken narrative units, moving letters, timed textual displays, algorithmic repetition, hyperlink transitions, and unstable screen behavior. These features indicate that digital literature does not present text as a fixed verbal object, but as a dynamic event that unfolds through sequence, duration, transformation, and visual movement. The analysis therefore focuses on observable poetic operations, including textual fragmentation, kinetic display, procedural variation, temporal pacing, and screen-specific organization.

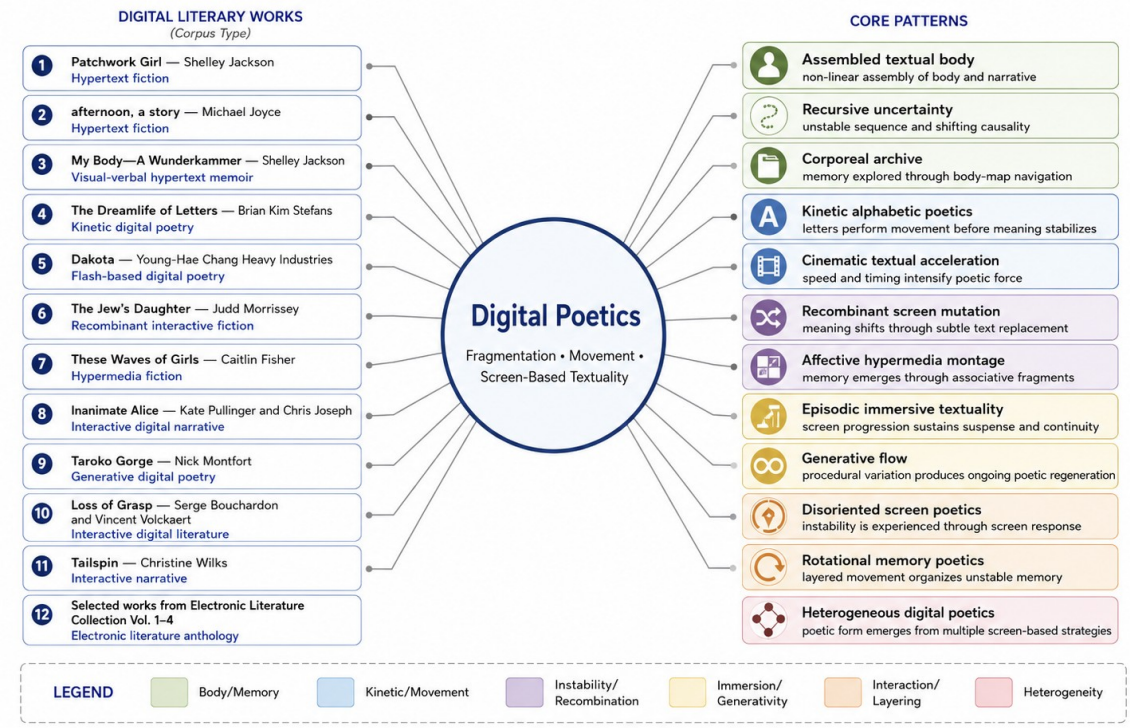

Figure 2. Digital poetics of fragmentation, movement, and screen-based textuality

Figure 2 shows that digital poetics appears through several recurring operations: assembled textual bodies, recursive uncertainty, corporeal archives, kinetic alphabetic movement, cinematic acceleration, recombinant mutation, affective montage, episodic immersion, generative flow, disoriented screen behavior, and rotational memory. Hypertext works such as *Patchwork Girl*, *afternoon, a story*, and *My Body—A Wunderkammer* use fragmentation to destabilize linear sequence and transform reading into spatial exploration. Kinetic and typographic works such as *The Dreamlife of Letters* and *Dakota* use motion, timing, and visual rhythm to transform language into performance. Generative and interactive works such as *Taroko Gorge*, *Loss of Grasp*, and *Tailspin* show that textuality can be procedural, unstable, layered, and responsive to the reader's encounter with the screen.

These findings indicate that digital poetics is not limited to metaphor, diction, imagery, or narrative structure in the conventional sense. In the corpus, poetic meaning emerges from how language is broken, moved, sequenced, delayed, regenerated, and displayed on the screen. Fragmentation does not merely interrupt coherence; it creates a new structure for representing memory, body, identity, uncertainty, and affect. Movement is also not merely an animated effect, but a literary mechanism that controls rhythm, temporality, pressure, attention, and expectation. Screen-based textuality therefore becomes central to digital literary form, because the screen determines how words appear, disappear, mutate, return, and interact with readerly perception. Digital poetry and narrative must consequently be read as temporal, procedural, and materially screen-bound literary events.

Reader navigation and interactive meaning-making

The third stage of analysis examines how readers participate in the construction of literary meaning through navigation, interaction, and interface-based action. In digital literature, reading is not limited to interpreting verbal signs, but involves clicking links, opening nodes, scrolling screens, waiting for timed displays, activating media layers, following prompts, or responding to unstable interface behavior. Figure 3 shows that interactivity does not always mean unlimited freedom; rather, reader agency is shaped by the relationship between available choices, programmed constraints, and the work's designed navigational structure. The analysis therefore focuses on observable interactional features, including navigation paths, degree of agency, reader-triggered responses, interface constraints, and the forms of meaning produced through readerly action.

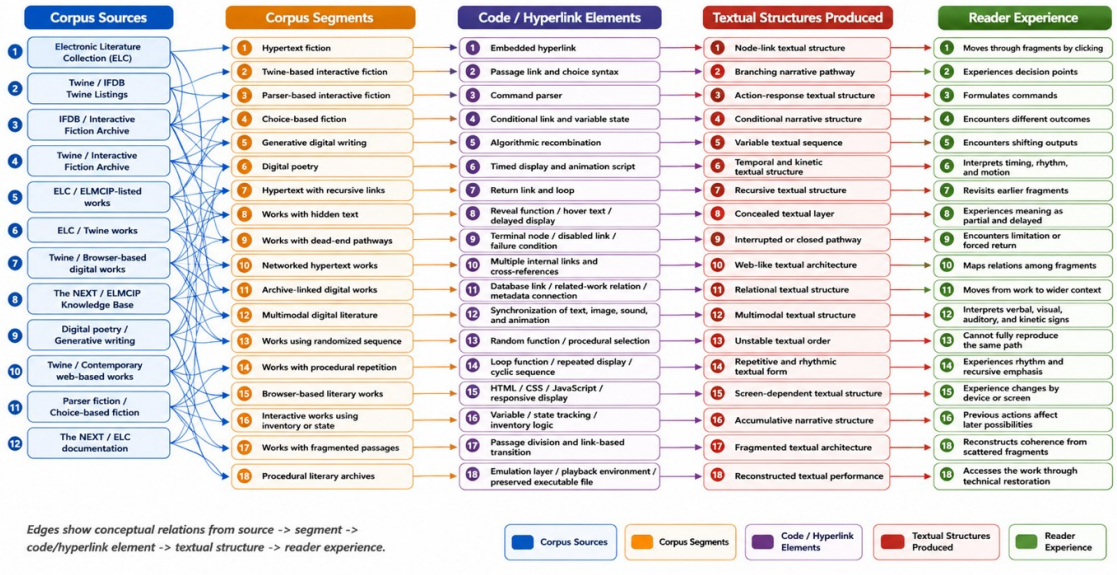

Figure 3. Reader navigation and interactive meaning-making

Figure 3 shows that reader navigation and interactive meaning-making appear through several recurring patterns: associative navigation, recursive pathwaying, embodied navigation, observational interaction, controlled temporality, recombinant interaction, affective navigation, guided immersion, procedural spectatorship, frustrated agency, and layered activation. Hypertext works such as *Patchwork Girl*, *afternoon, a story*, *My Body—A Wunderkammer*, and *These Waves of Girls* provide relatively high reader agency by allowing readers to select routes, open lexia, and construct associative relations among fragments. Kinetic and timed works such as *The Dreamlife of Letters*, *Dakota*, and *Taroko Gorge* offer more limited agency, but still involve readers through attention, duration, visual tracking, and temporal reception. Interactive narratives such as *Inanimate Alice*, *Loss of Grasp*, and *Tailspin* occupy a middle position by combining guided structure with reader-triggered responses.

These findings indicate that interactivity in digital literature should be understood as a literary strategy rather than a merely technical feature. The corpus shows that reader agency is always negotiated: readers can select, activate, wait, observe, or trigger responses, but their actions remain shaped by the interface and the programmed structure of the work. In some works, interaction expands interpretive possibility by allowing readers to assemble fragments and choose pathways; in others, limited control creates pressure, uncertainty, immersion, frustration, or affective intensity. This means that digital literature does not simply invite the reader to participate; it designs the conditions under which participation becomes meaningful. Reading becomes a performance of movement, attention, hesitation, choice, and constraint within a digital environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings on visual-verbal configuration show that digital literature relocates literary meaning from verbal expression alone to the interaction among words, images, typography, layout, and screen composition. This relocation is important because it changes how literary value, interpretation, and aesthetic experience should be understood in digital environments. In works such as *Patchwork Girl*, *My Body—A Wunderkammer*, *Dakota*, and *The Dreamlife of Letters*, visual form does not merely accompany verbal language; it actively organizes embodiment, memory, rhythm, uncertainty, and affect. The function of visuality in these works is therefore literary rather than ornamental, because visual arrangement participates in the production of narrative and poetic meaning (Busareva, 2024; Nag, 2024). A possible limitation appears when digital works are read through print-based assumptions that privilege plot, diction, and theme while neglecting layout, motion, and visual hierarchy. Such a reading risks reducing digital literature to verbal content and overlooking the multimodal operations through which meaning is actually produced.

The integration of visual and verbal modes occurs because digital literature is composed within a medium where language is inseparable from its conditions of display. In printed literature, typography and layout may influence interpretation, but they generally remain stable once the text is materially fixed on the page. In digital environments, by contrast, words may appear, move, disappear, respond, fragment, or become reorganized through screen design and interface behavior (Petrenko et al., 2024; Prozorova, 2024). This media-specific condition explains why verbal signs in digital literature cannot be separated from the visual and spatial systems that present them. The screen does not function as a neutral container but as an active field that shapes attention, pacing, emphasis, and interpretation. For this reason, multimodal analysis must be adapted to literary aesthetics: it should not only identify semiotic modes, but also explain how those modes generate poetic tension, affective force, and interpretive complexity.

The findings on fragmentation, movement, and screen-based textuality demonstrate that digital literature expands poetic form beyond the stable arrangement of printed words. Fragmentation in the corpus does not simply indicate discontinuity, difficulty, or broken narrative coherence. It functions as a representational strategy for memory, body, trauma, identity, temporality, and computational process. Movement also performs more than animation; it regulates rhythm, delay, speed, suspense, and perceptual pressure (Aliagas et al., 2024; Höglund, 2022). Screen-based textuality therefore changes literary form into a temporal and procedural event, where the text unfolds through transition, repetition, mutation, scrolling, or programmed display. This has significant implications for digital poetics because the poem or narrative is no longer defined only by what is written, but by how language behaves on the screen. The dysfunction occurs when motion and procedural variation are treated as technical effects rather than as part of the work's literary grammar.

This dynamic structure emerges from the difference between the printed page and the programmable screen. The printed page usually stabilizes text in a fixed spatial arrangement, while the digital screen allows textual elements to be animated, recombined, refreshed, delayed, or algorithmically generated. As a result, poetic organization can shift from lineation, stanza, and narrative sequence to duration, transformation, interaction, and screen behavior (Loh et al., 2021; Morris, 2024). In *Taroko Gorge*, poetic repetition depends on algorithmic variation; in *Dakota*, rhythm is produced by timed typographic acceleration; in *Loss of Grasp*, instability is enacted through responsive visual distortion. These cases show that digital poetic form is structured by the correlation between computational affordance and literary effect. The underlying structure is therefore procedural: the literary work consists not only of visible textual units, but also of the operations that determine how those units appear, change, and persist.

The findings on reader navigation and interactive meaning-making show that digital literature repositions the reader as a participant in the unfolding of literary experience. This participation does not mean that the reader has unlimited freedom or that authorial design disappears. Instead, meaning is produced through a negotiated relation between readerly action and programmed constraint. In hypertext fiction, readers assemble pathways and connect fragments; in kinetic and timed works, readers are positioned as observers of controlled textual events; in interactive narratives, readers activate media layers, follow prompts, or trigger textual and visual responses (Ramya & Rukmini, 2021; Sastre & Garcia, 2022). The implication is that reading becomes performative: it involves movement, attention, selection, delay, hesitation, and response. However, interactivity may be misunderstood if it is equated only with freedom. The corpus shows that restriction, frustration, waiting, and limited control can also become productive literary strategies.

This interactive structure exists because digital literature is organized through interfaces that distribute control among author, system, and reader. The reader can click, scroll, choose, wait, observe, or activate elements, but these actions occur within a designed computational environment that enables some possibilities while limiting others. Agency in digital literature is therefore relational rather than absolute, because it emerges from the tension between what the reader attempts to do and what the system allows, redirects, or resists (Höglund, 2022; Mustofa & Lestari, 2023). This explains why different works produce different modes of meaning-making: *Patchwork Girl* encourages associative assembly, *afternoon, a story* multiplies uncertainty, *Inanimate Alice* balances guidance and immersion, while *Loss of Grasp* transforms failed control into thematic experience. Digital literature becomes meaningful because it turns navigation itself into an aesthetic act, making choice, movement, constraint, and uncertainty central to literary interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital literature constructs meaning through the integrated operation of verbal expression, visual design, screen behavior, and reader interaction. Its most important insight is that digital literary meaning cannot be adequately explained through print-based categories alone, because words in digital works are shaped by layout, movement, interface, screen temporality, and reader action. The study contributes to digital literary studies by proposing a multimodal poetics framework that connects Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Digital Poetics Analysis, and Interface and Interaction Analysis within a single interpretive model. This framework renews the perspective of literary interpretation by treating typography, image, spatial composition, textual fragmentation, procedural movement, and reader navigation as core components of literary form. Accordingly, digital literature should be understood not as a static textual object, but as a multimodal poetic event produced through the interaction of language, media, interface, and user performance.

The study is limited by its focus on selected archived works from established digital literature repositories, which means that it does not fully represent newer platform-based literary practices on social media, mobile applications, immersive media, or AI-generated environments. It also emphasizes textual, visual, and interface analysis rather than empirical reader-response data. Future research should therefore expand the corpus to include contemporary digital storytelling platforms, interactive fiction communities, virtual reality narratives, mobile literary applications, and generative literary systems. Further studies may also combine multimodal close reading with audience research, usability observation, platform analysis, or computational methods to examine how different readers actually experience and interpret digital literary works. Such expansion would strengthen the empirical basis of digital literary studies while preserving the analytical sensitivity needed to understand the aesthetic complexity of digital-born literature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank the reviewers and editorial team for their constructive feedback on this manuscript.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Author states no funding involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Ridhatullah Assyabani: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing; data curation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The authors used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible documents, platform policies, and governance materials.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly available documentary records concerning machine co-authorship, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the authors affirm that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance

with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus/data analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

REFERENCES

Adawiyah, R. (2024). Regulation and production of contemporary literature: An examination of literary evolution in the digital age. *LITERA*. https://doi.org/10.21831/ltr.v23i2.72965

Adhikary, R. P. (2025). Computational neurocognitive poetics: Towards an integrated philosophical, psychological, and ethical framework for literary analysis. *Revue Congo Research Papers*. https://doi.org/10.59937/sufu9139

Alagiya, K. (2023). Exploring the Potential of Twine Fiction as an Interactive Learning Tool for Literature Education: A Case Study of Girish Karnad's Naga-Mandala. *Vidhyayana*. https://doi.org/10.58213/vidhyayana.v9isi1.1584

Aliagas, C., Correro, C., & Fittipaldi, M. (2024). Digital Fiction in Literary Education: What do secondary-school teachers think about this multimodal artform as a pedagogical resource? *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 24*(3), 1–27.

Atzenbeck, C. (2024). Interview with Mariusz Pisarski. *ACM SIGWEB Newsletter*, 2024, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1145/3643603.3643606

Burin, D. I., Barreyro, J. P., Saux, G., & Irrazábal, N. C. (2015). Navigation and comprehension of digital expository texts: Hypertext structure, previous domain knowledge, and working memory capacity. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 13*(3), 529–550. https://doi.org/10.14204/ejrep.37.14136

Busareva, S. (2024). Brian Bilston's multimodal poetic practices: Interactions between the digital and the analogue. *Slovo.Ru: Baltic Accent*. https://doi.org/10.5922/2225-5346-2024-3-8

Fawaid, A., Kholil, M., & Dewi, N. A. R. (2024). The role of culturally-responsive gamification to improve multiethnic students' self-engagement in Islamic education. *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Sains, 5*(2), 267–275. https://doi.org/10.55210/al-fikru.v5i2.1868

Höglund, H. (2022). The Heartbeat of Poetry: Student Videomaking in Response to Poetry. *Written Communication, 39*, 276–302. https://doi.org/10.1177/07410883211070862

Joshwa, J. (2023). Reading hypertextuality: A critical reading of Dictionary of the Khazars (1984). *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia, 29,* 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614568.2023.2258848

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2020). Modality and validity. In G. Kress & T. Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images* (3rd ed., pp. 149–178). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003099857-6

Kucirkova, N. (2019). Theorising materiality in children's digital books. *Libri et Liberi, 8*(2), 279–292. https://doi.org/10.21066/carcl.libri.8.2.2

Lagerkvist, L., & Ghajargar, M. (2020). Multiverse: Exploring Human Machine Learning Interaction through Cybertextual Generative Literature. *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*. https://doi.org/10.1145/3423423.3423424

Liu, L. (2024). Hearing Rhythm, Seeing Rhythm: A Research Approach to Reimagining Traditions of Chinese Poetic 'rules of rhythm.' *Journal for Artistic Research*. https://doi.org/10.22501/jar.1900487

Loh, C., Steagall, M., & Tavares, T. (2021). Logical Coding & Emotional Poetry: An exploration of poetic expression in the digital. *Link Symposium Abstracts 2020*. https://doi.org/10.24135/link2021.v2i1.164

Long, J. (2024). A Review of the Poem "Invisible Rhythm": Visible Sound of Invisible Rhythm. *Verse Veison*. https://doi.org/10.64699/bola1299

Morris, K. W. (2024). Transforming the Chaos: The 'Writing' Experiments of the Postdigital Ludic Writer. Anglica. *An International Journal of English Studies*. https://doi.org/10.7311/0860-5734.33.2.06

Mustofa, A., & Lestari, L. (2023). LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE: ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL LITERATURE IN EFL PEDAGOGY. *English Review: Journal of English Education*. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v11i1.7137

Nag, A. D. (2024). CURATING THE SELF: BODY IMAGE AND THE AESTHETICS OF LANGUAGE IN YOUTH-CENTRIC INSTAGRAM LITERATURE. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*. https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.5262

Petrenko, T., Levina, N., Airapetov, G., Keleynikova, A., & Kotliarevskaia, I. (2024, January 1). Francophone literature in the digital age: Language and style. *SHS Web of Conferences*. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202419502002

Prozorova, N. (2024). SOUND IMAGES IN POETICS BY O. F. BERGHOLZ. *Проблемы Исторической Поэтики*. https://doi.org/10.15393/j9.art.2024.13802

Qin, X., & He, L. (2011). Parodic intertextuality and ironic intertextuality in Austin Clarke's The Polished Hoe and More. *Foreign Literature Studies, 33*(5), 80–85.

Ramya, R., & Rukmini, S. (2021). Literature in new media: A comparative study of literary affordances of lance Olsen's "10:01" in traditional and digital medium. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities, 13*(2). https://doi.org/10.21659/RUPKATHA.V13N2.45

Sastre, M. S., & Garcia, E. F. (2022). From Text on Paper to Digital Poetry: Creativity and Digital Literary Reading Practices in Initial Teacher Education. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.882898

Skains, R. L. (2023). THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS ON AUTHORS OF ELECTRONIC LITERATURE AND INTERACTIVE DIGITAL NARRATIVES. In *The Routledge Companion to Literary Media* (pp. 209–220). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003119739-20