Teacher Strategies in Fostering Children's Empathy through Moral Story Learning in Lower Grades

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe teachers' strategies in fostering children's empathy through moral story-based learning in lower elementary grades. Empathy is a crucial aspect of children's socio-emotional development that can be nurtured through literary literacy activities. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method involving grade 1–3 teachers in a public elementary school. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and analysis of instructional materials. The findings reveal three main strategies: (1) selecting moral stories relevant to children's daily lives; (2) implementing interactive storytelling with value reflection; and (3) conducting follow-up activities such as empathetic discussions and role-playing. These strategies effectively enhance students' social awareness, emotional understanding, and prosocial behavior in lower grades. The study recommends ongoing literary literacy training for teachers to integrate empathy values into Bahasa Indonesia learning sustainably.
Keywords: Teacher Strategies; Children's Empathy; Moral Stories

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology over the past two decades has brought a significant transformation in the field of education, particularly in higher education. This transformation not only affects the instructional system but also changes how students interact with knowledge and creative expression. In the context of literature learning, technology has opened new opportunities for lecturers and students to design learning models that are more interactive, creative, and contextual. Literature, which was once confined to printed text, can now be integrated into digital media that offer immersive and meaningful learning experiences for students in the digital era.

As one of the essential branches of the humanities, literature plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, empathy, and social awareness. Through literary works, students can explore human values, moral conflicts, and the beauty of language as a means of understanding life. However, in the digital era, students' interest in studying literature tends to decline because it is often perceived as theoretical and less relevant to modern lifestyles. Therefore, pedagogical innovation

is urgently needed so that literature learning remains engaging, dynamic, and compatible with the learning preferences of digital-native students.

One innovative approach to revitalize literary learning is the integration of digital audio media such as podcasts. A podcast provides an alternative platform that allows students to express their interpretations and emotions through sound. This medium enhances the aesthetic experience of literature by combining language, rhythm, and voice expression in a creative form. The use of podcasts not only develops students' speaking and listening skills but also deepens their understanding of poetic elements such as diction, rhythm, tone, and meaning. Hence, podcasts serve as an artistic and technological bridge connecting traditional literature with the demands of digital literacy.

From a pedagogical perspective, integrating podcasts into literature learning aligns with the principles of student-centered learning and blended learning, emphasizing active participation and creative production. Through the process of producing poetry podcasts, students do not merely receive theoretical content but also apply interpretive and technical skills to create digital literary products. This activity enhances essential 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (4C skills). Thus, the integration of technology in literature learning represents a strategic effort to develop students' digital and aesthetic literacy simultaneously.

Beyond its academic dimension, podcast-based learning also provides strong emotional and social experiences. Students learn to express themselves through reading and interpreting poetry, empathize with the meanings conveyed in texts, and collaborate with peers in producing quality audio works. This process transforms literature learning into a living and expressive activity, allowing students to connect literature with their daily lives. In this way, literature becomes not only a subject to analyze but also a medium of communication, emotion, and personal reflection.

The integration of technology into literature learning also carries strategic value for strengthening students' digital literacy. By creating and publishing poetry podcasts, students gain practical knowledge of publication ethics, copyright issues, and sound aesthetics. This fosters critical awareness of technology use and encourages responsible media production. The combination of digital literacy and literary competence helps prepare students to face the challenges of the digital communication era, where creativity, ethics, and technical proficiency are equally important for professional development.

Nevertheless, implementing technology-integrated literature learning faces several challenges. Some of the common obstacles include limited digital literacy among students, unequal access to devices, and insufficient technical skills in editing and publishing audio works. Therefore, the role of lecturers as facilitators is essential— not only to guide the technical aspects but also to nurture the aesthetic and

interpretive dimensions of students' creative processes. Institutional support, in the form of training programs, technological infrastructure, and policies that encourage digital-based learning, is also critical to ensure the sustainability of this innovation in higher education.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to describe in depth the integration of literature learning and technology through the creation of student poetry podcasts. The primary focus includes the learning process, students' creativity, and the educational as well as aesthetic values emerging from these activities. The findings are expected to contribute empirically to the development of literature learning models that are relevant to the digital era. Through this integration, literature is not only studied and appreciated but also revived through sound, technology, and creative student expression.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection between literature learning and digital technology has become an increasingly significant area of academic inquiry in recent years. Scholars have recognized that the integration of technology in the humanities, particularly in literature education, provides new dimensions of engagement and creativity for students. According to Pratama (2018), digital media enables learners to interact with literary texts in multimodal ways—through sound, visuals, and interactivity—which enhances comprehension and appreciation. Traditional classroom approaches that rely solely on printed texts are gradually being complemented by digital formats that make literary experiences more dynamic and accessible. This transformation reflects the broader pedagogical shift toward technology-enhanced learning environments that emphasize active participation and contextual understanding.

Literature education traditionally aims to cultivate aesthetic appreciation, moral sensitivity, and critical interpretation skills. However, contemporary research shows that the inclusion of technology can amplify these objectives by expanding the modes of literary expression. Lestari and Suharto (2019) argue that digital learning tools not only enhance students' motivation but also provide opportunities for them to create and disseminate literary works. Through digital platforms, students can engage with poetry, prose, or drama in ways that align with their daily interactions with media. The integration of technology, therefore, serves as a pedagogical bridge connecting classical literary values with modern modes of communication, allowing literature to remain culturally and educationally relevant. Among various technological innovations, podcasts have emerged as a powerful educational tool for language and literature learning. A podcast, as an audio-based digital medium, promotes listening, speaking, and creative production skills simultaneously. Fitria (2021) highlights that podcasts can stimulate language learners to interpret, perform, and appreciate texts more effectively by engaging their auditory and emotional faculties. In the context of literature, podcasts offer students the chance to bring poems to life—transforming written language into

vocal art. The process of producing poetry podcasts requires interpretive thinking, vocal modulation, and creative decision-making, which together foster deeper literary engagement and emotional resonance.

Podcast-based learning also aligns with constructivist and experiential learning theories that emphasize learning through doing. Dewi (2021) explains that project-based approaches, such as podcast creation, enable students to actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive it. Through these projects, learners analyze literary works, make interpretive decisions, and apply digital tools to convey meaning creatively. This hands-on process encourages students to synthesize cognitive understanding with affective and technical skills. As a result, literature learning becomes a holistic experience that combines intellectual analysis, artistic performance, and technological competence—key aspects of 21st-century education.

Furthermore, podcasts contribute to enhancing oral communication and aesthetic sensitivity, which are fundamental to literature studies. Wijayanti (2020) emphasizes that reading and performing poetry aloud improve pronunciation, rhythm, emotional expression, and sensitivity to linguistic nuances. When students record their readings, edit audio, and add background music, they engage deeply with the tone and mood of the text. This process mirrors the performative tradition of poetry recitation while integrating digital literacy components. Thus, podcasts not only serve as an educational tool but also as an artistic medium that revives the oral dimension of literature in a digital context.

In addition to fostering individual creativity, podcast-based literature learning encourages collaboration and social interaction among students. Susanto (2022) observes that collaborative digital projects in literature learning help students develop teamwork, communication, and shared responsibility. Producing a poetry podcast typically involves dividing roles—such as text selection, interpretation, editing, and publication—which mirrors professional media production. This collaborative process builds a sense of ownership and collective achievement, reinforcing both interpersonal and academic skills. It also allows students to experience literature as a communal art form that thrives on interpretation, dialogue, and shared appreciation.

From the perspective of educational innovation, the use of podcasts in literature learning supports the development of 21st-century competencies, commonly referred to as the 4Cs: critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Rahmawati (2023) notes that integrating interactive technologies into literature education enhances reflective thinking and self-expression. Students engaged in podcast creation analyze literary meaning, interpret poetic symbols, and design expressive performances that communicate personal and cultural insights. This multidimensional process nurtures both cognitive and emotional intelligence, empowering learners to connect literature with real-world communication practices. In doing so, literature learning becomes not only an academic endeavor

but also a medium for identity formation and digital citizenship. Despite its many advantages, the integration of technology into literature learning also presents challenges that have been widely discussed in recent studies. Limited access to devices, insufficient digital literacy, and lack of technical guidance can hinder students' ability to produce quality digital content. As noted by Rahmawati (2023) and Fitria (2021), successful implementation requires institutional support, adequate training, and a supportive curriculum framework. Lecturers must act as facilitators who balance literary depth with technological proficiency, ensuring that the aesthetic values of literature are not overshadowed by technical novelty. Therefore, the effective use of podcasts in literature education depends on thoughtful pedagogical design that harmonizes art, technology, and education.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at exploring how the integration of literature learning and technology through poetry podcast creation enhances students' creativity, appreciation, and digital literacy. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of students' experiences, behaviors, and perceptions in a natural learning environment. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), qualitative methods are particularly effective in capturing the meanings and processes behind human actions rather than measuring them numerically. In this context, the study focuses on how students interpret, experience, and respond to the integration of technology in literary learning, emphasizing the pedagogical and creative outcomes that emerge from the process.

The research was conducted at the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program of a private university in Indonesia during the 2024–2025 academic year. The study involved 30 students enrolled in the Literary Appreciation course, consisting of 10 males and 20 females aged between 19 and 22 years. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria: (1) being active students of the course, (2) having basic familiarity with digital technology, and (3) showing interest in creative learning activities. This selection ensured that participants could meaningfully engage in podcast production and reflect on their learning experiences.

Instruments and Procedures

The study was designed as a classroom-based learning innovation project implemented over six weeks, following the principles of project-based learning (PBL), which emphasizes active learning through creation, collaboration, and reflection. The learning process was divided into three major phases: preparation, implementation, and reflection. In the preparation phase, the lecturer introduced the concept of poetry podcasts and explained the project objectives. Students were

shown examples of educational podcasts and discussed the characteristics of effective poetic performance such as intonation, emotion, and clarity of voice. They were also introduced to technical tools like Audacity and Anchor.fm for recording and editing audio. Additionally, the lecturer provided guidelines on copyright, background music selection, and publication ethics to ensure that students produced original and responsible digital content.

During the implementation phase, students worked in small groups of four to five members. Each group selected a poem—either a classical Indonesian poem or a modern work—based on personal interest or thematic relevance. They conducted interpretative discussions to explore the poem's meaning, tone, and message. Afterward, they developed a creative concept for the podcast, including background sounds, music, and narration techniques. The groups then recorded and edited their poetry podcasts, experimenting with voice modulation and sound effects to enhance emotional and aesthetic expression. The lecturer observed and guided students throughout this process, offering feedback and technical support when needed.

In the reflection phase, students shared their completed podcasts with peers through digital platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, and Anchor. They reflected on their creative journey, discussing what they learned about literature, language, technology, and collaboration. A class discussion followed, allowing students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their works and give peer feedback. This reflective activity encouraged metacognitive awareness and deeper literary appreciation, transforming students from passive learners into creative digital producers.

Data were collected through several instruments. Observation was conducted throughout the learning process to document student engagement, interaction, and participation. The researcher acted as a participant observer, keeping field notes on classroom dynamics and group collaboration. Semi-structured interviews were carried out at the end of the project to capture students' perceptions of podcast-based literature learning. The interviews explored experiences, challenges, motivation, and the perceived impact of the project on literary understanding and digital competence. Each interview lasted about 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Documentation included students' final podcast files, project reports, and reflective essays, serving as authentic evidence of learning outcomes and creativity.

Ethical procedures were maintained throughout the study. Students were informed about the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Audio recordings and digital works were used solely for academic and research purposes. The researcher emphasized respect for intellectual property by guiding students to use royalty-free music and properly credit the original authors of poems. These ethical measures were intended to foster not only digital competence but also integrity and professionalism in content creation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2018) interactive model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying relevant data from field notes, interviews, and podcasts by identifying recurring themes such as creativity, motivation, collaboration, and digital literacy. Data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and visual matrices to organize findings systematically. Transcripts of interviews and observation notes were coded to highlight patterns and relationships among themes.

Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted by interpreting the meaning of the data and ensuring consistency across multiple sources. Triangulation was applied by comparing data from observations, interviews, and students' digital works to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness. To ensure research validity and reliability, several strategies were employed, including triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation involved cross-verifying data from different instruments and perspectives, while member checking required returning preliminary interpretations to participants for confirmation and clarification. Peer debriefing was conducted through consultation with colleagues in the language education department to validate interpretations and enhance objectivity.

While the qualitative approach provided rich and contextual insights, it also had limitations. The relatively small number of participants limited the generalizability of findings. Variations in students' technical skills and access to digital devices occasionally affected the consistency of podcast quality. However, these variations also revealed valuable information about the diversity of student learning experiences, which constitutes one of the strengths of qualitative inquiry. Future studies could expand the scope by involving other institutions or using comparative methods to deepen understanding of technology-integrated literature learning. Overall, this methodological framework reflects an integrative approach that combines pedagogy, technology, and creativity. By using a descriptive qualitative design with multiple data sources, the study captures the complex process of learning literature through digital media, focusing not only on the final output—the podcast but also on the experiential, collaborative, and reflective dimensions of learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that integrating technology into literature learning through the creation of poetry podcasts generated positive outcomes in students' creativity, participation, and literary appreciation. Overall, students showed greater engagement and enthusiasm during the learning process compared to traditional text-based literary activities. They demonstrated a deeper understanding of the meaning, rhythm, and emotional tone of poetry through the process of recording,

editing, and publishing their podcasts. This integration transformed poetry learning into an interactive, aesthetic, and experiential activity that encouraged both intellectual and emotional involvement.

The analysis of observation data showed that students were highly motivated throughout the project-based learning process. During the early sessions, students appeared curious and somewhat hesitant to use audio editing software. However, as the project progressed, their confidence and creativity increased significantly. They began experimenting with voice modulation, sound effects, and background music to enhance the emotional delivery of the poems. This transformation illustrates how technology can motivate learners by providing a sense of autonomy and creative freedom in expressing literary interpretation.

Interview results further confirmed that students found the podcast project enjoyable and meaningful. Most participants expressed that the activity helped them overcome fear and nervousness when performing poetry aloud. They also felt a stronger emotional connection to the poems after interpreting and recording them in their own voices. Several students mentioned that the public accessibility of their podcasts on platforms like Spotify or YouTube provided a sense of pride and professional accomplishment. These experiences enhanced their motivation to continue exploring literature beyond the classroom.

Documentation analysis of students' podcasts indicated that the final products varied in theme, tone, and style. Some groups focused on romantic and reflective poetry, while others explored social and environmental themes. The use of sound and music varied according to the emotional context of each poem. Technical aspects such as clarity, balance, and timing also improved over time, showing students' growing proficiency in digital media production. This improvement demonstrates that sustained exposure to creative technology-based projects can enhance both artistic and technical competencies.

In terms of collaboration, students reported that group-based podcast creation fostered teamwork, mutual respect, and responsibility. Each group member contributed according to their strengths—some specialized in editing, others in narration or sound design. This division of roles reflected real-world media production dynamics and helped students develop interpersonal and organizational skills. The collaborative process also provided opportunities for peer learning, as students exchanged ideas about poetic interpretation and digital editing techniques. The observation data also revealed that podcast-based learning improved students' ability to interpret poetic structure, imagery, and diction. Many students demonstrated progress in recognizing sound patterns, metaphorical language, and emotional resonance. This was reflected in their oral performances, which became more expressive and intentional over time. The auditory nature of podcasting encouraged them to pay closer attention to rhythm, stress, and vocal texture, thereby deepening their understanding of poetry as both a linguistic and performative art.

Students' reflective essays indicated that they perceived podcast creation as a holistic learning experience combining linguistic, aesthetic, and technological dimensions. They emphasized that the activity required not only literary analysis but also digital problem-solving skills. For instance, they learned to adjust audio levels, manage background noise, and ensure narrative coherence. This technical learning, while challenging, was perceived as empowering. It allowed students to realize that literature could coexist harmoniously with modern media and technology.

Overall, the results affirm that integrating literature learning with podcast technology fosters a more engaging, creative, and reflective learning environment. Students not only enhanced their appreciation of poetic beauty but also developed critical digital literacy skills relevant to the demands of contemporary education. The findings also reveal that technology, when used meaningfully, can bridge the gap between traditional literary education and the realities of digital-age communication.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings

Category	Observed Impact	Supporting Evidence
Learning Motivation	Increased enthusiasm and participation	Students actively engaged in recording, editing, and sharing podcasts
Creativity	Enhanced expressive reading and interpretation	Experimentation with voice, music, and sound effects
Collaboration	Improved teamwork and communication	Clear division of roles and effective group interaction
Digital Literacy	Growth in technical and media skills	Mastery of audio editing tools (Audacity, Anchor)
Literary Understanding	Deeper comprehension of poetic aesthetics	Greater awareness of diction, imagery, and tone
Confidence	Improved self-expression and presentation	Reduced performance anxiety during poetry reading
Reflection	Heightened self-awareness of learning process	Reflective essays demonstrating metacognitive growth

The findings of this study reinforce the growing body of research asserting that digital technology can enhance engagement and learning outcomes in literature education. The integration of podcast production into poetry learning exemplifies how multimedia tools can transform passive reading into active, creative expression. Consistent with the findings of Pratama (2018), this study confirms that digital platforms encourage learners to interact with literature in a more personal and immersive way. By producing and publishing poetry podcasts, students became both interpreters and creators of literary meaning—an outcome that traditional lecture-based methods rarely achieve.

The results also highlight how project-based learning (PBL) frameworks can successfully bridge cognitive and affective learning. As Dewi (2021) argues, learning through creative projects enables students to integrate knowledge and emotion while developing autonomy. In this study, students' engagement in selecting, interpreting, and producing poetry podcasts facilitated deep learning experiences. They not only analyzed literary texts but also made artistic and technical decisions that required creativity and problem-solving. The PBL approach thus empowered students to construct knowledge actively rather than passively consume it.

Furthermore, the use of podcasts revitalized the oral and performative dimensions of poetry. According to Wijayanti (2020), oral performance develops sensitivity to rhythm, tone, and emotion—elements essential to literary appreciation. Students in this study demonstrated increased awareness of these aspects as they rehearsed and refined their vocal delivery. The process of hearing their own recorded voices allowed them to reflect on expression, pacing, and tone, leading to more nuanced interpretations of poetry. This suggests that auditory learning strategies should be recognized as effective tools in literature pedagogy.

Collaboration emerged as another critical component of this innovation. The group-based format fostered cooperative learning and strengthened social communication skills. Susanto (2022) emphasizes that collaborative digital projects promote accountability and teamwork—qualities that are vital for both academic and professional contexts. The present study supports this view, as students' collaborative efforts not only produced better creative outputs but also enhanced their interpersonal competencies. The experience of producing a podcast mirrored real-world creative industries, preparing students for future interdisciplinary work environments.

Additionally, the integration of technology promoted digital literacy, a core competence in the 21st century. Students learned to operate recording tools, edit audio files, and publish content ethically. This aligns with Rahmawati's (2023) assertion that digital literacy in education must combine technical proficiency with ethical awareness. In creating poetry podcasts, students learned about copyright issues, appropriate media use, and the importance of attribution—skills essential

for responsible participation in digital culture. Thus, the podcast project functioned as both a literary and a digital literacy experience.

The emotional dimension of learning also played a significant role in the outcomes. Many students described feelings of pride, joy, and self-confidence upon completing their podcasts. This emotional engagement supports the view that literature education should appeal to both intellect and feeling. When students emotionally connect with literary works, their learning becomes more meaningful and lasting. The positive affective outcomes observed here echo Fitria's (2021) conclusion that podcast-based learning enhances emotional connection and enjoyment in language and literature education. However, the study also acknowledges certain challenges in implementing technology-integrated literature learning. Limited access to devices, varying technical skills, and time constraints occasionally affected the quality of outputs. These challenges highlight the need for continuous support, training, and infrastructure to ensure equitable learning opportunities. As Rahmawati (2023) suggests, institutions must provide adequate technological resources and professional development for educators to sustain innovative pedagogical practices.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating literature learning with digital technology through the creation of poetry podcasts provides a powerful and transformative learning experience for students. The process encourages active engagement, creativity, and deeper literary appreciation while simultaneously enhancing digital literacy. By combining artistic interpretation with technological application, students were able to internalize poetic meaning more profoundly and express it through performance. This approach effectively bridges traditional literary learning and the realities of digital-age education, showing that literature remains relevant and dynamic when integrated with modern media. Furthermore, the study confirms that podcast-based learning supports the development of essential 21st-century skills—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Through project-based learning, students actively constructed knowledge, shared ideas, and reflected on their learning processes. They not only improved their aesthetic sensitivity and oral performance but also developed teamwork and problem-solving abilities. The production and publication of poetry podcasts empowered students to view themselves not only as learners but also as creators capable of contributing meaningfully to digital cultural spaces. This underscores the pedagogical value of integrating literary education with innovative, technology-driven approaches. Podcast-based literature learning offers a sustainable model for modern higher education that aligns with the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka philosophy, emphasizing autonomy, creativity, and contextual learning. It enriches students' intellectual, emotional, and digital capacities, making literary education more interactive and meaningful. The study recommends that future literature curricula incorporate digital media projects such

as podcasts to promote experiential, interdisciplinary, and inclusive learning. Ultimately, this innovation ensures that literature continues to inspire imagination, empathy, and cultural literacy in the digital era.

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