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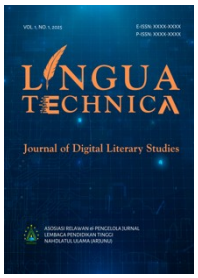

Teaching digital literature in secondary school: Multimodal meaning-making and students' interpretive engagement

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A B S T R A C T

Background: The growing use of digital platforms in secondary education has changed how literature is accessed, discussed, and produced, yet many classroom practices still treat technology mainly as a tool for distributing materials rather than as part of literary meaning-making. **Objective:** This study aims to examine how digital literature is taught in one public senior high school in East Java. **Method:** Using a qualitative case study design, this research analysed lesson documents, teaching materials, selected digital literary texts, classroom observations, platform interactions, student reflections, creative products, teacher interviews, selected student interviews, and assessment artefacts through TPACK Analysis, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, and Reader-Response Analysis. **Results:** The findings show that technology integration was uneven: Google Classroom, Padlet, Canva, mobile phones, online texts, and projection media supported access, discussion, reflection, and production, but lesson objectives and assessment rubrics still relied heavily on print-based literary categories. Digital literary texts expanded meaning-making through verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, kinetic, interactive, and platform-based modes. **Implication:** Students demonstrated strong affective, social, and creative engagement, especially through digital poems, visual stories, posters, and video responses, but they experienced difficulty with hyperlinks, non-linear narration, interface structures, and multimodal coherence. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in proposing a corpus-based classroom framework that connects TPACK, multimodal discourse, and reader-response perspectives to examine digital literature as instructional design, textual form, and student reading experience.

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INTRODUCTION

The accelerated digitisation of schooling has transformed the conditions under which literature is taught, read, and interpreted in Indonesian secondary education, particularly as students increasingly encounter texts through screens, platforms, hyperlinks, videos, and social media rather than through printed literary materials alone. This transformation is particularly crucial in senior high schools, where literary learning is expected not only to preserve students' appreciation of canonical texts but also to respond to the changing ecology of digital reading. UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report stresses that technology now shapes education as an input, delivery channel, skill, planning tool, and socio-cultural context, yet its pedagogical value depends on whether it is appropriate, equitable, and supported by teacher preparation. In Indonesia, the urgency is sharpened by literacy concerns: PISA 2022 reported that only 25% of Indonesian students reached at least Level 2 proficiency in reading, compared with the OECD average of 74%. Within this context, examining the teaching of digital literature in one public senior high school in East Java becomes essential for understanding how literary learning can respond to students' digital realities without reducing technology to a mere instructional accessory.

Previous studies on technology-enhanced learning have widely discussed digital platforms, online assessment, blended learning, and students' engagement in classroom activities (AlFaruque et al., 2022; Bennis, 2024; Vanathi, 2023). Studies on digital literature have also examined electronic literature, hypertext fiction, interactive fiction, digital poetry, multimodal storytelling, and the changing ontology of literary texts in networked environments (Aliagas et al., 2024; Iskarna, 2023; Mustofa & Lestari, 2023; Sastre & Garcia, 2022). The Electronic Literature Organization defines electronic literature as works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts of stand-alone or networked computers. However, much of the existing scholarship remains divided between two dominant trajectories: studies that treat digital literature primarily as an aesthetic and textual phenomenon (Shamshul et al., 2024), and studies that treat educational technology primarily as a pedagogical instrument (Thapliyal & Professor, 2023). Less attention has been given to how digital literature is actually taught in secondary school classrooms, especially in Indonesian public schools where digital platforms, printed-literary traditions, and students' everyday media habits intersect. The gap is therefore not merely thematic but methodological: limited research has connected text selection, teacher instructional design, multimodal textual features, platform-mediated participation, and students' reader responses within one situated classroom ecology.

This study aims to investigate how technology is integrated into literary learning through the teaching of digital literature in a selected public senior high school in East Java. More specifically, it asks three interrelated questions. First, how are technology, pedagogy, and literary content configured in the teacher's lesson design, classroom activities, platform use, and assessment practices? Second, how do multimodal elements—such as verbal text, image, sound, colour, layout, hyperlink, animation, and screen-based navigation—shape meaning-making in the digital literary texts and learning materials used in class? Third, how do students experience, interpret, and respond to digital literature as readers, navigators, collaborators, and producers of meaning? To answer these questions, the study analyses lesson plans, teaching modules, classroom tasks, digital literary texts, platform-based interactions, student reflections, creative products, and documentation of learning activities. The analysis is guided by TPACK to examine instructional integration, Multimodal Discourse Analysis to interpret semiotic configurations, and Reader-Response Analysis to understand students' interpretive engagement.

The central argument of this study is that teaching digital literature should not be understood simply as using digital tools to deliver conventional literary content, but as a pedagogical reconfiguration in which technology becomes part of the literary object, the interpretive process, and the learning environment itself. When digital literature is taught through a coherent integration of content, pedagogy, and technology, students are not only exposed to new textual forms but are also invited to read literature as a multimodal, interactive, and culturally situated practice. Nevertheless, this integration is likely to remain partial when teachers use platforms mainly for distributing materials while continuing to interpret digital texts through categories designed for printed literature. By focusing on one public senior high school in East Java, this study offers a grounded account of both the promise and limits of digital literary pedagogy in Indonesian secondary education. Its contribution lies in proposing a corpus-based analytical connection among TPACK, multimodal

meaning-making, and reader-response engagement, thereby clarifying how digital literature can be examined simultaneously as instructional design, textual form, and student reading experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital literature

Digital literature refers to literary works whose aesthetic, narrative, and interpretive effects depend on computational, networked, and screen-based media. Unlike digitised literature, which merely transfers printed texts into electronic formats, digital literature is often "born digital" and cannot be fully experienced outside digital environments. Scholars of electronic literature emphasise that hypertextuality, interactivity, procedurality, multimodality, and networked circulation are not supplementary features but constitutive elements of the text itself (Caramay et al., 2023; Zuo & Ives, 2023). This distinction is important for literary education because teaching digital literature requires students to recognise how literary meaning is shaped by interface, navigation, media affordance, and reader action. Therefore, digital literature should not be approached as printed literature displayed on a screen, but as a literary form whose textuality is inseparable from its technological conditions.

Digital literature can be understood through several interrelated categories that provide useful indicators for classroom analysis (Saputra et al., 2024). Hypertext fiction foregrounds non-linear reading through links and branching structures. Interactive fiction requires readers to make choices that influence narrative progression. Digital poetry combines verbal language with animation, sound, typography, and spatial movement. Literary games merge narrative, rules, agency, and play. Social media literature uses platform-based affordances such as comments, threads, hashtags, images, and short-form circulation. These categories indicate that digital literature is not a single genre but a spectrum of literary practices shaped by different technological affordances. In classroom contexts, these aspects help teachers select appropriate texts, design medium-sensitive reading tasks, and assess whether students can interpret digital features as part of literary meaning.

Technology in literary learning

Technology integration in literary learning refers to the purposeful alignment of digital tools, pedagogical strategies, and literary content to support interpretation, collaboration, reflection, and creative production. It differs from mere technology use because integration implies pedagogical coherence between learning objectives, textual materials, instructional activities, digital platforms, and assessment practices (Shamshul et al., 2024; Zuo & Ives, 2023). The TPACK framework is particularly relevant because it conceptualises effective teaching as the intersection of technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge. In literature classrooms, this means that teachers need not only technical familiarity with digital platforms but also the ability to connect those platforms with literary concepts, interpretive methods, and students' meaning-making processes. Thus, technology becomes pedagogically significant only when it changes how students access, discuss, analyse, and produce literary meaning.

The indicators of technology integration in digital literature learning may be observed at the level of planning, enactment, interaction, production, and assessment (Bennis, 2024). At the technological level, teachers select platforms such as LMS, Google Classroom, Padlet, blogs, or interactive reading tools. At the pedagogical level, they design activities involving guided reading, collaborative annotation, reflective writing, multimodal production, or project-based interpretation. At the content level, they connect digital tools with literary elements such as character, plot, voice, imagery, point of view, intertextuality, and narrative structure. More advanced integration occurs when technology does not merely distribute materials but enables new forms of literary experience, such as non-linear reading, multimodal interpretation, collaborative response, and digital creative authorship. These indicators make it possible to distinguish administrative technology use from transformative digital literary pedagogy.

Multimodal meaning-making

Multimodal meaning-making is central to digital literature because literary meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, kinetic, and interactive modes. Multimodal

Discourse Analysis argues that images, colours, layout, typography, sound, movement, and screen arrangement are semiotic resources that participate in meaning production (Mustofa & Lestari, 2023; Sastre & Garcia, 2022). In digital literary texts, readers do not only interpret verbal language but also navigate interfaces, follow hyperlinks, respond to visual cues, and experience temporal or sonic effects (Aliagas et al., 2024; Vanathi, 2023). This perspective differs from traditional literary analysis, which often privileges written language as the primary carrier of meaning (Shamshul et al., 2024). Consequently, digital literature requires a broader analytical framework that treats the screen, interface, hyperlink, image, sound, and movement as literary signs rather than as decorative or technical additions.

Students' engagement with digital literature can be examined through affective, cognitive, social, navigational, multimodal, creative, and critical responses (Vanathi, 2023). Reader-response theory positions students not as passive recipients of textual meaning but as active participants whose experiences, expectations, and interpretive choices shape the reading event. In digital literature learning, this response becomes more complex because students interact with texts through screens, platforms, links, images, sounds, and collaborative spaces. Their engagement can therefore be traced through reflections, discussion posts, reading journals, classroom dialogue, platform comments, and digital creative products. By combining reader-response with multimodal analysis, the study can explain not only what students understand from digital literature, but also how they experience, negotiate, and reproduce literary meaning through digital media.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consisted of pedagogical, textual, multimodal, and interpretive artefacts produced during one instructional unit on digital literature in a public senior high school in East Java, Indonesia. The material objects were selected to represent the full ecology of digital literary learning, from instructional planning to students' responses. The corpus included one lesson plan, one teaching module, one set of teacher slides, one worksheet package, selected digital literary texts, classroom observation notes, platform-based interactions, students' written reflections, students' creative digital products, teacher interview data, selected student interview data, and assessment artefacts. These data enabled the study to examine how technology, literary content, and classroom pedagogy were interrelated in actual instructional practice. To make the corpus transparent, all materials were classified according to corpus category, data items, estimated quantity, and analytical focus, as shown in Table 1 below.

This study employed a qualitative case study design because it focused on a bounded learning context: one teacher, one class, one instructional unit, and one public senior high school in East Java. The case study approach was appropriate for examining how digital literature was planned, enacted, mediated, and interpreted within a specific classroom ecology. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of technology through statistical comparison, the study sought to understand the pedagogical logic, textual mediation, and student meaning-making practices that emerged from the integration of digital literary texts and digital platforms. The design allowed close attention to classroom processes, teacher decisions, students' interpretive experiences, and the multimodal characteristics of the literary materials used in learning. This approach was chosen because digital literature pedagogy requires contextual explanation of how instructional design, media affordances, and reader responses operate together in real classroom practice.

The sources of information consisted of one Indonesian language teacher, one selected senior high school class, classroom learning artefacts, and digital platform records generated during the instructional unit. The teacher served as the primary source for understanding instructional intentions, text selection, platform use, and assessment design. Students served as sources for examining reception, interpretation, engagement, and difficulties in reading digital literature. The student participants were treated as a class-based learning community rather than as isolated individual cases, because the study focused on classroom interaction, collective platform participation, and shared interpretive activity. Documents and platform records provided non-verbal evidence of how learning was structured and how participation occurred. Additional information was obtained from observation notes, screenshots, student products, and selected interview excerpts to enable triangulation among planning data, classroom enactment, digital interaction, and learner response.

Data were collected through five procedures: document collection, classroom observation, platform documentation, student artefact collection, and semi-structured interviews. First, the researcher collected lesson plans, modules, worksheets, slides, rubrics, and selected digital literary texts used by the teacher. Second, classroom learning was observed to record how technology was used during explanation, reading, discussion, interpretation, and production activities. Third, digital interactions on Google Classroom, Padlet, or other platforms were documented through screenshots, copied comment threads, and archived assignment submissions. Fourth, students' reflective writings, comments, essays, and creative digital products were collected as evidence of interpretive engagement. Finally, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and selected students were conducted to clarify instructional intentions, reading difficulties, multimodal experiences, and perceptions of digital literature learning.

Table 1. Research corpus

No	Corpus Category	Data Items	Estimated Quantity	Analytical Focus
1	Lesson documents	Lesson plan, teaching module, syllabus excerpt, learning objectives	3 documents	Alignment of technology, pedagogy, and literary content
2	Teaching materials	Slides, worksheets, digital reading guides, task instructions	4–6 files	Pedagogical framing of digital literature
3	Digital literary texts	Hypertext fiction, digital poetry, short interactive fiction, social-media-based literary text	3–4 texts	Multimodal and interactive literary features
4	Classroom activities	Group discussion, teacher explanation, reading session, presentation	3–4 observed meetings	Classroom enactment of digital literary pedagogy
5	Platform interaction	Google Classroom posts, Padlet responses, comment threads, uploaded assignments	30–50 entries	Technology-mediated participation
6	Student responses	Reading reflection, interpretive paragraph, discussion comment, short essay	25–35 student texts	Reader engagement and interpretation
7	Creative products	Digital poem, visual story, Canva-based literary poster, short video response	20–30 products	Student production of multimodal meaning
8	Documentation	Screenshots, field notes, photos of learning activities, observation notes	20–40 records	Contextual evidence of learning practice
9	Assessment artefacts	Rubric, feedback notes, score sheets, peer comments	3–5 documents	Evaluation of literary and digital competence

Data analysis was conducted through five interrelated stages to ensure that each finding was traceable to the corpus. First, all materials were organised according to corpus type, learning phase, participant source, and analytical relevance. Second, TPACK analysis was used to examine the relationship between technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and literary content knowledge in the teacher's planning, classroom practice, platform use, and assessment. Third, Multimodal Discourse Analysis was applied to digital literary texts, teaching materials, student products, and platform displays by identifying verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, kinetic, and interactive modes. Fourth, Reader-Response Analysis was used to interpret students' reflections, comments, interviews, and creative outputs as evidence of affective, cognitive, social, navigational, and creative engagement. Finally, the findings from the three analytical procedures were compared through cross-corpus triangulation to identify convergences, tensions, and pedagogical implications.

RESULTS

Technology-pedagogy-content integration in digital literature teaching

This research found that technology, pedagogy, and literary content were integrated in the teaching of digital literature at one public senior high school in East Java. The analysis was developed from lesson plans, teaching modules, teacher slides, worksheets, digital literary texts, classroom observations, platform interactions, student reflections, creative products, teacher interview data, and assessment artefacts. Figure 1 demonstrates that technology appeared across almost all stages of instruction, from planning and access to discussion, reflection, production, feedback, and assessment. However, the role of technology varied across the corpus. In some learning episodes, technology functioned mainly as a medium for distributing materials, while in others it became part of how students read, interpreted, and produced literary meaning.

Case: One public senior high school in East Java

Corpus Source	TK	PK	CK	TCK	TPK	PCK	Integrated TPACK	Level
Lesson plan	✓	✓	✓					Partial
Teaching module					✓	✓		Emerging
Teacher slides				✓				Partial
Digital literary text				✓				Partial
Worksheet / LKPD				✓		✓		Emerging
Classroom observation					✓			Partial
Classroom discussion							✓	Strong
Platform interaction					✓	✓		Emerging
Student reflection					✓	✓		Emerging
Student creative product							✓	Strong
Teacher feedback					✓	✓		Emerging
Assessment rubric					✓	✓		Emerging
Observation notes	✓				✓			Emerging
Teacher interview							✓	Emerging

TK = Technological Knowledge; **PK** = Pedagogical Knowledge; **CK** = Content Knowledge;
TCK = Technological Content Knowledge; **TPK** = Technological Pedagogical Knowledge; **PCK** = Pedagogical Content Knowledge.

Strongest integration appears in classroom discussion and student creative product;
planning and assessment remain more dependent on print-based literary categories.

Figure 1. Corpus-based TPACK integration matrix in digital literature teaching

Figure 1 indicates an uneven but developing pattern of integration. At the planning level, technology was included through platforms, online texts, and digital media, but the learning objectives still relied heavily on print-based literary competencies such as identifying theme, plot, character, and message. In classroom practice, stronger integration appeared when students discussed visual, auditory, spatial, and interactive features of digital literary texts. Platform-based participation through Google Classroom or Padlet supported student engagement, although many responses remained descriptive rather than interpretive. The most advanced integration was found in students' creative products, where verbal expression, image, colour, typography, and layout were combined to produce literary meaning. Nevertheless, the assessment rubric still gave limited attention to digital-specific features such as hyperlink, navigation, interactivity, and multimodal coherence.

These findings suggest that digital literature pedagogy requires a shift from technology-supported literary teaching to technology-constituted literary learning. The teacher had demonstrated technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, but the full integration of these domains appeared only in selected activities. The strongest TPACK configuration emerged when technology was not merely used to present materials or submit assignments, but became part of the literary object and interpretive process itself. This pattern shows that digital literature cannot be taught effectively through conventional print-based categories alone. Literary learning becomes more transformative when students are guided to read the screen, interface, hyperlink, image, sound, layout, and navigation as meaningful components of the text.

Multimodal meaning-making in digital literary texts and learning materials

This research also found that meaning in digital literature learning was constructed through the interaction of verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, kinetic, interactive, and platform-based modes. Figure 2 demonstrates that students did not encounter literary texts only as written narratives or poems, but as screen-based compositions shaped by images, colours, sound, layout, hyperlinks, scrolling patterns, and collaborative platforms. In the observed classroom, digital literary learning created a reading environment in which interpretation occurred across multiple spaces: the teacher's projected screen, students' mobile phones, worksheet prompts, Padlet responses, Google Classroom comments, and student-produced digital artefacts. This pattern indicates that literary meaning was mediated by both the design of the text and the technological setting of the lesson.

Case: One public senior high school in East Java

Corpus Source	Verbal	Visual	Auditory	Spatial	Kinetic	Interactive	Platform-based	Performative	Interpretive Pattern
1. Digital literary text	✓			✓					Emerging
2. Hypertext fiction example	✓					✓			Strong
3. Digital poetry material	✓				✓				Emerging
4. Teacher slides	✓	✓							Foundational
5. Worksheet / LKPD	✓								Foundational
6. Classroom observation		✓		✓		✓			Emerging
7. Digital text with audio	✓		✓						Emerging
8. Visual element in digital text		✓							Emerging
9. Screen layout		✓		✓					Strong
10. Padlet discussion board	✓	✓		✓			✓		Strong
11. Google Classroom comments	✓						✓		Foundational
12. Student reflection	✓								Emerging
13. Student creative product	✓	✓		✓					Strong
14. Student video response	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	Strong
15. Assessment rubric	✓								Foundational
16. Teacher interview	✓								Foundational
17. Group presentation	✓	✓						✓	Emerging
18. Overall corpus pattern	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Strong

Mode Legend
Verbal = written or spoken language; **Visual** = image, colour, typography, icon, layout display; **Auditory** = sound, music, voice, silence;
Spatial = arrangement, white space, sequencing on screen; **Kinetic** = movement, animation, scrolling effect;
Interactive = hyperlink, branching, reader choice; **Platform-based** = LMS or collaborative interface; **Performative** = oral or audiovisual presentation.

Strong multimodal meaning-making appears in hypertext fiction, screen layout, Padlet discussion, student creative product, student video response, and the overall corpus pattern; foundational multimodal interpretation remains most visible in teacher-led explanation, worksheet prompts, platform comments, and assessment criteria.

Figure 2. Corpus-based multimodal meaning-making matrix in digital literature learning

Figure 2 shows that students were most confident in interpreting verbal elements such as theme, character, message, and emotional expression. Visual elements, especially colour, image, typography, and layout, were also recognised, although students tended to explain them in general evaluative terms such as "sad," "interesting," "dark," or "beautiful." Auditory and kinetic elements were noticed but less frequently connected to literary interpretation. Hyperlinks and navigation were experienced as part of reading, yet they were rarely discussed as meaningful literary structures. The strongest evidence of multimodal competence appeared in student creative products, such as digital poems, Canva-based literary posters, visual stories, and video responses, where students combined words, images, colour, sound, and layout to express literary meaning.

These findings indicate that digital literature expands the boundaries of literary reading from textual interpretation to semiotic navigation. In this classroom, students were already able to feel and use multimodality, but they did not always possess the analytical vocabulary to explain how multimodal elements produced meaning. This suggests that digital literary pedagogy should not stop at asking students to identify themes or respond emotionally to digital texts. It needs to guide them to read the screen as a literary space, where colour can frame mood, sound can shape atmosphere, movement can create rhythm, layout can organise attention, and hyperlinks can alter narrative sequence. Multimodal learning becomes meaningful when students are trained not only to enjoy digital forms, but also to interpret their literary functions.

Students' reading experience and interpretive engagement in digital literature learning

This research also shows how students experienced, interpreted, and responded to digital literature during the learning process. Across reflections, interviews, worksheets, platform comments, classroom observations, reading journals, teacher feedback, and creative products, students' responses showed that digital literature generated both attraction and difficulty. The screen-based format made literary texts feel more visual, dynamic, and closer to students' everyday media practices. At the same time, non-linear structures, hyperlinks, sound, animation, and dense visual arrangements challenged their established habits of reading literature as a fixed and sequential text. Figure 3 indicates that students' engagement with digital literature cannot be understood only from whether they enjoyed the lesson, but also from how they negotiated unfamiliar textual forms.

Case: One public senior high school in East Java

Corpus Source	Affective	Cognitive	Navigational	Social	Multimodal	Creative	Critical	Mediated	Engagement Pattern
1. Student reflection	✓	✓							Emerging
2. Student reflection (hypertext difficulty)		✓					✓		Emerging
3. Google Classroom comment		✓							Foundational
4. Padlet discussion				✓				✓	Strong
5. Classroom observation			✓						Emerging
6. Group discussion				✓	✓				Emerging
7. Student interview (attractive)	✓								Strong
8. Student interview (confusion)		✓					✓		Emerging
9. Worksheet / LKPD		✓						✓	Foundational
10. Worksheet / LKPD (multimodal)		✓			✓			✓	Emerging
11. Student creative product					✓	✓			Strong
12. Student video response					✓	✓			Strong
13. Peer comment				✓			✓		Emerging
14. Observation notes			✓					✓	Foundational
15. Teacher feedback		✓					✓	✓	Emerging
16. Reading journal	✓	✓					✓		Strong
17. Classroom presentation				✓		✓		✓	Emerging
18. Overall corpus pattern	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Strong

Engagement Legend
Affective = emotional attraction, enjoyment, curiosity, frustration; **Cognitive** = comprehension, confusion, recognition of textual difference;
Navigational = scrolling, clicking, zooming, replaying, revisiting; **Social** = dialogue, peer comparison, collaborative response;
Multimodal = response to image, sound, colour, layout, media form; **Creative** = reinterpretation through poster, poem, video, or design;
Critical = evaluative awareness, reflection, recognition of limits or difficulty; **Mediated** = teacher guidance, worksheet scaffolding, platform support, feedback.

Affective and creative engagement are especially visible in student reflections, interviews, creative products, and video responses;
guided and mediated engagement remains central in worksheets, feedback, classroom presentation, and platform-supported interpretation.

Figure 3. Corpus-based reader-response engagement matrix in digital literature learning

Figure 3 shows several patterns of student engagement. Affective engagement appeared strongly in students' expressions of interest, enjoyment, curiosity, and surprise. Cognitive engagement appeared when students tried to understand fragmented plots, interactive links, and unfamiliar modes of presentation. Social engagement emerged through Padlet discussions, peer comments, group presentations, and classroom dialogue. Creative engagement was most visible in digital poems, Canva-based literary posters, visual stories, and video responses. However, students' analytical responses were still uneven. They were able to identify themes, moods, characters, and messages, but they found it more difficult to explain how hyperlinks, layout, animation, and platform structures shaped literary meaning.

These findings suggest that students' reading of digital literature develops through a movement from impression to interpretation, and from interpretation to production. Digital texts first attracted students through visual novelty, interactive access, and media familiarity. However, attraction alone did not automatically lead to deeper literary understanding. Students needed guided questions, teacher mediation, peer discussion, and opportunities for creative transformation in order to connect their reading experiences with literary concepts. Their strongest engagement appeared when they were asked not only to explain meaning, but also to remake meaning through multimodal artefacts. In this sense, digital literature learning positioned students as readers, navigators, interpreters, collaborators, and producers of literary meaning.

DISCUSSION

The integration of technology, pedagogy, and literary content in the observed classroom shows that digital literature teaching can function as a bridge between conventional literary education and students' contemporary media ecology. The findings indicate that technology was no longer entirely external to learning; it appeared in lesson planning, classroom access, platform-based discussion, reflective writing, teacher feedback, and creative production. This matters because literature teaching in secondary schools often struggles to maintain students' attention when literary texts are treated only as printed objects detached from their digital lives. When digital platforms, online texts, visual materials, and creative applications are connected to literary interpretation, students encounter literature as a living cultural form (Mustofa & Lestari, 2023; Sastre & Garcia, 2022). However, the integration remained uneven. Technology functioned effectively for access, display, interaction, and submission, but its literary function was less consistently developed in learning objectives and assessment criteria. Thus, the main pedagogical implication is that technology can revitalize literary learning only when it is designed as part of interpretation, not merely as a classroom tool.

This uneven integration can be explained by the persistence of print-based literary pedagogy within a digitally mediated classroom. The teacher demonstrated familiarity with Google Classroom, Padlet, Canva, online links, and digital presentation tools, but the learning objectives and assessment criteria still relied heavily on conventional categories such as theme, character, plot, setting, and moral message (Aliagas et al., 2024; Mustofa & Lestari, 2023). This suggests that the challenge is not technological adoption alone, but the reconstruction of literary content knowledge in relation to digital form. TPACK scholarship argues that effective technology integration requires the dynamic intersection of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, not the simple addition of devices to existing instruction. In this study, the strongest integration appeared when students produced multimodal literary artefacts, because technology, literary meaning, and pedagogy worked together in one learning activity. The weaker integration occurred when digital texts were analysed through questions designed for printed literature, showing that pedagogical structure often determines whether technology becomes transformative or merely supplementary.

The multimodal features of digital literary texts and learning materials reveal that meaning in digital literature is produced through a wider semiotic field than verbal language alone. Images, colours, sounds, typography, layout, animation, hyperlinks, scrolling structures, and platform interfaces all shaped how students encountered and interpreted literary meaning. This expands the function of literary learning: students are invited not only to identify what a text says, but also to examine how meaning is organised, displayed, sounded, moved, linked, and navigated. Such a finding is important because school literature lessons often privilege verbal comprehension while treating visual or auditory features as decorative. In digital literature, however, these features are constitutive (Norman, 2023; Shamshul et al., 2024). The classroom therefore becomes a site where literary analysis overlaps with multimodal literacy. The potential dysfunction appears when students enjoy the visual and interactive elements but lack the conceptual vocabulary to explain their literary significance. Without explicit scaffolding, multimodality may produce attraction without analytical depth.

The students' uneven multimodal interpretation reflects the underlying structure of their previous literacy training. They were more confident in interpreting theme, mood, character, and message because these categories were already familiar from conventional literary learning. By contrast, they were less confident in explaining hyperlink, interface, movement, spatial composition, and platform design because these features are rarely treated as literary elements in school practice. Multimodal Discourse Analysis helps clarify this gap by showing that each mode contributes specific meaning-making resources: colour may frame emotion, layout may organise attention, sound may intensify atmosphere, and navigation may alter narrative sequence (Mustofa & Lestari, 2023; Sastre & Garcia, 2022). The study shows that students intuitively sensed these meanings, especially in creative production, but could not always articulate them analytically. This gap is not a failure of students' ability; rather, it reflects the limited presence of multimodal metalanguage in literary pedagogy. The implication is that digital literature teaching requires explicit instruction in how modes work together as literary signs.

Students' reading experience demonstrates that digital literature can generate strong affective, social, and creative engagement. They described digital literary texts as more visual, attractive, different, and closer to their everyday media habits. This engagement is pedagogically valuable because it challenges the assumption that literature is distant from students' lives. Digital texts made literary learning more participatory: students clicked, scrolled, compared interpretations, commented on platforms, presented ideas visually, and transformed their responses into posters, poems, videos, or visual stories (Thapliyal & Professor, 2023; Zuo & Ives, 2023). At the same time, the findings show an important tension. The same features that increased interest also produced confusion. Non-linear reading, fragmented narration, dense visual design, and interactive navigation disrupted students' expectation of a fixed textual order. This ambivalence is productive because it reveals that engagement is not simply enjoyment, but also includes uncertainty, exploration, negotiation, and the gradual development of new reading strategies.

The students' ambivalent experience can be understood as the effect of moving from a reception model of reading to a participatory model of meaning-making. In printed literary learning, students are often positioned as readers who receive, analyse, and explain a relatively stable text. In digital literature, they become navigators who choose pathways, viewers who interpret visual cues, listeners who respond to sound, users who interact with interfaces, and producers who remake meaning through digital media. Reader-response theory is useful here because it emphasises the active role of readers in constructing meaning, yet digital literature extends this role by embedding response within technological action. The causes of students' difficulty therefore lie not only in textual complexity, but also in a shift of reading practice (Iskarna, 2023; Mustofa & Lestari, 2023). Students needed teacher mediation, guiding questions, peer discussion, and creative tasks to move from impressionistic response to interpretive articulation. The study consequently argues that digital literary pedagogy must cultivate students as active readers, multimodal interpreters, and creative participants in digital textual culture.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teaching digital literature in a public senior high school in East Java becomes most meaningful when technology is positioned not merely as a delivery device, but as part of the literary object, interpretive process, and learning environment. The findings show that digital literature learning can expand students' engagement from conventional comprehension toward multimodal interpretation, collaborative response, and creative production. The main lesson from this study is that students are more deeply engaged when they are guided to read digital texts through their verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, kinetic, interactive, and platform-based features. Its contribution lies in connecting TPACK, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, and Reader-Response Analysis within one corpus-based classroom framework. By doing so, the study renews the perspective on literature pedagogy by showing that digital technology should reshape not only how literature is delivered, but also how literary meaning is designed, interpreted, discussed, and produced.

However, this study is limited by its single-school case design, its focus on one instructional unit, and its reliance on qualitative corpus data from selected classroom activities. The findings therefore cannot be generalised to all Indonesian senior high schools without further comparative evidence. Future studies should involve multiple schools, different regions, larger student groups, and varied genres of digital literature, including interactive fiction, digital poetry, literary games, and social media literature. Further research may also combine qualitative interpretation with learning analytics, pre-test and post-test designs, or longitudinal observation to examine how students' multimodal literary competence develops over time. Such research would help clarify whether digital literature pedagogy can consistently improve literary interpretation, digital literacy, and creative participation across different educational contexts.

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Dewi Masyithoh: 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.

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