
Implementing digital literacy-based learning through “*Topeng Malangan*” using Padlet in an elementary school

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of digital literacy-based learning through Padlet to support fourth-grade students' understanding of *Topeng Malangan* characters at UM Laboratory Elementary School. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, involving 52 students, with data collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation to capture students' perceptions. The findings show that Padlet promotes interactive, collaborative, and engaging learning environments. Students demonstrated high participation, creativity, and motivation, as reflected in active posting, peer feedback, and multimodal expression. The platform also enhanced students' understanding of cultural values embedded in *Topeng Malangan* characters. However, challenges such as limited internet access and varying digital skills were identified which hindered some students' ability to fully engage with the platform and benefit from its educational resources. Overall, the integration of Padlet supports both digital literacy development and cultural learning, highlighting its potential as an innovative tool for culturally responsive education in elementary schools.

Keywords

Collaborative learning, digital learning, elementary education, Padlet, Topeng Malangan

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Introduction

The development of 21st century digital technology has transformed the role of humans in all aspects of life, including education and learning. In line with this, Said (2023) emphasized that the development of digital technology has significantly changed the role of humans in both education and learning. This emphasizes that the use of digital technology not only accelerates access to information but also gradually simplifies the classroom learning process. Without us realizing it, almost everyone in society utilizes technology in their lives (Komara et al., 2022). According to Ambarwati et al. (2022), the past education system relied on textbooks and monotonous memorization, which quickly bored students. Technological advances have driven innovation in learning media that can facilitate the delivery of material and create a more engaging learning experience (Wijayanto et al., 2025).

In contrast, the current situation is different. The presence of digital technology in learning makes it easier for both teachers and students to achieve learning objectives. With the presence of digital technology, teachers can more easily use creative and innovative learning media to create an engaging and enjoyable learning environment. Furthermore, the use of digital technology is not limited to hardware such as computers, tablets, or projectors, but also extends to digital applications and platforms that enable learning to take place interactively, collaboratively, and adaptively to students' needs.

The world of education has widely utilized digital integration, particularly in learning, including the use of digital-based learning media to ensure continuity and foster participatory learning. Azizah (2025) stated that the media used in digital technology-based learning plays a crucial role in creating a dynamic and participatory teaching and learning process. The use of digital-based learning media for cultural and local wisdom materials can encourage students to learn more collaboratively and enjoyably, including the "Topeng Malangan" culture. Wijaya (2022) emphasized that studying cultural material, especially regarding the "Topeng Malangan", is not enough if delivered only through lecture methods; it is necessary to use digital technology-based learning media to convey the material to students.

"Topeng Malangan" art is a performance that combines dance and wayang orang, with all the performers wearing masks. Hazmi et al. (2020) state that Topeng Malangan is an art form found in the East Java region, specifically in Malang, that involves dance and puppetry using a mask. In this art, there are various elements, such as dance, stories, dialogue, characters, and, of course, the mask's characteristics. This art also has a religious background in the Malang community. Because the Topeng Malangan Dance depicts human nature, many mask models depict various situations and expressions, such as crying, laughing, sadness, happiness, and so on. Because the "Topeng Malangan" has several characters, it is necessary to use digital technology to convey information about each character of the Topeng Malang mask so that students can understand and comprehend it well (Fajri et al., 2020). In line with that, based on an interview with the fourth-grade homeroom teacher at SD Lab UM conducted on Friday, July 18, 2025, the results showed that students were more interested and happier when learning used digital technology, especially when learning about local culture. Thus, the researcher used the Padlet website as a digital technology-based learning medium.

Padlet is a website or learning platform that can be used as an interactive board. Aisyah et al. (2024) stated that Padlet, as a digital learning platform, enables users to create interactive

boards, allowing students to share information, images, and videos in visual form, which is certainly interesting to apply in learning. It fills a platform that allows blank pages to be filled with various ideas, short essays, and summaries. Blank pages can be filled with various types of content, such as text, images, videos, links, and files. Padlet makes it easier for students to understand more complex concepts by providing visual access to and organization of information. Several studies have been conducted on Padlet media, such as the study [Sudirman et al. \(2025\)](#), which states that Padlet media is effective for improving the ability of sixth grade elementary school students to write report texts; and [Dewi et al. \(2024\)](#), which stated that students of SMAN 9 Semarang felt happy and helped in learning about literary criticism and essay text material. [Maarif et al. \(2024\)](#) conducted another study that found that Padlet can help students write poetry. Several studies have shown that using Padlet for learning provides a fun experience for students. However, these studies have not yet applied Padlet in a local cultural context, leaving researchers with a gap in their use of Padlet for the "Topeng Malangan" topic, which is a traditional form of Javanese mask dance that reflects local cultural heritage and could benefit from innovative teaching methods.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore in depth the implementation of digital literacy-based learning using the Padlet platform in introducing *Topeng Malangan* characters to elementary school students. Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate for examining natural phenomena and providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, behaviors, and interactions within real educational contexts. In this approach, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, responsible for designing the study, collecting data, interpreting findings, and ensuring the credibility of the results.

This design was selected because it allows for the exploration of authentic classroom dynamics, particularly students' engagement, collaboration patterns, and understanding of cultural values during the learning process. The unit of analysis in this study included students' learning activities on Padlet (posts and comments), students' responses to questionnaires, teacher perspectives obtained through interviews, and documentation of classroom practices. Data were presented descriptively in narrative form to provide a holistic representation of how digital technology supports cultural learning in elementary education.

Research setting and participants

The research was conducted in July 2025 at the UM Laboratory Elementary School (SD Lab UM) in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The school was selected purposively for its bilingual learning system, adequate technological infrastructure, and active implementation of digital tools in teaching and learning. These characteristics made the school a relevant context for examining the integration of digital literacy in cultural education.

The participants in this study were 52 fourth-grade students from two bilingual classes: Bilingual Class 1 (27 students) and Bilingual Class 2 (25 students). The selection of participants was based on several considerations, including students' prior exposure to digital learning

environments, their readiness to engage with interactive digital platforms, and their involvement in learning local cultural content as part of the curriculum. All students served as primary data sources, and their learning activities, interactions, and responses during Padlet-based learning were analyzed to address the research objectives. In addition, the fourth-grade classroom teacher was involved as a key informant to provide contextual insights into the implementation process.

Research procedures

The research was conducted through a systematic sequence of stages to ensure methodological rigor and coherence. The initial stage involved preparation, during which the researcher designed the digital learning environment using Padlet. This included creating a Padlet board, uploading instructional videos related to *Topeng Malangan* characters, organizing learning materials, configuring access settings for posting and commenting, and preparing QR codes and links to facilitate student access.

The next stage involved implementing the learning activities in the classroom. Students accessed the Padlet platform by scanning QR codes and were guided to engage with the provided materials. They watched instructional videos together using a projector and subsequently completed analytical tasks on the characteristics and values of *Topeng Malangan*. Students were encouraged to actively participate by posting their responses on Padlet and interacting with their peers through comments and feedback.

Data collection was conducted concurrently with the implementation stage. The researcher conducted structured observations to record students' behavior and engagement, documented students' activities on Padlet, conducted semi-structured interviews with the classroom teacher, and administered questionnaires to students. In addition, documentation in the form of photographs and screenshots was collected to capture the learning process.

The final stage involved data verification, during which all collected data were reviewed, organized, and cross-checked to ensure consistency, completeness, and accuracy prior to analysis. This stage was essential to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

Data collection techniques and instruments

This study employed multiple data collection techniques, including observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation, to obtain comprehensive and triangulated data. Observation was conducted to capture students' real-time engagement during the learning process. The observation instrument focused on four main aspects, namely participation, collaboration, creativity, and attitudes toward digital technology. Each aspect was assessed using a four-point rating scale ranging from very poor to good. Through observation, the researcher identified patterns in student behavior, including the frequency of participation, the quality of peer interaction, and the extent to which students used Padlet features.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format with the fourth-grade teacher. The interviews aimed to explore the teacher's experience in using digital technology, perceptions of students' readiness, and contextual factors influencing the implementation of

Padlet in the classroom. The interview data provided supporting evidence and enriched the interpretation of findings derived from other data sources.

Questionnaires were administered to students to examine their perceptions of Padlet use in learning. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale to assess ease of use, engagement, collaboration, and understanding of cultural material. The questionnaire results were used to identify general patterns in student responses and to complement the qualitative data from observation and interviews.

Documentation was used to collect visual and textual evidence of the learning process. This included screenshots of Padlet boards, students' assignments, peer comments, and photographs of classroom activities. Documentation provided concrete evidence of how students expressed their understanding of *Topeng Malangan*, a traditional Indonesian mask dance, through multimodal representations, including text, images, and symbols.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which involves the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data reduction stage, all raw data obtained from observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation were carefully reviewed, selected, and organized to focus on information relevant to the research objectives. Irrelevant or redundant data were excluded, while significant data were categorized based on emerging themes.

The reduced data were then presented as narrative descriptions and thematic groupings to facilitate interpretation. This process allowed the researcher to identify patterns and relationships related to students' participation, collaboration, creativity, and understanding of cultural values.

In the final stage, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns identified in the data. Verification was conducted by continuously comparing findings across different data sources to ensure consistency and accuracy. This process strengthened the validity of the conclusions and ensured that the findings accurately reflected the actual learning conditions.

Trustworthiness of the data

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation, combining multiple sources: observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Prolonged field engagement and careful observation also contributed to a more profound understanding of the research context.

Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear, systematic research procedure, enabling the study to be traceable and replicable. Confirmability was achieved by ensuring that all findings were based on field-collected data rather than on researcher bias or assumptions. In addition, data verification was conducted through cross-checking among data sources to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Findings

Student participation and engagement

The implementation of Padlet created an engaging and interactive learning environment. Students demonstrated high levels of participation throughout the learning process. Observation results indicated that 38 of 52 students (73%) achieved the highest score for independently accessing and navigating Padlet, while 12 students (23%) showed adequate participation. This indicates that 96% of students were able to engage with the platform with minimal assistance.

Students showed enthusiasm when accessing Padlet through QR codes and interacting with the provided materials. Questionnaire data supported these findings: 73% of students expressed a strong interest in learning cultural content through Padlet, 67% reported that the platform was easy to use, and 79% indicated a desire to use Padlet in future learning activities. In addition, 63% of students submitted complete and well-structured responses to the assigned tasks, demonstrating not only participation but also meaningful engagement with the learning content.

These findings also suggest that the integration of digital tools such as Padlet can reduce passive learning behaviors commonly found in traditional classrooms. Students were not only participating because of teacher instruction but also because the platform encouraged autonomy and exploration. The interactive features, such as posting and commenting, appeared to sustain students' attention and promote continuous involvement throughout the lesson. Furthermore, the accessibility of Padlet via mobile devices contributed to a more inclusive learning environment, allowing students with different levels of technological familiarity to engage actively and confidently in the learning process.

Collaborative interaction

The findings revealed strong collaborative interaction among students during the learning process. Based on observation data, 56% of students demonstrated excellent collaboration by actively providing feedback on their peers' work, while 35% showed good levels of collaboration.

Padlet activity logs recorded 174 comments, averaging 3–4 per student. These comments were generally constructive, reflective, and supportive, indicating active peer-to-peer interaction. Questionnaire responses further confirmed that 58% of students enjoyed commenting on their peers' work, and 79% expressed willingness to use Padlet again for collaborative learning. These findings suggest that Padlet successfully facilitated a collaborative learning environment that extended beyond traditional classroom interaction.

Moreover, the asynchronous nature of Padlet allowed students to reflect before responding, leading to more thoughtful and meaningful interactions compared to spontaneous verbal discussions. This indicates that digital collaboration can enhance the quality of peer feedback, not just its quantity. Students also appeared to develop a sense of responsibility toward their peers, as they were aware that their comments were visible to others. This visibility encouraged respectful communication and constructive criticism, which are essential

components of collaborative learning. As a result, Padlet not only supported interaction but also helped build positive social learning dynamics in the classroom.

Creativity and multimodal expression

Students demonstrated notable creativity in expressing their understanding of *Topeng Malangan* characters. Observation data showed that 46% of students achieved the highest level of creativity, while 38% demonstrated good performance.

Documentation analysis revealed that 60% of students incorporated visual elements such as icons or emojis, and 25% uploaded relevant images to support their interpretations. Students used combinations of text, images, and symbols to represent character traits, demonstrating multimodal expression. Most students were able to produce two to three sentences that reflected their understanding of the characters, fulfilling the task requirements while also demonstrating creative engagement with the platform.

In addition, the availability of multiple content formats on Padlet allowed students to personalize their learning outputs, making the activity more engaging and meaningful. Students who were less confident in writing could still express their ideas effectively through images or symbols, indicating that multimodal tools support diverse learning styles. This flexibility not only enhanced creativity but also reduced learning barriers, particularly for students with varying abilities. Furthermore, the process of selecting appropriate visuals and combining them with textual explanations required students to think critically about how to represent meaning, thereby strengthening both their creative and analytical skills simultaneously.

Understanding of cultural content

Students' understanding of *Topeng Malangan* characters was evident from both their Padlet submissions and questionnaire responses. A total of 56% of students demonstrated excellent ability in identifying character names, while 42% showed a good level of understanding in explaining the values associated with each character.

Students were able to connect visual characteristics of the masks, such as color and facial expressions, with abstract values such as bravery, wisdom, and anger. Furthermore, 73% of students expressed a strong interest in learning cultural materials through digital platforms. These findings indicate that Padlet supported not only engagement and interaction but also meaningful comprehension of cultural content.

Additionally, the integration of digital media appeared to make cultural learning more relatable and accessible for students. By combining visual, textual, and interactive elements, students were able to internalize cultural concepts more effectively than through traditional lecture-based methods. The ability to revisit Padlet content also reinforced learning, allowing students to review and deepen their understanding over time. This repeated exposure contributed to stronger retention of cultural knowledge. Furthermore, the use of local cultural content within a digital platform helped students develop a sense of identity and appreciation for their cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of culturally responsive digital learning.

Discussions

Digital platforms and student participation in cultural learning

The findings reveal that integrating Padlet significantly enhanced student participation and engagement during the learning process. This result is consistent with the study's objective of examining how digital literacy-based learning supports active involvement in elementary classrooms. The high level of participation observed can be attributed to Padlet's interactive, accessible nature, which allows students to engage with content independently while still being guided by the teacher. As highlighted in the methodology, students interacted directly with multimedia materials and responded through digital postings, creating a more dynamic learning environment than conventional approaches.

Recent studies suggest that digital platforms increase student engagement by promoting autonomy, interactivity, and accessibility (Bond et al., 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2021). In this study, the use of QR codes and visual interfaces reduced barriers to entry, enabling students to focus on learning tasks rather than technical difficulties. Furthermore, integrating local cultural content made the learning experience more meaningful and relevant, thereby increasing students' intrinsic motivation. This indicates that participation is not solely influenced by technology itself, but also by how well the content is contextualized within students' cultural experiences.

In addition, the findings suggest that structured teacher guidance played a crucial role in supporting student participation. The initial instructions provided before using Padlet helped students build confidence in navigating the platform, reducing anxiety about digital tools. This aligns with the principle that scaffolding is essential in digital learning environments, particularly for young learners who are still developing technological competence. Moreover, the combination of visual, textual, and interactive elements appears to sustain attention more effectively than traditional methods, as students are continuously engaged through multiple stimuli. Therefore, participation in this study can be understood as the result of both technological affordances and pedagogical design working together to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Collaborative learning through digital interaction

The strong collaborative patterns observed in this study highlight Padlet's effectiveness in facilitating social learning. Based on the findings, students actively engaged in peer interaction through comments and feedback, demonstrating that learning extended beyond individual tasks into collective knowledge construction. This aligns with the study's qualitative design, which aimed to capture natural interactions and collaborative behaviors within a digital learning environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding supports social constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through interaction and dialogue (Hadwin et al., 2022). Padlet provides a digital space where students can share ideas, respond to peers, and reflect on different perspectives. Recent research also indicates that collaborative digital platforms enhance communication skills, critical thinking, and peer-supported learning

(Fuchs, 2021). In this study, the ability to comment asynchronously enabled students to think more deeply before contributing, leading to more meaningful and reflective interactions.

Furthermore, the collaborative environment created through Padlet fosters a sense of community among learners. Students are not only engaging with content but also building social connections through shared learning experiences. This is particularly important in elementary education, where social interaction plays a key role in cognitive and emotional development. The opportunity to receive and provide feedback also encourages students to take ownership of their learning, as they become both contributors and evaluators of knowledge. Additionally, the visibility of peer responses may motivate students to produce higher-quality work, as their contributions are shared within a collective space. Therefore, collaboration in this study extends beyond interaction and becomes a mechanism for enhancing both learning outcomes and social engagement.

Multimodal creativity and meaning-making

The findings on creativity show that students expressed their understanding through multimodal representations, including text, images, and symbols. This reflects Padlet's role as a flexible platform that supports diverse forms of expression, particularly important in elementary education. As described in the methodology, students were encouraged to use various Padlet features, enabling them to construct knowledge in ways that align with their individual learning preferences.

This finding is supported by multimodal learning theory, which suggests that combining multiple modes of communication enhances both comprehension and creativity (Kress, 2020). The use of visual elements in this study not only increased student engagement but also helped students represent abstract cultural concepts more concretely. For example, students used images and symbols to illustrate character traits, indicating deeper cognitive processing rather than a surface-level understanding. Moreover, multimodal expression allows students to become active creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients.

In addition, integrating multimodal tools supports inclusive learning by accommodating diverse learner needs. Students who may struggle with written expression can still participate meaningfully through visual or symbolic representations. This flexibility enhances equity in classroom participation and allows for a broader range of student voices to be represented. Furthermore, creativity in this context is closely linked to critical thinking, as students must decide how to effectively represent meaning. The process of selecting images, organizing ideas, and combining different elements requires higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, the use of Padlet not only promotes creativity but also facilitates deeper cognitive engagement and more meaningful learning experiences.

Enhancing cultural understanding through digital integration

One of the most significant findings of this study is the improvement in students' understanding of *Topeng Malangan* characters. The integration of audiovisual materials and interactive discussion enabled students to connect visual representations with underlying cultural values. This aligns closely with the study's focus on combining digital literacy with cultural education, as outlined in the abstract and research design.

Recent studies emphasize that digital media can enhance cultural learning by making traditional content more accessible, engaging, and relevant for younger learners (Engerman & Otto, 2021). In this study, the use of videos and interactive tasks allowed students to explore cultural concepts in a more immersive way. Additionally, integrating local culture into digital platforms supports culturally responsive teaching, where students learn through content that reflects their identity and environment.

Moreover, the findings suggest that digital integration can strengthen students' emotional connection to cultural heritage. By presenting cultural content in a modern, interactive format, students are more likely to develop an interest and appreciation for local traditions. This is particularly important in the context of globalization, where local cultures may be overlooked, as it helps to ensure that students remain connected to their cultural roots and fosters a sense of identity amidst the influences of a globalized world. The use of Padlet provides an opportunity to bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary learning practices, making cultural education more relevant to today's learners. Furthermore, the ability to revisit digital content allows students to reinforce their understanding over time. Therefore, digital platforms not only enhance comprehension but also contribute to the sustainability of cultural knowledge among younger generations.

Challenges in implementing digital literacy-based learning

Despite the positive outcomes, this study also identified several challenges in implementing digital learning. The most prominent issues included unstable internet connections and variations in students' digital literacy skills. These challenges align with previous research, which highlights infrastructure limitations and digital skill gaps as common barriers to technology integration (Haleem et al., 2022).

From a methodological perspective, these findings reinforce the importance of considering contextual factors when implementing digital learning strategies. The effectiveness of platforms such as Padlet depends not only on their features but also on the availability of technological resources and the readiness of both students and teachers (Baidoo et al., 2022; Chen, 2022). In addition, some students tended to focus more on visual or technical aspects rather than engaging deeply with the learning content, which can hinder their overall understanding and retention of the material being taught.

Furthermore, these challenges highlight the need for adaptive teaching strategies in digital learning environments. Teachers must be prepared to provide additional support for students who face technical difficulties or lack digital experience. This may include step-by-step guidance, peer assistance, or alternative learning strategies to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, schools need to consider infrastructure improvements to support sustainable digital learning implementation. Without adequate support systems, such as training for educators and resources for students, the potential benefits of digital platforms may not be fully realized. Therefore, addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that digital learning remains effective, equitable, and accessible for all students.

Implications for digital literacy and elementary education

Overall, this study's findings confirm that Padlet is an effective tool for integrating digital literacy with cultural learning in elementary education. The platform supports active participation, collaborative interaction, creative expression, and meaningful understanding of cultural content. These outcomes are consistent with the goals of digital literacy education, which emphasize not only technical skills but also critical thinking, communication, and cultural awareness.

This study contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating that digital platforms can be used effectively in culturally responsive teaching, particularly in introducing local heritage to young learners. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on academic skills such as writing, this research highlights the role of digital tools in preserving and promoting cultural knowledge.

In a broader educational context, these findings suggest that digital transformation should be implemented in a way that complements, rather than replaces, cultural education. Educators are encouraged to integrate local wisdom into digital learning environments to create more meaningful and contextually relevant experiences. Additionally, this study provides practical implications for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing technology-enhanced learning that balances innovation with cultural preservation. By doing so, education can produce learners who are not only digitally competent but also culturally grounded, which is essential in navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating Padlet as a digital learning platform effectively enhances student engagement, collaboration, creativity, and cultural understanding in elementary education. The findings indicate that students actively participated in learning activities, interacted meaningfully with peers, and demonstrated their understanding of *Topeng Malangan* characters through multimodal representations. The high level of participation and the substantial number of peer interactions confirm that Padlet fosters an interactive, student-centered learning environment.

In addition, the use of Padlet supports the development of digital literacy while simultaneously strengthening students' appreciation of local cultural heritage. By combining audiovisual materials, interactive tasks, and collaborative discussion, students were able to connect abstract cultural values with concrete representations, leading to deeper, more meaningful learning. These findings highlight the potential of digital platforms to serve not only as instructional tools but also as media for culturally responsive teaching in elementary schools.

However, this study also identified several challenges, particularly related to technical difficulties such as unstable internet connections and differences in students' digital skills. These limitations suggest that the successful implementation of digital learning depends on adequate infrastructure and effective teacher guidance and instructional design. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure equitable participation and optimal learning outcomes.

Overall, this study confirms that Padlet is a relevant and effective medium for integrating digital literacy with cultural education. It offers a promising approach to creating engaging, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences while preserving local culture, particularly by facilitating interactions that blend digital tools with traditional cultural practices.

Future research is recommended to explore its application in different educational contexts, involve comparative or experimental designs, and examine its long-term impact on students' digital competence and cultural awareness.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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