

LITERARY EDUCATION IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR THE MILLENNIALS GENERATION

(Pendidikan Sastra dalam Transformasi Digital bagi Generasi Milenial)

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Abstract: *The development of digital technology has changed the way millennials interact with information, including in the field of literary education. Digital transformation presents new opportunities for teaching literature through the use of interactive media, digital platforms, and learning applications that encourage student engagement. However, these changes also require educators to adjust their strategies so that literary learning remains relevant, interesting, and capable of fostering aesthetic appreciation amid the rapid flow of digital information. This study aims to analyze the role of digital transformation in literary education for millennials and identify effective learning models in the digital context. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection through literature study, observation of digital media uses, and interviews with educators and students. The results of the study show that the integration of digital technology, such as interactive e-books, online discussion forums, and literacy social media, can increase interest in learning literature and expand access to cross-cultural literary works. In addition, digital-based learning strategies encourage millennials to be more active and creative in interpreting literary works. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of digital literacy training for educators and the development of interactive literary learning platforms so that literary education remains relevant in the era of digital transformation.*

Keywords: *Digital Literacy; Digital Transformation; Literature Education; Millennial Generation*

A. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the way millennials interact with knowledge, including in the field of literary education. The generation that was born and raised in a digital ecosystem has a natural tendency to respond to content that is visual, interactive, and participatory (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). In this context, literary education that still relies on conventional methods risks losing its relevance, as it no longer suits the way millennials construct meaning and aesthetic experiences (Coiro et al., 2014; Jenkins, H. & Ito, 2015). Without adaptation, literature, which is essentially a space for dialogue between humans and their era, could become a “dead monument” abandoned by future generations.

This paradigm shift requires literature educators to not only master texts, but also be able to design contextual and engaging learning experiences through digital media (Spante et al., 2018) shows that when literature is taught through interactive platforms, student engagement levels increase significantly, not because of the technology, but because of the humanizing approach to the learning process. Lecturers are required to be facilitators who are able to connect literary texts with the real world of students, not just conveyors of information. This challenge is not only technical but also philosophical in terms of how to maintain the aesthetic depth of literature amid the acceleration of digital culture.

The digital literacy gap between educators and students is a major structural obstacle. Many literature educators, despite being experts in text analysis, are not yet technically or pedagogically prepared to integrate technology into learning (Arifuddin et al., 2025; Gallardo & Guevara, 2024). On the other hand, students have grown up in a digital culture that makes them more comfortable learning through independent exploration, online collaboration, and content creation (Kim et al., 2022; Ng & Purwanto, 2024). If this gap is not bridged, digital transformation will widen the divide between the world of education and the world in which students live.

Millennials quickly tire of monotonous methods, are highly visual, and tend to learn through creative projects, demanding a reorientation of the literature curriculum that focuses not only on content, but also on the method of delivery (Everett, 2017). They are more interested in literature that “speaks” to them through podcasts, video essays, or lively online discussions. This is not a sign of declining literacy, but rather a new form of literacy that is more inclusive and participatory (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Leu et al., 2017; Sawyer, 2019). Future literature education must be able to read the signs of the times, not reject them.

Therefore, this study explores how digital transformation can be strategically utilized in literary education for millennials, particularly at Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study aims to identify effective digital learning models, explore the challenges of their implementation, and formulate their pedagogical and aesthetic implications. Digital transformation is not a threat, but rather a golden opportunity to revitalize literary education so that it remains alive, relevant, and meaningful as long as it is done with full awareness of the context, the character of the students, and the integrity of literary values themselves.

B. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a focus on in-depth exploration of digital-based literature learning practices among students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Veteran Bangun Nusantara University, Sukoharjo. This location was chosen based on the representation of the millennial generation who actively use digital technology in their daily lives, especially in academic activities, as well as the initiative of lecturers to integrate digital platforms into the literature lecture syllabus. The informants in this study consisted of 15 active fourth-semester students and two lecturers teaching Indonesian literature courses.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques, namely 1) literature study of previous research, 2) observation of learning activity participation for 2 months, and 3) semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers. The data were analyzed thematically using the Braun & Clarke (2006) model to identify patterns, challenges, and the effectiveness of the digital learning model. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques. This approach allowed the researcher not only to describe the phenomenon but also to understand the meaning behind literary learning practices in the digital era (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Increased Student Interest and Engagement in Literature through Digital Media

Students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program at Veteran Bangun Nusantara University (UGN) demonstrated a distinct enthusiasm when literary materials were presented digitally. Interactive e-books, complete with voiceovers, visual illustrations, and links to cultural contexts, made literary texts that previously felt "stiff" or "distant" seem more lively and approachable. Many students expressed feeling like they were "invited into the world of the story," rather than simply reading letters on a page.

Online discussion forums, whether through the LMS platform or WhatsApp groups, became dynamic spaces full of exchange of ideas. Students not only answered lecturers' questions but also responded to each other, questioned each other, and even debated the symbolic meanings and psychological motives of characters. Discussions often continued late into the night, demonstrating that digital spaces actually prolong the process of reflection and naturally build a depth of understanding.

Literacy social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, became engaging channels for expression and a means of independent exploration. Students created content in the form of short videos reviewing novels, memes of humorous yet critical literary characters, or Twitter threads connecting literary themes to contemporary social issues. This activity opened their eyes to literary works from around the world, from Persian poetry and novels to Latin drama, which are rarely touched upon in conventional printed curricula. They felt that literature was no longer something foreign, but rather a part of the world they lived in.

2. Effective Learning Strategies in a Digital Context

Interactive e-books have proven to be an effective medium because they can present layers of literary meaning through a multimodal approach. For example, when reading Sitti Nurbaya, students not only read the text but also hear the narrative of the Minangkabau cultural background, see illustrations of Padang scenes, and click on links explaining the custom of "merantau." This approach helps them understand the symbolism and social context without feeling like they are being "taught a lesson."

Online discussion forums enable students to develop critical and reflective thinking skills. They learn that a single literary text can be interpreted from various perspectives, and that differing interpretations actually enrich shared understanding. Lecturers act as facilitators, prompting provocative questions, rather than providing the sole answer.

Literacy social media provides space for students to become creators, not simply recipients. They create digital comics based on short stories, podcast dramatizations of play scripts, or short video essays interpreting poetry in their own style. This creative process not only deepens understanding but also fosters a sense of ownership over the literary work; they feel like they are "conversing" with the author, not just "listening."

3. Obstacles and Challenges

Despite the many benefits experienced, several obstacles remain in this transformation process. First, access to technological infrastructure remains a barrier. Some students struggle to access digital materials due to unstable internet connections or limited device availability. They must find public places or borrow devices from friends just to download materials or upload assignments.

Second, educators' capacity to design digital materials varies. Some lecturers still rely on static formats such as PDF documents or slides without interactivity. They acknowledge the need for mentoring and training to develop materials that are not only informative but also aesthetically pleasing and engaging digitally.

Third, there is concern that the "fast content" spirit on social media could diminish the depth of literary appreciation. Some students tend to take short excerpts from poems or novels solely for social media captions, without understanding the overall context of the work. If not properly guided, this practice has the potential to shift the focus from deep meaning to merely superficial aesthetics.

4. Aesthetic Implications and Literary Appreciation

The digital transformation has opened up new avenues for aesthetic experiences in literature learning. Students are no longer simply reading texts, but are invited to experience the characters' moods, understand layers of metaphor, and connect literary works to their own life experiences. They are beginning to see literature not as a rigid legacy of the past, but as a living medium capable of dialogue with the times.

Students' creativity in interpreting literary texts through multimedia produces highly personal and expressive forms of appreciation. One student, for example, created a short animation depicting a character's inner monologue, complete with voice-over narration and illustrations depicting a dark atmosphere of despair. This form of interpretation is far more profound than a conventional essay, fully engaging emotions, imagination, and aesthetic sensibilities.

Digital literature learning also encourages students to see literature as an inclusive space where their own voices can resonate, and where works from diverse cultures can dialogue with each other. They no longer feel "studied," but "engaged."

These field findings indicate that digital transformation in literary education is not simply a shift in medium, but rather a paradigm shift from text- and teacher-centered teaching to learning centered on student experience, participation, and creativity. However, this shift is not automatic; it requires pedagogical awareness, infrastructure readiness, and thoughtful mentoring.

In general, these results align with Warschauer's (2010) notion that digital technology has the potential to create a more inclusive and participatory "new literacy ecosystem." However, unlike research that tends to focus on secondary schools, this study shows that in higher education, student autonomy in choosing learning media and styles is the key to success, rather than strict control from lecturers.

The increased interest in interactive e-books also aligns with Spante et al (2018) view that millennials respond better to multimodal content. However, uniquely, in the literary context, students were not only captivated by the visuals but also used them as a gateway to understanding deeper layers of meaning a finding that contradicts Meir et al (2023) concern that technology would shallow learning.

Productive online discussion forums also reinforce Leu et al.'s (2017) argument that "new literacies" require collaborative and reflective spaces. However, unlike studies emphasizing the importance of synchronicity (Aljawarneh, 2020v), this study found that an asynchronous format is more suitable for literature courses, as it allows students time to reflect, formulate arguments, and respond with depth.

Social media as a literary literacy tool also challenges Jenkins & Into (2015) critical view, which concerns that social platforms merely promote an "instant culture." Field data shows that when given clear guidance and objectives, students actually use social media for serious literary exploration, even more so than when given traditional essay assignments.

Challenges in infrastructure and lecturer capacity are also identified in the UNESCO (2023) report. However, emerging local solutions, such as peer-to-peer training between junior and senior lecturers, or the use of lightweight, data-efficient platforms, demonstrate that digital transformation need not require major structural changes but can begin with micro-initiatives at the classroom level.

The risk of aesthetic degradation due to content simplification is real, but this can be overcome with strong pedagogical support, as proposed by Gess-Newsome et al (2019) in his concept of "pedagogical content knowledge for the digital age." Lecturers need to be trained not only to use technology but also to maintain the aesthetic and philosophical integrity of literary works in digital formats.

The findings on student creativity in multimodal interpretation also support Moschini & Sindoni (2021) idea that "multimodal meaning-making" allows students to express their understanding through various modes, not just words, but also color, sound, movement, and layout. This is a form of contemporary literacy that deepens, rather than diminishes, literary appreciation.

The implications of using social media as a literacy space also align with the concept of "cosmopolitan literacies" by Choo (2018), where literary education in the digital age must build cross-cultural and global awareness through access to diverse and representative texts, as seen in students' exploration of African, Japanese, and Latin American literature.

Student engagement in intensive online discussion forums also reflects Alexander's (2020) concept of "dialogic pedagogy," where the classroom (or digital space) becomes an arena for open dialogue, rather than an authoritative monologue. Students learn that literature is a space for negotiating meaning, not a single truth.

Finally, the theoretical implication of this research is that literary education in the digital era is no longer about "teaching texts," but rather about "building aesthetic experiences through contemporary media." Practically, the blended learning model that combines interactive e-books, discussion forums, and creative social media projects has proven

effective and worthy of replication in similar universities, with the caveat infrastructure support and lecturer training must be a top priority, as Sawyer (2019) reminds us.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, digital transformation in literary education among students at Bangun Nusantara University has proven itself to be a medium capable of revitalizing interest, deepening understanding, and broadening cross-cultural literary horizons through the use of interactive e-books, online discussion forums, and literacy social media, where students are not only passive readers but also active interpreters and creators of expressive literary content. However, the success of this transformation still faces real challenges in the form of limited technological infrastructure, uneven capacity among educators in designing digital materials, and the risk of simplifying literary meaning for the sake of surface aesthetics. Therefore, careful pedagogical assistance, continuous digital literacy training for lecturers, and strong institutional support are needed to keep literary education alive, relevant, and meaningful amid the rapid changes of the times.

E. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all students and lecturers of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program at Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara who participated in this research, as well as those who supported the completion of this article.

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