

## IMPLEMENTATION OF FIELD STUDY-BASED LEARNING METHODS IN ORAL LITERATURE COURSES TO INCREASE STUDENT UNDERSTANDING AND PARTICIPATION

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### ABSTRAK

Sastra lisan merupakan bentuk pengetahuan yang berakar pada praktik budaya dan bersifat performatif; namun, pengajarannya di perguruan tinggi masih didominasi oleh pendekatan berbasis teks yang cenderung mendekontekstualisasi makna serta membatasi keterlibatan mahasiswa. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana pembelajaran berbasis studi lapangan mengubah pemahaman kontekstual dan partisipasi mahasiswa dalam mata kuliah sastra lisan tingkat sarjana. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif yang dilaksanakan selama satu semester dengan melibatkan 60 mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas dan lapangan, wawancara semi-terstruktur, serta dokumen yang dihasilkan mahasiswa, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan dalam pengalaman berbasis lapangan menggeser orientasi praktik interpretatif mahasiswa dari analisis tekstual yang terlepas dari konteks menuju pemaknaan yang berakar pada praktik budaya. Secara simultan, partisipasi mahasiswa berkembang dari keterlibatan reaktif menjadi bentuk keterlibatan yang lebih bersifat agensi, yang ditandai oleh kontribusi interpretatif, interaksi dialogis, serta kolaborasi dalam konstruksi pengetahuan. Dalam proses tersebut, pembelajaran muncul sebagai proses yang bersifat rekursif dan relasional, di mana pengalaman, refleksi, pemahaman, dan partisipasi berkembang secara saling terkait. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi dengan menawarkan pemahaman integratif tentang pembelajaran yang memandang pemahaman kontekstual dan partisipasi sebagai proses yang saling membentuk melalui keterlibatan pengalaman. Temuan ini memperluas perspektif pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman dan kontekstual, serta menegaskan pentingnya desain pedagogis yang mengintegrasikan persiapan konseptual, pengalaman lapangan yang autentik, dan refleksi terstruktur untuk mendukung pembelajaran yang bermakna dan partisipatif dalam disiplin yang berakar pada budaya.

**Kata kunci:** Pembelajaran Eksperiensial; Pembelajaran Berbasis Lapangan; Keterlibatan Mahasiswa; Pembelajaran Kontekstual; Sastra Lisan

### ABSTRACT

*Oral literature is a form of knowledge rooted in cultural practice and is inherently performative; however, its teaching at the university level is still dominated by text-based approaches that tend to decontextualize meaning and limit student engagement. This study aims to examine how*

*fieldwork-based learning transforms contextual understanding and student participation in undergraduate oral literature courses. The research adopts a qualitative case study design conducted over one semester, involving 60 students. Data were collected through classroom and field observations, semi-structured interviews, and student-generated documents, then analyzed using a thematic approach. The results show that involvement in field-based experiences shifts students' interpretive orientation from context-detached textual analysis to meaning-making rooted in cultural practice. Simultaneously, student participation evolves from reactive involvement to a more agentic form of engagement, characterized by interpretive contributions, dialogic interaction, and collaboration in knowledge construction. In this process, learning emerges as a recursive and relational procedure, where experience, reflection, understanding, and participation develop in an interconnected manner. This study contributes by offering an integrative understanding of learning that views contextual understanding and participation as mutually shaping processes through engaged experience. These findings broaden perspectives on experiential and contextual-based learning and emphasize the importance of pedagogical designs that integrate conceptual preparation, authentic field experiences, and structured reflection to support meaningful and participatory learning in disciplines rooted in culture.*

**Keywords:** *Experiential Learning; Field-Based Learning; Student Engagement; Contextual Learning; Oral Literature*

## INTRODUCTION

In higher education, oral literature should not be understood merely as a verbalised text to be analysed but as a culturally situated, performative, and interactional practice through which meaning is produced and negotiated within communities. However, pedagogical practices in oral literature courses continue to be largely dominated by text-centered approaches that prioritise structural and thematic analysis. While these approaches are effective in developing students' analytical and theoretical capacities, they tend to abstract knowledge from its sociocultural context and overlook the performative and situated dimensions of oral narratives. Consequently, students often develop fragmented forms of understanding in which conceptual knowledge is acquired without sufficient sensitivity to the cultural processes through which meaning is constructed (Brown et al., 1989; Gan, 2019; Schneider & Hardy, 2013).

This limitation is particularly pronounced in the context of oral literature, where meaning is inherently embedded in performance, interaction, and social

context (Kolawole, 2023; Lubis et al., 2024; Osei-Tutu, 2022). When oral narratives are approached primarily as static textual artefacts, students may be able to identify narrative structures and thematic elements; however, they may remain limited in their ability to interpret their cultural significance and social functions. Moreover, such pedagogical orientations tend to constrain student participation by positioning learning as knowledge reception rather than active engagement with lived cultural practices. This aligns with broader findings in higher education research indicating that passive learning environments often reduce meaningful engagement and inhibit deeper understanding (Bavishi et al., 2022; Deslauriers et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2014).

In response to these limitations, a growing body of literature has highlighted the potential of experiential and field-based learning approaches to enhance both the depth of understanding and student engagement in the learning process. Experiential learning emphasises active participation, reflection, and the transformation of experience into knowledge, which are essential for deep learning processes (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Empirical studies further suggest that such approaches can foster presence, engagement, and meaningful involvement in learning activities, thereby improving learning outcomes and motivation. However, despite this potential, experiential learning remains underutilised in higher education, and its implementation often falls short of its theoretical promises.

Within the specific domain of oral literature instruction, the application of experiential and field-based learning remains limited and insufficiently theorised. Existing studies tend to address cognitive outcomes, such as understanding, or participatory dimensions, such as engagement, in isolation, without adequately examining how these dimensions interact (Robson et al., 2024; Zhu et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a lack of conceptual clarity regarding the mechanisms through which experiential engagement shapes contextual understanding and student participation in an integrated manner. This gap is particularly significant in disciplines rooted in cultural practice, where learning inherently involves the interplay of knowledge, context, and participation.

To address this gap, the present study draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives. Experiential learning provides a framework for

understanding how knowledge is constructed through cycles of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Situated learning emphasises that knowledge is inherently embedded in authentic social and cultural contexts, making it particularly relevant for understanding oral literature as a cultural practice (Hannington & Govender, 2024; F. Li et al., 2022). Meanwhile, social constructivism highlights the role of interaction and dialogue in the co-construction of meaning (Alzate et al., 2025; Kaliisa et al., 2022; Lehtinen et al., 2023). By integrating these perspectives, the study conceptualises learning as a dynamic process in which experience, reflection, context, and interaction are mutually interconnected, rather than sequentially ordered.

Based on this theoretical framework, this study investigates the implementation of field-study-based learning in an oral literature course and examines how this approach reshapes students' learning processes. Specifically, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How is field-study-based learning pedagogically enacted in oral literature instruction? (2) How does this approach reshape students' contextual understanding of oral literature? and (3) How does it transform students' participation in the learning process?

This study contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, it extends the application of experiential and field-based learning to the relatively underexplored area of oral literature pedagogy in higher education. Second, it offers an integrative analysis that conceptualises contextual understanding and student participation not as separate outcomes, but as mutually reinforcing processes that co-develop through experiential engagement. Third, it advances a relational perspective on learning by demonstrating how experiential engagement functions as a mechanism linking understanding, participation, and meaning-making. In doing so, the study also highlights that the impact of field-based learning extends beyond cognitive outcomes to include affective and identity-related transformations, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of learning in culturally grounded disciplines.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the implementation and pedagogical impact of field-study-based learning in an undergraduate oral literature course. The study was designed as an instrumental case study, in which a bounded instructional context was used to generate insights into a broader pedagogical issue: how experiential, field-based learning shapes students' contextual understanding and participation in disciplines rooted in cultural practice (Yin, 2017).

The case study involved implementing a field-study-based learning model within a single oral literature course delivered over one academic semester at a public Islamic university in Indonesia. The case is bounded by context (one institution), duration (one semester), and the instructional setting (two parallel classes within the same course). The primary unit of analysis was the pedagogical process, particularly how students experienced, interpreted, and engaged with learning across different phases of the intervention. This design enabled an in-depth exploration of learning as a situated and processual phenomenon that cannot be adequately captured through decontextualised or variable-based approaches (Creswell, 2009).

The study was conducted in an undergraduate oral literature course in the Indonesian Language Education program at Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The course focuses on oral traditions, including folklore, narrative practices, and cultural performances in community contexts.

Sixty fourth-semester students enrolled in two parallel classes participated in the course and constituted the bounded case context. All students were involved in the pedagogical intervention as part of regular course activities. However, for in-depth qualitative data collection, a purposive subsample of participants was selected for interviews. The selection criteria included variations in classroom participation, levels of engagement, and diversity of learning experiences observed during the course (Patton, 2015). This approach ensured the representation of multiple perspectives rather than statistical generalisation.

The selection of fourth-semester students was based on their prior exposure to foundational linguistic and literary concepts, combined with their limited

experience engaging directly with cultural contexts. This positioning made them suitable participants for examining shifts in contextual understanding and participation through experiential learning activities.

The pedagogical intervention was implemented over one academic semester (approximately 14 weeks) and structured into three interconnected phases aligned with the experiential learning cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

The first phase (Weeks 1–4) focused on conceptual preparation. Students were introduced to key concepts in oral literature, such as genre classification, narrative structures, performance elements, and interpretive approaches. Learning activities included lectures, guided discussions, and analyses of sample texts. This phase aimed to establish a conceptual framework that would inform students' engagement with field data.

The second phase (Weeks 5–10) involved field-based learning. Students worked in small groups to engage directly with community contexts, conducting observations of oral cultural practices, interviewing community members, and documenting oral narratives. Data collection emphasised performative elements, social interactions, and situational contexts. Students were provided with general guidelines for observation and interviewing while retaining the flexibility to respond to the dynamics of the field settings.

The third phase (Weeks 11–14) focused on reflections and presentations. The students produced written reports and participated in structured classroom discussions to reflect on their field experiences. They also presented their findings by linking empirical observations to the theoretical concepts introduced earlier. This phase was designed to facilitate reflective integration and conceptual development, allowing students to reinterpret their experiences in light of theoretical frameworks (Moon, 2006).

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to capture different dimensions of the learning process and enhance credibility through triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Observations were conducted throughout classroom sessions and field-related activities. The researcher adopted a participant-observer role and documented patterns of student participation, interaction, and engagement. The observational focus included the initiation of discussions, responsiveness,

collaborative interactions, and use of contextual references in interpretation. Field notes were recorded systematically after each session.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive subset of students following the fieldwork phase and at the end of the course. The interviews aimed to explore students' experiences, interpretive processes, and perceived changes in understanding and participation. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes, was conducted in Indonesian, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The documentary data included students' field reports, reflective writings, presentation materials, and selected field documentation. These materials were used to examine how students articulated their understanding, integrated theoretical concepts, and represented their experiences in the field.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved both inductive and theory-informed approaches to data analysis. The process began with data familiarisation, in which all transcripts, field notes, and documents were read repeatedly to develop an overall understanding of the data. Initial coding was then conducted across all data sources to identify meaningful units related to the learning experiences, contextual understanding, participation, and emerging affective and identity dimensions. Codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories and candidate themes. During this stage, patterns across different data sources were compared iteratively to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation. In later stages of the analysis, theoretical perspectives, particularly experiential learning, situated learning, and social constructivism, were used as sensitising frameworks to interpret the relationships between themes. The final stage involved refining and naming themes and constructing a coherent analytical narrative explaining how experiential engagement shaped students' learning processes. Analytical decisions were documented through memo writing and an audit trail to ensure transparency and rigor of the study.

### ***Trustworthiness***

The quality of the study was ensured through the established criteria of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation across observations, interviews, and documents, as well as through iterative comparisons of the emerging interpretations across data sources. Prolonged engagement throughout the semester allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the learning context of the participants.

Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and instructional processes, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Dependability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail of the research procedures, coding processes, and theme development. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive memo writing, in which the researcher critically examined the assumptions and interpretations to minimise any subjective bias.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the study. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their rights, including voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any time, without academic consequences. Participation in the study was clearly separated from course assessments to minimise the power-related pressure.

Written informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participant confidentiality was maintained by anonymising all data and reports.

Given that the study involved interactions with community members during fieldwork, the students were instructed to engage respectfully and ethically and to obtain consent from community participants when collecting oral narratives. Cultural sensitivity was emphasised, and care was taken to avoid the misuse or inappropriate representation of cultural knowledge of the participants.

## **DISCUSSION**

The analysis generated three primary empirical themes corresponding to the research focus on implementation, contextual understanding, and participation, alongside two higher-order interpretive themes that emerged from the cross-theme analysis. Together, these themes illustrate how field-study-based learning reshapes

students' learning processes in oral literature through interconnected cognitive, participatory and affective transformations.

### **Shifting Participation Trajectories in Field-Based Learning**

The findings indicate that student participation evolved progressively over the course of the intervention, moving from limited and reactive engagement in classroom settings to more active and contextually grounded participation during and after the field experiences. This transformation did not occur instantaneously but developed through cumulative exposure to structured and authentic learning environments.

In the initial classroom phase, most students demonstrated relatively passive participation. Their engagement was typically reactive, characterised by responses to instructor prompts rather than initiating discussions or elaborating on interpretations. Observational data showed that few students voluntarily contributed extended responses or introduced new perspectives, suggesting surface-level engagement with the course content.

A noticeable shift occurred during the field-study phase. Direct interaction with community members and engagement with lived cultural practices introduce a level of complexity and uncertainty that is absent from classroom learning. At this stage, several students reported initial hesitation, particularly in initiating conversations with community participants. As one student noted, "At first, I did not know how to start asking questions. I was afraid of saying something wrong." However, this initial uncertainty gradually gave way to increased confidence and participation in the study.

Over time, the students became more proactive in initiating interactions, asking follow-up questions, and engaging more deeply with community narratives. Observational data indicated that students who were initially hesitant began to take more active roles in both field interactions and subsequent classroom discussions. This trajectory suggests that participation is not a fixed attribute but develops through situational engagement and repeated exposure to authentic learning contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding extends experiential learning theory by emphasizing that participation evolves alongside experience rather than functioning as a precondition for learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Radović et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2025). It also aligns with recent perspectives that view engagement as context-dependent and dynamically constructed rather than a stable individual trait (Alonso-Tapia et al., 2022; Böheim & Symonds, 2025; J. Li & Xue, 2023). Importantly, the findings suggest that uncertainty in field contexts may serve as a productive condition that stimulates engagement, rather than hindering it.

### **From Textual Interpretation to Contextual Meaning-Making**

A central finding of this study is the qualitative shift in students' interpretive practices, from decontextualized textual analysis to contextually grounded meaning-making. This shift reflects a reorientation in how students conceptualize oral literature, moving from a static textual object to a dynamic cultural practice.

At the beginning of the course, students primarily approached oral literature through textual frameworks, focusing on its narrative structure, themes, and moral messages. Observational records and early discussions revealed minimal attention to performance, audience interaction, and sociocultural context. Interpretations were largely confined to what could be derived from the textual representation alone.

Following their field-study experience, the students began to incorporate contextual dimensions into their interpretations. This shift was evident in both their verbal reflections and written reports. As one student explained, "Before going to the field, I thought folklore was just about stories. But after meeting the storyteller, I realized that the story is connected to traditions, beliefs, and daily life." Another student highlighted the importance of performative elements, stating that "how the story is told is as important as the content itself."

These responses indicate that students began to interpret oral literature as being embedded within social and cultural practices. In classroom presentations, several groups explicitly linked narratives to broader social functions such as moral education, identity formation, and ritual practice. This suggests a movement toward more holistic and context-sensitive interpretations of the data.

Theoretically, this finding supports the principles of situated learning, which posit that knowledge is constructed in authentic contexts (Benachar, 2025; Moore, 2023). However, the findings also extend this perspective by demonstrating that experiential engagement does not merely add contextual awareness but actively reorients interpretive frameworks. Rather than treating context as supplementary, students began to view it as constitutive of meaning. This indicates a shift toward contextualized meaning-making, even if such shifts remain emergent rather than fully stabilized.

### **The Emergence of Agentic Participation**

Beyond increased frequency of participation, the findings revealed a qualitative transformation toward more agentic forms of engagement. Participation has evolved from reactive involvement to more self-directed and meaning-oriented contributions.

In the early stages of the course, participation was uneven and often limited to a small group of students. Most contributions were prompted by the instructor, and only a few students initiated discussions or proposed independent interpretations. This pattern reflects a teacher-centred dynamic in which students primarily function as knowledge recipients.

During and after the field study phase, participation became more distributed and dialogic. Students increasingly initiated questions, responded to peers' ideas, and contributed to interpretations grounded in their field experiences. Observational data showed that previously less active students began to engage more confidently in discussions.

Participation also became more cognitively and contextually grounded in the study. Students connected theoretical concepts to empirical observations and used their field experiences to support their interpretations. As one participant noted, "I can explain not only the story, but also its meaning for the community because I saw it directly."

Collaborative engagement has become increasingly prominent. The students worked in groups during field activities and engaged in collective interpretations

during classroom discussions. Several participants described negotiating meaning with peers, indicating a shift toward co-constructing knowledge with them.

These findings suggest that agentic participation involves more than increased activity; it reflects the repositioning of students as contributors to knowledge construction. This aligns with social constructivist perspectives that emphasize the role of interaction and dialogue in learning (Mishra, 2023; Saleem et al., 2021). However, the findings also suggest that such agency is not inherent but emerges through pedagogical design that situates learners in authentic and socially meaningful contexts.

### **Cross-Theme Synthesis**

Across the empirical themes, a consistent pattern emerged: experiential learning functions as an integrative mechanism linking experience, reflection, understanding and participation.

Field engagement provided students with concrete experiences that challenged their prior assumptions and created opportunities for reflection. Reflective processes were evident in classroom discussions and written reports, where the students revisited and reconsidered their initial interpretations. As one student stated, “After observing the performance, I realized that I misunderstood the purpose of the story when I only read it as text.”

This reflective process contributed to the development of contextual understanding, which, in turn, supported more confident and meaningful participation in the study. As the students’ interpretations became more grounded in context, their contributions to the discussion became more analytical and dialogic.

The relationship between these elements appears cyclical rather than linear. Experience stimulates reflection, reflection deepens understanding, understanding encourages participation, and participation generates further experience. This recursive dynamic extends Kolb’s experiential learning model by emphasizing the relational and mutually reinforcing nature of these processes (Gordon, 2022; Morris, 2019).

Importantly, the findings suggest that contextual understanding and participation are not independent outcomes but develop together through experiential engagement. This provides a more integrated account of learning in which cognitive and participatory dimensions are interconnected rather than separable.

### **Beyond Cognitive Outcomes**

In addition to cognitive and participatory changes, the findings indicate shifts in students' affective orientations and emerging learner identities. These changes suggest that the impact of field-based learning extends beyond knowledge acquisition to include how students perceive themselves in relation to learning and cultural knowledge acquisition.

Initially, some students perceived oral traditions as being outdated or irrelevant. However, direct engagement with community practices led to more appreciative perspectives among the participants. As one student reflected, "I used to think this tradition was old-fashioned, but now I see that it has important meaning for the community." This indicates a shift in affective orientation toward greater cultural sensitivity and appreciation.

Students also reported increased confidence over time. Initial uncertainty during field engagement gradually diminished as they became more familiar with real-world interactions. This suggests the development of self-efficacy, which plays a crucial role in sustaining engagement.

Furthermore, some students began to reposition themselves as active learners and novice researchers during the process. They described their experiences not merely as receiving knowledge but as discovering and constructing it. As one participant noted, "I feel like I am not just learning from books, but discovering something from the field myself."

Although these shifts may still be emergent rather than fully consolidated, they indicate the early stages of learner identity development. This study extends the existing literature by suggesting that experiential learning in culturally grounded contexts can contribute not only to understanding and participation but also to how students position themselves as knowers and participants in knowledge production.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

Taken together, these findings contribute to the literature in the following ways.

First, this study extends experiential learning theory by demonstrating that learning processes in culturally situated disciplines are inherently relational and recursive in nature. Rather than following a linear sequence, experience, reflection, understanding, and participation interact dynamically.

Second, the findings provide an integrative account of contextual understanding and student participation as interdependent co-developing processes. This challenges approaches that treat cognitive and participatory outcomes as analytically separate entities.

Third, the study highlights the importance of affective and identity-related dimensions in experiential learning, suggesting that engagement with authentic cultural contexts can reshape not only what students know but also how they relate to knowledge and themselves as learners.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined how field-study-based learning reshapes students' understanding and participation in oral literature class. The findings indicate that learning in this context cannot be adequately explained as a linear progression from knowledge acquisition to knowledge application. Instead, learning emerges through a recursive and relational process in which experience, reflection, contextual understanding, and participation co-develop over time.

A central contribution of this study is the demonstration that experiential engagement in culturally situated contexts reorients students' interpretive practices. Rather than approaching oral literature as a decontextualised textual artefact, students began to construct meaning through engagement with performance, social interaction, and cultural contexts. This finding suggests that contextual understanding is not an additional layer of textual interpretation but a constitutive dimension of meaning-making in oral literature.

This study also conceptualises student participation as an emergent and context-dependent process. Participation has evolved from reactive involvement to

more agentic forms of engagement, characterised by initiative, interpretive contribution, and collaborative meaning-making. Importantly, participation was not merely a behavioural outcome but was closely intertwined with students' developing understanding and confidence, indicating a dynamic relationship between knowledge and engagement.

Beyond the cognitive and participatory dimensions, the findings highlight the affective and identity-related impacts of field-based learning. Students not only developed a deeper contextual understanding but also demonstrated shifts in their attitudes toward cultural practices and began to reposition themselves as active learners and emerging knowledge producers in the process. Although these changes appear to be in the early stages, they point to the broader transformative potential of experiential learning in higher education settings.

Taken together, these findings offer an integrated account of learning in which cognitive, participatory, and affective dimensions are mutually constitutive. This extends existing experiential learning frameworks by emphasising the recursive and relational nature of learning processes, particularly in disciplines grounded in cultural practice. This study contributes to ongoing debates on how learning should be conceptualised and designed in contexts that require engagement with lived cultural realities.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that learning environments that integrate conceptual preparation, authentic field engagement, and structured reflection can foster more meaningful and participatory learning. Such approaches enable students to engage with knowledge as a living cultural practice rather than as an abstract object of analysis.

This study is limited by its focus on a single institutional context and course, which may constrain its generalisability. Future research could adopt comparative, mixed-method, or longitudinal designs to examine how field-based learning operates across contexts and how shifts in understanding, participation, and identity evolve over time.

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