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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Digital Humanities***Digital poetry and national belonging among Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia: A SENANDI Mobile-assisted literacy case study**Anang Sudigdo^{1,3}, Feisal Aziez^{2*}, Hastangka³, Tjaturningsih Rosdiana⁴, Ika Mustika⁴, Asep Purwo Yudi Utomo⁵, Harjito⁶, Laila Lupita Ardhiyanti⁷ & Onok Yayang Pamungkas⁸¹Elementary School Teacher Education, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia²English Language Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Banyumas, Indonesia³Research Center for Education, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia⁴Research Center for Applied Zoology, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia⁵Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia⁶Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia Semarang, Indonesia⁷Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia⁸Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia*Correspondence: feisalaziez@ump.ac.id**ABSTRACT**

This study examines SENANDI, a mobile-assisted poetry-writing application designed to support Indonesian language learning and national-themed poetic expression among Indonesian primary-school-aged children in a migrant learning setting in Malaysia. The participants were 67 children studying at Sanggar Bimbingan Sungai Mulia 5, Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, a non-formal learning space serving Indonesian migrant children with constrained access to formal schooling. Moving beyond an achievement-oriented account of mobile learning, the study conceptualizes digital poetry as a mediated literacy practice through which administratively vulnerable children articulate homeland, memory, language, and belonging. A qualitative-dominant case study with embedded descriptive rubric analysis was conducted using application screenshots, field documentation, 67 student poems, thematic coding, selected close readings, and a six-aspect analytic rubric. The findings show that SENANDI functioned as a multimodal literacy space connecting national-symbolic interface design, poetry-related learning content, a digital writing interface, and children's poetry production. Thematic coding revealed that students most frequently positioned Indonesia as a symbolic homeland (85.1%), followed by love of homeland (53.7%), learning and sanggar experience (35.8%), and migrant longing (31.3%). Rubric analysis identified a descriptive gap between national identity expression ($M = 3.48$) and poetic-linguistic accuracy ($M = 2.41$). The study contributes the concept of affective entry before linguistic mastery, showing that migrant children may first enter writing through emotional attachment

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to homeland before they develop fuller control of diction, spelling, stanza organization, and poetic elaboration. The pedagogical value of mobile-assisted poetry writing therefore depends on teacher scaffolding, guided revision, and sustained language support.

KEYWORDS: mobile-assisted language learning, digital poetry, national belonging, migrant children, multimodal literacy, Indonesian language education, pedagogical scaffolding

1. Introduction

Children of migrant workers are often positioned at the edge of formal education systems, where access to schooling is shaped not only by age and learning needs but also by documentation, citizenship, cost, mobility, and policy recognition. In Malaysia, recent studies on non-citizen, stateless, refugee, and undocumented children have shown how administrative status and legal identity can restrict access to public schooling and redirect children into non-formal, community-based, or alternative learning spaces (Loganathan et al., 2021, 2022, 2023). For Indonesian children in these settings, educational exclusion is not merely institutional; it is also linguistic, symbolic, and affective. Being outside Indonesia while having limited access to formal schooling places children in a fragile position where Indonesian language, cultural memory, and national belonging must be sustained through informal and often under-resourced pedagogical practices. This study begins from this condition: literacy learning for migrant children is not only about acquiring writing skills, but also about maintaining a meaningful relationship with language, homeland, and identity.

Mobile-assisted language learning has been widely discussed as a way to extend access, autonomy, participation, and learner engagement across diverse educational contexts (Burston, 2015; Burston & Giannakou, 2022; Hwang & Fu, 2019; Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Recent studies have also examined mobile technologies in Indonesian language-learning and EFL contexts, including autonomous writing, teacher practice, and digital learning challenges (Lestarina et al., 2022; Misdi et al., 2023; Ningsih et al., 2022; Purwaningrum et al., 2024). However, much of this scholarship still assumes relatively stable educational arrangements: formal classrooms, recognized learners, institutional curricula, measurable achievement targets, or second/foreign language environments with clearer pedagogical infrastructure. These assumptions become insufficient when mobile learning is examined in migrant learning spaces, where technology does not simply deliver content but mediates the maintenance of language, memory, and belonging under conditions of educational precarity. This concern is reinforced by Ayuningtyas and Rakhmawati (2026), who argue that technology in multilingual language classrooms becomes meaningful only when it is integrated with pedagogy, content, linguistic diversity, participation, and contextual learning rather than used as an instrumental add-on.

At the same time, multimodal literacy studies have shown that meaning is produced through the interaction of language, image, colour, interface, symbol, material arrangement, and social practice (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996). Digital writing spaces are therefore not neutral containers. They shape attention, authorize certain signs, organize pathways of participation, and influence how learners move from seeing to reading and from reading to composing. Yet relatively little is known about how mobile and multimodal literacy tools operate when the learners are transnational children in non-formal educational spaces. This gap is particularly important for Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia because national language and national belonging may need to be sustained outside the territorial and institutional boundaries of the nation.

This article addresses that gap through a study of SENANDI (*Semangat Nasionalisme dalam Puisi Anak Indonesia*), a mobile-assisted application that combines Indonesian national symbols, poetry materials, and a writing interface for children to compose national-themed poems. Rather than treating SENANDI as a technological intervention that automatically improves achievement, this study examines how the application structures children's movement from national-symbolic exposure to poetry writing, how students articulate national belonging in their poems, and what descriptive gap emerges between national expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy. The study addresses three questions: (1) How does SENANDI structure students' movement from national-symbolic exposure to poetry writing? (2) How do students express national belonging in their poems? (3) What gap emerges between national expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy? The article contributes

to language education, children's literacy, and migrant education by showing that digital poetry can become an affective entry point through which Indonesian migrant children name, remember, and imagine Indonesia while also revealing the continuing need for teacher scaffolding in diction, spelling, imagery, revision, and poetic form.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical position of this study is deliberately relational. National belonging is not treated as a fixed attitude that children either possess or lack. It is understood as a situated practice produced through language, symbol, memory, affect, and social positioning. Anderson's (1983) idea of the nation as an imagined community remains useful here, but the migrant setting requires a more mobile account of belonging. Transnational children may live outside the nation while still inhabiting it symbolically through family narratives, language, songs, flags, cultural objects, religious and cultural routines, and school-like practices (Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 1996; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Norton, 2013; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Vertovec, 2009). In this study, children's poems are read as small acts of positioning: they show how Indonesia is named, remembered, loved, and reassembled in language.

This study also draws on identity-oriented literacy theory. Cummins (2000) argues that identity texts allow learners to invest their identities in written, spoken, visual, or multimodal products that can be affirmed by others. This perspective is important because the poems produced through SENANDI are not evaluated only as school writing products. They are also artifacts of recognition through which children make their Indonesian language, memory, and belonging visible. Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment further clarifies that language learning is shaped by identity, ideology, and capital. In a migrant learning setting, Indonesian writing carries more than linguistic value: it becomes symbolic capital through which children claim relation to homeland, community, and future educational possibility (Bourdieu, 1991; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

SENANDI is read through a multimodal literacy lens because a mobile application is not a neutral container for content. It arranges pathways of attention, foregrounds some meanings, backgrounds others, and invites particular forms of participation. The red-white interface, national flag imagery, child-friendly illustrations, poetry menu, search functions, learning materials, and writing box are therefore semiotic resources that shape how children encounter Indonesia before writing about it (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996). This view aligns with literacy studies that treat reading and writing as social, material, and designed practices rather than merely cognitive skills (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2004; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Street, 1984, 1995). This non-neutrality is also evident in digital-archive research, which shows that digitisation reshapes cultural visibility through language, material form, institutional power, custody, and access rather than simply transferring content into a new medium (Iskandar & Sabri, 2025).

Digital poetry in this study is understood not as literary experimentation in a narrow aesthetic sense, but as a mediated writing practice in which children compose short poetic texts through a mobile interface. Poetry matters because it allows compressed, affective, and image-based expression; the digital interface matters because it organizes how children access prompts, symbols, and writing space. In this sense, SENANDI creates a designed encounter between multimodal national symbols and children's emerging written language. Children's poems are therefore interpreted as both identity texts and developing literacy artifacts: they reveal what children can already express and where instruction must still intervene. Related research on Indonesian digital poetry likewise shows that digitally mediated poems can function as living cultural archives in which memory and identity are reconfigured through participatory remediation (Sudigdo & Suprpto, 2026). Although SENANDI operates in a pedagogical rather than public-platform context, the children's poems similarly transform remembered homeland into a shareable textual form.

The final theoretical bridge is scaffolding. Poetry writing requires more than affective motivation; it involves vocabulary, imagery, rhythm, lineation, spelling, and revision. Vygotsky's (1978) account of mediated learning and Wood, Bruner, and Ross's (1976) concept of scaffolding help explain why the application alone cannot carry the whole pedagogical burden. SENANDI can open a zone of entry into national-themed writing, but teachers and facilitators remain necessary to support the movement from direct expression to richer poetic language (Bruner, 1986, 1996; Kerbs et al., 2024; Wertsch, 1991). These perspectives are brought together to examine SENANDI as a mediated literacy space: national belonging explains what children express, multimodality explains how the application organizes expression, identity-text theory explains why the poems

matter as acts of recognition, and scaffolding explains why expression still requires pedagogical support.

On this basis, the study advances the working concept of affective entry before linguistic mastery. The concept refers to a developmental and pedagogical pattern in which children first enter writing through affective attachment, symbolic memory, and the desire to name homeland before they acquire fuller control over diction, spelling, stanza organization, and poetic elaboration. This concept does not romanticize linguistic inaccuracy; rather, it proposes that children's affective attachment can become the starting point for more sustained language instruction when digital writing is embedded in guided pedagogy.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative-dominant case study design with embedded descriptive rubric analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). The approach was selected because the study sought to understand how SENANDI was used in a specific migrant learning context and how students' poems represented national belonging. The quantitative component was descriptive and was used only to summarize patterns in students' written products; it was not designed to test causal effectiveness. The unit of analysis was the SENANDI-based poetry-writing activity as enacted in one non-formal learning site, while the embedded units consisted of application interface evidence, field documentation, individual poems, thematic codes, and rubric scores.

3.2 Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Sanggar Bimbingan Sungai Mulia 5, Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The participants were 67 Indonesian primary-school-aged children studying in a non-formal learning environment. The children came from migrant-family backgrounds and were described by the learning community as having limited access to formal schooling because of documentation and administrative constraints. The study did not independently verify children's legal or documentation status, and no individual legal-status data were collected or reported. The description of administrative vulnerability is therefore used only to contextualize educational access, not to classify individual children. The analysis did not treat gender, age, or documentation status as explanatory variables; the focus remained on poems, interface-mediated writing practice, and the pedagogical conditions of literacy expression.

3.3 SENANDI Implementation

The activity is reported as a documented guided writing activity rather than a controlled instructional sequence. SENANDI was implemented as a mobile-assisted poetry-writing activity consisting of four pedagogical phases: orientation to the application, guided exploration of nationalism and poetry materials, individual composition through the "*Buat Puisi Kamu!*" feature, and brief facilitator-supported reflection on students' written products. The application included a login/register page, a home and service menu, learning materials on nationalism and poetry, a poetry-writing interface, search functions, and profile features. Students first explored the interface, then encountered the learning materials, and finally composed short national-themed poems individually. Facilitators assisted with navigation, clarified task instructions, and encouraged students to complete their own texts, but they did not compose the poems for the students. The analyzed poems are therefore treated as first-draft products of the activity rather than polished literary works.

3.4 Data Sources

Data consisted of four sources: application screenshots, field documentation of student use, 67 student poems produced during the activity, and rubric-based assessment of the poems. The visual data documented the interface structure and classroom use of SENANDI. The poems served as the main textual dataset for analyzing national belonging and poetic-linguistic development. The coding matrix recorded poem codes, thematic markers, illustrative excerpts, and rubric scores. Selected anonymized excerpts are provided in Appendix B; the full anonymized coding matrix is retained by the authors and can be made available under child-protection and privacy constraints.

3.5 Thematic Coding

The poems were coded thematically for expressions of national belonging, including homeland, love of country, cultural diversity, national symbols, nature, heroes, unity, *sanggar* learning experience, and migrant longing. Multiple coding was used because one poem could contain more than one thematic marker. Coding followed an iterative process informed by thematic analysis principles (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). First, the poems were read repeatedly to identify recurrent lexical indicators, images, and affective references. Second, a preliminary codebook was developed from both the research questions and recurring patterns in the poems. Third, code definitions were reviewed by the research team, with ambiguous cases discussed until consensus was reached. Coding focused on textual evidence rather than on students' personal identities, and original Indonesian excerpts were retained where possible. Spelling and capitalization were not standardized in quoted data so that children's writing features remained visible.

3.6 Rubric-Based Assessment

A six-aspect analytic rubric was used to describe the gap between national identity expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy. Three aspects measured national identity expression: nationalism theme, Indonesian symbolic reference, and affective attachment to the homeland. Three aspects measured poetic-linguistic accuracy: diction, poetic organization, and spelling/mechanics. Each aspect was scored on a four-point scale. Before final scoring, rubric descriptors were calibrated through team discussion using anchor examples from the poem dataset. Composite means were calculated by averaging the relevant aspects. The scores are reported as descriptive indicators of textual patterns within this case and are not intended for inferential comparison or statistical generalization. The full rubric descriptors are provided in Appendix A to support transparency and auditability.

3.7 Trustworthiness and Ethical Care

Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation across visual documentation, student poems, thematic coding, rubric assessment, and selected close readings. Thematic codes were recorded in a coding sheet and checked against representative excerpts. Final categories were retained only when supported by repeated lexical, imagistic, or affective evidence across poems. Coding and scoring decisions were discussed among the research team to reduce single-coder bias, and the results are reported as descriptive patterns rather than causal effects. The manuscript also distinguishes between interface evidence, thematic frequency, interpretive close reading, and rubric-based description so that each type of claim remains aligned with the data source that supports it. Ethical care was central because the participants were children in a vulnerable learning context. Institutional permission was obtained from the learning centre, and the activity was conducted under the centre's child-protection arrangements. Participation was treated as voluntary, children received age-appropriate explanations, and they were informed that participation or non-participation would not affect access to learning activities. Student names were replaced with codes, and no individually identifying legal, administrative, or documentation-status data were collected or reported. Visual materials were selected, cropped, or excluded to avoid facial identification. The manuscript uses anonymized textual excerpts and follows child-protection principles consistent with educational research ethics (BERA, 2024; COPE, 2006; UNICEF, 2018; World Medical Association, 2024).

4. Results

4.1 SENANDI as a Multimodal Literacy Space

This section presents the documented interface structure and classroom use of SENANDI as a digital medium for national-themed poetry writing. The analysis is based on four forms of visual evidence: the home menu, the login/register page, the poetry-writing interface, and field documentation showing a student composing a poem through the application. These visual data are used to describe how SENANDI organizes students' movement from application access to poetry production, rather than to claim causal learning improvement.

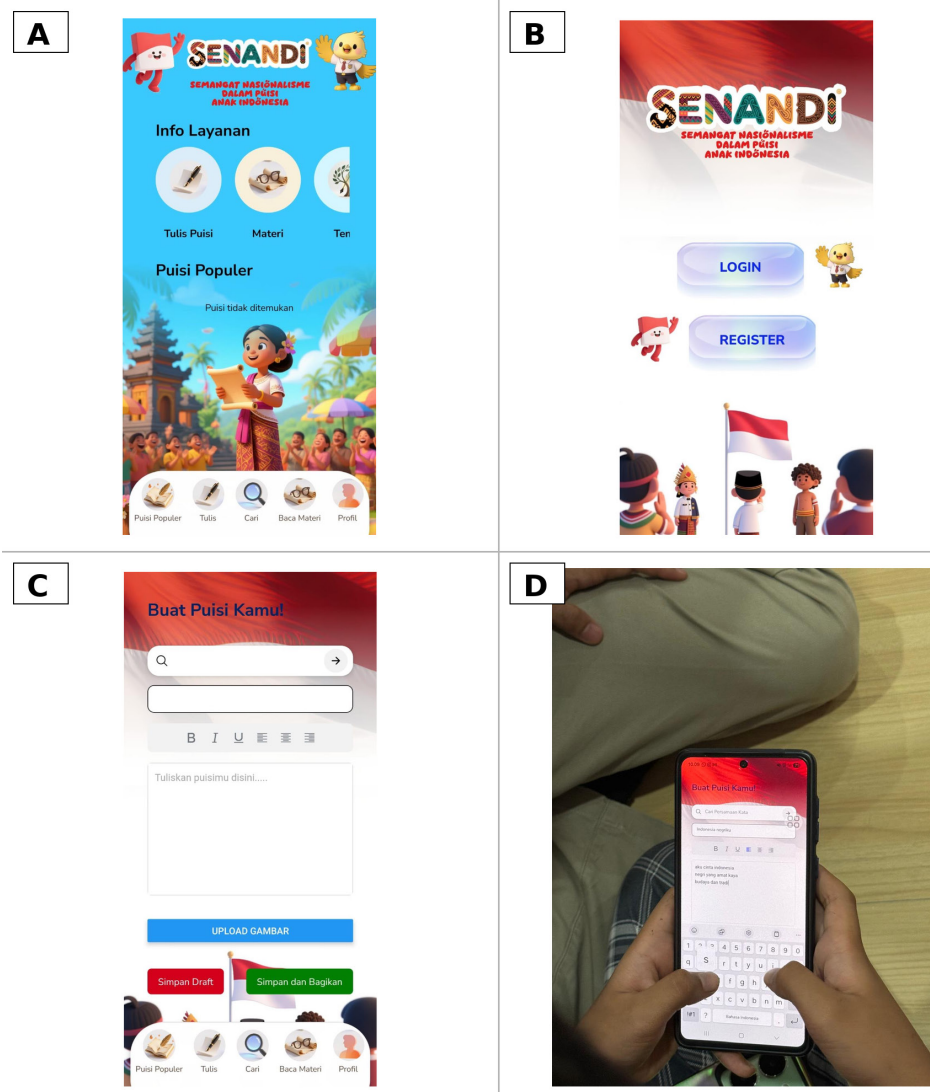


Figure 1. Selected SENANDI interfaces and documented student poetry-writing practice. (A) Home and service menu; (B) login/register page; (C) poetry-writing interface; and (D) student composing a national-themed poem through the application.

Figure 1 shows that SENANDI was structured as a digital learning environment with a clear sequence of use. Panel A presents the home and service menu, where students can access poetry writing, learning materials, search tools, and profile features. Panel B shows the entry page, Panel C presents the writing interface, and Panel D documents actual student use of the application on a mobile phone. The sequence matters because it positions national symbols not as isolated decoration but as part of a writing pathway: children first encounter Indonesia visually, then navigate toward a space where Indonesia can be rewritten in their own words.

The figure demonstrates that SENANDI connects interface design and literacy practice. The application first introduces students to a child-friendly digital environment with Indonesian symbolic visuals, then provides access to writing tools, and finally enables students to produce national-themed poems. In the documented student output, the poem contains simple expressions such as “*aku cinta indonesia*,” “*negri yang amat kaya*,” and “*budaya dan tradisi*.” These lines indicate that the application opened a space for students to express national belonging through simple poetic language, even though their spelling and poetic structure still required pedagogical guidance. Therefore, Figure 1 is treated as evidence of design and implementation, not as evidence of learning effectiveness. Its main function is to show how SENANDI was operationalized in the learning activity: from access, navigation, and writing interface to actual student use.

4.2 Students' Expression of National Belonging through Poetry

The students' poems were coded to identify how national belonging was linguistically expressed in their writing. The coding focused on recurring words, images, and affective references associated with Indonesia, including

homeland, love of country, cultural diversity, national symbols, nature, heroes, unity, the *sanggar* learning experience, and migrant longing. Because one poem could contain more than one thematic marker, multiple coding was applied. Table 1 summarizes the thematic patterns found across the 67 poems.

Table 1. Thematic patterns of national belonging in 67 students' poems

Thematic pattern	Linguistic indicators	n	%	Representative excerpt
Indonesia as symbolic homeland	Indonesia, negeriku, tanah air, bangsaku, rumah bersama	57	85.1	"Indonesia negriku / aku cinta indonesia" (S01)
Love of homeland	cinta Indonesia, cinta tanah air, sayang negeri, bangga menjadi anak Indonesia	36	53.7	"aku cinta indonesia / negri yang amat kaya" (S01)
Learning, literacy, and sanggar experience	belajar, menulis, puisi, sanggar, guru, membaca, bahasa Indonesia	24	35.8	"di sanggar aku membaca / menulis puisi tentang Indone-sia" (S11)
Migrant longing and distance from Indonesia	jauh, Malaysia, rindu, pulang, ran-tau, dekat di hati	21	31.3	"meski aku tinggal di Malaysia / aku tetap anak Indonesia" (S04)
Cultural diversity and tradition	budaya, tradisi, adat, Nusantara, tari, batik, suku	13	19.4	"budaya dan tradisi" (S01)
National symbols	bendera, merah putih, Garuda, Pancasila, Indonesia Raya	13	19.4	"merah putih berkibar tinggi / aku hormat dengan hati" (S03)
Natural richness and landscape	alam, gunung, laut, sawah, pantai, hutan, indah	13	19.4	"gunung hijau laut biru / sawah luas menunggu rindu" (S05)
Unity, harmony, and togetherness	bersatu, rukun, damai, gotong roy-ong, saudara, bersama	13	19.4	"berbeda warna berbeda nama / kami tetap bermain bersama" (S27)
Heroes, struggle, and independence	pahlawan, merdeka, perjuangan, berkorban, berani	8	11.9	"pahlawan berjuang dahulu / demi merdeka bangsaku" (S06)

Note. The table uses multiple coding because a single poem could contain more than one thematic marker. Therefore, the total frequency of themes exceeds the total number of poems. Percentages were calculated based on the total number of poems (N = 67).

Table 1 shows that the strongest thematic pattern was Indonesia as a symbolic homeland, appearing in 57 poems or 85.1% of the dataset. This dominance indicates that students repeatedly positioned Indonesia as the central object of identification in their poems. The frequent use of expressions such as "*Indonesia*," "*negeriku*," "*tanah air*," and "*bangsaku*" suggests that national belonging was articulated first through naming and emotional attachment. In the context of Indonesian children studying in Malaysia, Indonesia appears not merely as a country of origin, but as a symbolic home that remains active in the children's imagination and language.

The second major pattern was love of homeland, found in 36 poems or 53.7%, followed by learning and *sanggar* experience in 24 poems or 35.8%, and migrant longing in 21 poems or 31.3%. These patterns show that students' nationalism was not expressed as abstract civic ideology, but as affective, experiential, and situated belonging. The lower frequency of heroes and formal national symbols suggests that children's nationalism was less state-centred than affective and domestic: Indonesia was remembered through home, language, learning, longing, culture, and everyday signs of belonging. The poems suggest that national belonging among these children was not primarily organized through official historical narratives, but through affective proximity: home, language, learning, longing, and everyday symbols.

4.3 Close Reading of Selected Poems

The frequency patterns in Table 1 become clearer when read through selected poem excerpts. In S04, the lines “*meski aku tinggal di Malaysia / aku tetap anak Indonesia / bahasaku tetap kujaga*” condense three dimensions of migrant belonging: geographical distance, national identification, and language maintenance. The child does not present Indonesia as a distant political category, but as an identity that must be kept through language. The phrase “*bahasaku tetap kujaga*” is especially important because it transforms Indonesian from a school subject into a marker of continuity across borders.

S41 offers a more compressed and affective articulation: “*Indonesia rumah yang jauh / tapi namanya dekat di tubuh.*” The line does not simply say that the child loves Indonesia; it places the homeland inside the body. This bodily metaphor suggests that national belonging is experienced as intimate memory rather than as external civic knowledge. In the migrant context, Indonesia becomes spatially distant but affectively proximate. Such lines show why children’s poems should be read as identity texts, not only as products of a writing task.

S38 reveals the literacy-development side of the same process: “*kadang aku salah mengeja / tetapi aku mau mencoba / bahasa Indonesia kujaga.*” The child explicitly recognizes difficulty with spelling while also expressing willingness to keep using Indonesian. This excerpt is central to the study’s argument because it shows that linguistic limitation and national attachment coexist in the same text. Rather than treating spelling difficulty as failure, the line shows how the desire to maintain language can become a pedagogical starting point for guided revision.

S23 links national symbol, song, and migrant longing: “*lagu Indonesia Raya kunyanyikan / pelan-pelan aku hafalkan / hatiku terasa pulang.*” Here, memorizing the anthem becomes a symbolic return. The child does not physically return to Indonesia; the act of singing produces an affective sense of homecoming. This pattern confirms that national belonging in the poems is not only referential but performative: children do not merely mention Indonesia; they use poetry to enact proximity to it.

4.4 The Gap between National Expression and Poetic-Linguistic Accuracy

This section examines the descriptive gap between students’ national expression and their poetic-linguistic accuracy. Each poem was assessed using a six-aspect analytic rubric. Three aspects represented national identity expression: nationalism theme, Indonesian symbolic reference, and affective attachment to the homeland. The other three aspects represented poetic-linguistic accuracy: diction, poetic organization, and spelling/mechanics. Each aspect was scored on a four-point scale. The composite score for each dimension was calculated by averaging the three relevant aspects. This analysis does not claim causal improvement; it identifies patterns in students’ written products after the learning activity. These scores are used as descriptive indicators of textual patterns within this case and are not intended for statistical generalization.

Table 2. Descriptive rubric-based assessment of students’ national expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy

Dimension	Assessment aspect	Mean	SD
National identity expression	Nationalism theme	3.61	0.49
National identity expression	Indonesian symbolic reference	3.34	0.58
National identity expression	Affective attachment	3.49	0.53
National identity expression	Composite mean	3.48	0.45
Poetic-linguistic accuracy	Diction	2.53	0.61
Poetic-linguistic accuracy	Poetic organization	2.42	0.57
Poetic-linguistic accuracy	Spelling and mechanics	2.29	0.64
Poetic-linguistic accuracy	Composite mean	2.41	0.52

While Table 2 reports the rubric scores for each assessment aspect, the central pattern of the finding lies in the contrast between the two composite dimensions. Figure 2 visualizes this contrast to show the descriptive gap between students’ national expression and their poetic-linguistic accuracy.

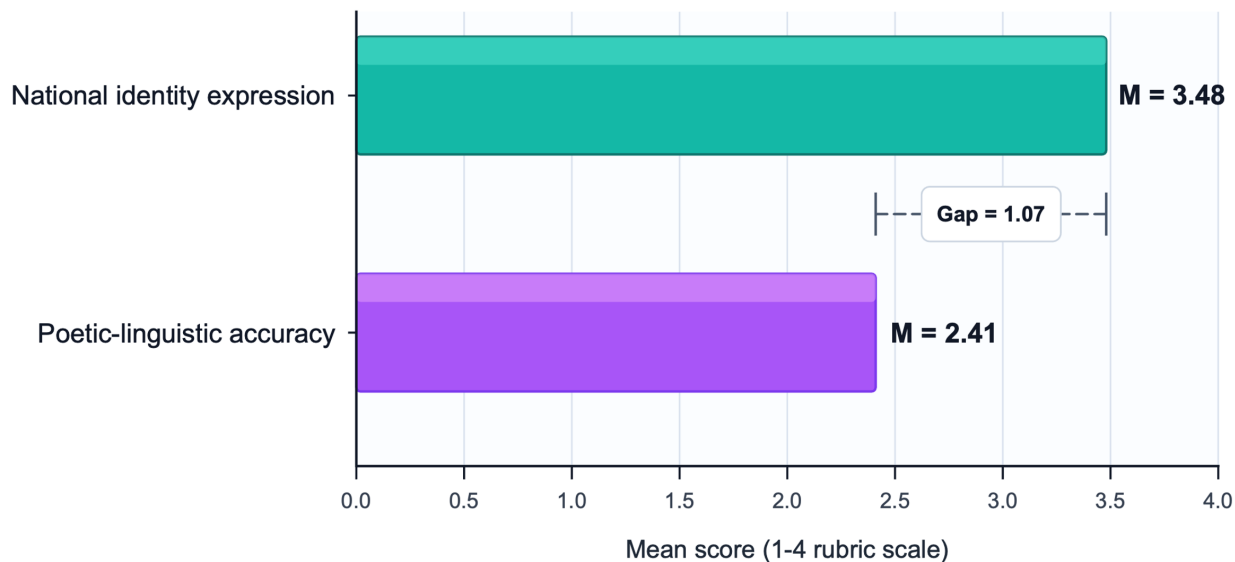


Figure 2. Composite mean scores for national identity expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show a clear gap between what students could express and how accurately they could shape that expression into poetic language. National identity expression reached a high composite mean ($M = 3.48$), whereas poetic-linguistic accuracy remained lower ($M = 2.41$). The highest score appeared in nationalism theme ($M = 3.61$), showing that students could readily connect their poems with Indonesia, homeland, pride, and belonging. By contrast, spelling and mechanics received the lowest score ($M = 2.29$), followed by poetic organization ($M = 2.42$) and diction ($M = 2.53$). This pattern indicates that the students' poems were thematically strong but formally still developing.

This gap is the central empirical point of the study. The documented line “*aku cinta indonesia / negri yang amat kaya / budaya dan tradisi*” captures the pattern clearly: the national message is present, but the language still needs refinement. The finding should not be read as a weakness of the students. Rather, it shows that children in a migrant learning context may enter poetry first through emotional attachment to Indonesia before developing stronger control of diction, structure, and spelling. SENANDI therefore functioned as an entry point for national-themed expression, while teacher scaffolding remained necessary to develop students' poetic-linguistic competence.

4.5 The Need for Pedagogical Scaffolding

The findings in the previous section show that SENANDI helped students express national belonging, but the quality of their poetic language still required guided support. Students were able to write about Indonesia, homeland, culture, and love of country; however, their poems also showed limitations in spelling, diction, stanza organization, imagery, and revision. This indicates that SENANDI functioned as a trigger for writing, but not as a complete instructional solution. In this context, teacher or facilitator scaffolding became necessary to help students transform direct national expressions into more accurate and developed poetic texts.

Table 3. Pedagogical scaffolding needed in SENANDI-based poetry writing

Area of scaffolding	Student writing issue	Teacher/facilitator support	Expected development
Spelling and mechanics	Lowest rubric score; non-standard spelling and inconsistent capitalization	Corrective feedback, word modelling, and guided revision	More accurate written Indonesian
Diction	Repetitive use of direct words such as cinta, Indonesia, and negeri	Vocabulary enrichment and word-choice modelling	More varied and expressive poetic vocabulary

Poetic organization	Short lines with limited stanza development	Modelling line breaks, stanza patterns, and poem organization	Clearer poetic structure
Imagery	National feeling expressed mostly through direct statements	Prompts using flag, nature, culture, school, home, and family images	Stronger poetic imagination
Idea expansion	Poems often stopped after one or two ideas	Guiding questions and peer discussion	More developed poetic meaning
Revision practice	Students tended to write once without substantial editing	Rereading, editing, and rewriting stages	Better awareness of writing as a process

Table 3 shows that the main pedagogical issue was not the absence of national feeling, but the limited linguistic and poetic resources available to students. The students already had meaningful ideas about Indonesia, but many of these ideas appeared in direct and simple expressions. Lines such as “*aku cinta indonesia*,” “*negri yang amat kaya*,” and “*budaya dan tradisi*” show clear national attachment, but they also reveal the need for spelling correction, vocabulary enrichment, and fuller poetic development. Therefore, scaffolding should not be understood as replacing children’s voices, but as helping them refine those voices without losing their emotional authenticity.

This finding has an important pedagogical implication. SENANDI can initiate literacy engagement by giving students access to national-themed materials, visual prompts, and a digital writing space. Yet the movement from expression to literary quality depends on human guidance. In the migrant learning context, teachers and facilitators remain central because they help students move from naming Indonesia to describing it, from stating love to shaping imagery, and from writing isolated lines to composing more coherent poems. Digital media can open the door to writing, but pedagogical scaffolding determines how far students can develop their language accuracy and poetic expression. The study therefore proposes the notion of affective entry before linguistic mastery: migrant children may first enter literacy through emotional and symbolic attachment to homeland before they develop refined control of spelling, diction, and poetic form.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how SENANDI, a mobile-assisted poetry-writing application, mediated national-themed writing among Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia. The findings show that SENANDI should not be understood primarily as a technological intervention, but as a mediated literacy space where children could rehearse national belonging through short poetic texts. In this setting, the application functioned less as a stand-alone learning solution than as symbolic and pedagogical infrastructure: it gathered images, prompts, national signs, and writing space through which children could encounter Indonesia visually and then rewrite it in their own language.

The first major finding concerns the affective structure of national belonging. Students most frequently represented Indonesia as symbolic homeland and expressed love of homeland through simple but repeated lexical markers such as *Indonesia*, *negeriku*, *tanah air*, *cinta*, and *bahasa*. This pattern extends Anderson’s (1983) concept of imagined community by showing how the nation is imagined not only through print capitalism or formal schooling, but also through modest digital-poetic acts in a non-formal migrant learning centre. It also resonates with transnational identity scholarship, which emphasizes that migrants may inhabit multiple social fields while maintaining emotional, linguistic, and symbolic attachments across borders (Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 1996; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Vertovec, 2009). For these children, Indonesia was not merely a geopolitical reference; it was a remembered, named, and affectively sustained home.

The second finding is that the poems operate as identity texts. When students wrote “*meski aku tinggal di Malaysia / aku tetap anak Indonesia*” or “*bahasa Indonesia kujaga*,” they were not merely completing a poetry task. They were investing identity into language and making that identity available for recognition, a process consistent with Cummins’s (2000) account of identity texts and Norton’s (2013) theory of language

and identity. The poems also show that Indonesian language has symbolic value in this setting: it becomes a resource through which children claim continuity with homeland and community. This finding supports investment-oriented accounts of language learning, where learners' participation is shaped by identity, ideology, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

The third finding concerns multimodality. SENANDI's interface did not simply provide a technical writing box; it organized a sequence from national-symbolic exposure to individual poetic expression. This supports social-semiotic accounts of literacy in which meaning is designed across language, image, colour, interface, and social practice (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996). The application mattered because it assembled a child-friendly digital environment in which national signs could become writing prompts. At the same time, this finding qualifies optimistic claims about mobile-assisted language learning. Mobile applications can support access and participation, but their pedagogical value depends on context, task design, and the forms of mediation they enable (Burston & Giannakou, 2022; Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022; Purwaningrum et al., 2024). This interpretation is consistent with evidence from augmented-reality literary learning, where interactive visual features supported cognitive engagement while still requiring careful task design and measurement alignment (Fauzan et al., 2026).

The most important theoretical contribution is the identification of a gap between national expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy. The students' poems were affectively strong but formally developing. This gap should not be interpreted as a failure of either the children or the application. Rather, it reveals a developmental sequence in which affective-national attachment can precede refined poetic competence. In Vygotskian terms, SENANDI opened a zone of entry into writing, while teachers and facilitators were needed to scaffold the movement toward richer diction, imagery, spelling, and organization (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976). The concept of affective entry before linguistic mastery therefore captures a pedagogical pattern: migrant children may begin writing from love, memory, and symbolic attachment before they acquire stronger poetic form.

The study also has methodological implications for research on children's digital writing in vulnerable contexts. Treating poems only as achievement products would miss their social and affective work; treating them only as identity texts would overlook the continuing need for language instruction. The combined use of thematic coding, rubric descriptors, visual documentation, and selected close readings makes it possible to read the poems as both expressions of belonging and developing literacy artifacts. This dual reading is important because it avoids two common reductions: technosolutionism, which assumes that digital tools automatically improve learning, and romanticism, which celebrates children's affective expressions without attending to their literacy needs.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that mobile-assisted poetry writing should be designed as a scaffolded writing cycle rather than as a one-time application activity. SENANDI can initiate engagement by giving children access to visual prompts, national-themed materials, and a writing space. However, teachers and facilitators remain decisive in helping children move from naming Indonesia to describing it, from stating love to shaping imagery, and from first-draft expression to revised poetic language. In migrant education, this matters because literacy support is also identity support: improving diction, spelling, and organization is not merely technical correction, but a way of strengthening children's ability to sustain and articulate belonging through language.

6. Conclusion

The value of SENANDI lies not in proving application effectiveness, but in revealing how digital poetry can make children's national attachment visible as a literacy object that teachers can then scaffold. This study examined SENANDI as a mobile-assisted literacy space for Indonesian migrant children in Malaysia. The findings show that the application connected national-symbolic interface design, poetry-related learning content, and students' writing practice. Through this space, students expressed Indonesia mainly through homeland, love, learning, migrant longing, culture, symbols, nature, unity, and heroes. The strongest pattern was Indonesia as symbolic homeland, followed by affective love of country and the *sanggar* as a literacy space. These findings indicate that national belonging among migrant children was not expressed primarily through formal civic discourse, but through simple poetic acts of naming, remembering, loving, and imagining Indonesia.

The key contribution of this study is the identification of a descriptive gap between national identity

expression and poetic-linguistic accuracy and the conceptual formulation of affective entry before linguistic mastery. Students were able to express national belonging clearly, but their diction, spelling, stanza organization, and poetic elaboration remained developing. SENANDI should therefore be understood not as a complete instructional solution, but as an entry point for national-themed writing whose pedagogical value depends on teacher scaffolding, revision practice, and sustained language support. The study is limited by its single-site design, descriptive scoring, absence of pre- and post-writing comparison, reliance on short poetry excerpts, and the fact that it did not independently verify children's legal or documentation status. Future research should examine longer implementation cycles, collect pre- and post-writing samples, include student and facilitator interviews, document the revision process, and compare SENANDI-based writing with other forms of literacy instruction. Despite these limitations, the study shows that digital poetry can help children in migrant learning settings express cultural memory and national attachment when it is embedded in guided pedagogy.

Declarations

Ethical approval

The study involved children in a vulnerable educational context and was conducted with institutional permission from the learning centre. The activity was implemented as a low-risk, non-invasive educational writing activity under the centre's child-protection arrangements. Identifiable faces were excluded, cropped, or anonymized in manuscript figures, and no individually identifying legal or documentation-status data were collected or reported.

Consent to participate

Participation was treated as voluntary and children received age-appropriate explanations that participation or non-participation would not affect access to learning activities. Consent and assent procedures followed the learning centre's established child-protection and guardian-communication arrangements.

Consent for publication

Images used in the manuscript do not display identifiable faces. Any identifiable visual material was excluded, cropped, or anonymized to protect children's privacy. The poem excerpts are anonymized and reported using student codes only.

Data availability

Anonymized coding matrices and rubric summaries can be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to child-protection, privacy, and institutional constraints.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI-assisted writing statement

AI-assisted tools were used to support language editing, organization, and manuscript drafting. The authors reviewed, verified, and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, interpretation, and final content of the manuscript.

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Appendix A. Analytic Rubric Descriptors

The descriptors below clarify the four-point scale used in the rubric-based assessment. They should be retained as an audit trail for the descriptive scores reported in Table 2.

Dimension	Aspect	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
N a t i o n a l identity ex- pression	Nationalism theme	No national theme is visible	National theme appears weakly or only by isolated word	National theme is clear and relevant	National theme is strong and sustained across the poem
N a t i o n a l identity ex- pression	Indonesian symbolic ref- erence	No Indonesian symbol, place, cul- ture, or national marker appears	One weak or un- clear symbolic ref- erence appears	Several clear Indo- nesian references appear	Symbols/references are meaningful and integrated into the poem
N a t i o n a l identity ex- pression	Affective at- tachment	No affective rela- tion to Indonesia is expressed	Affect is implied but weak	Love, pride, long- ing, or belonging is clear	Affective attachment is strong and person- ally meaningful
Poetic-linguis- tic accuracy	Diction	Very limited vocab- ulary; meaning dif- ficult to follow	Simple and repeti- tive vocabulary	Appropriate vocab- ulary with some variation	Varied, expressive, and poetic vocabu- lary
Poetic-linguis- tic accuracy	Poetic orga- nization	Text is not orga- nized as poetry	Some line breaks appear but organi- zation is weak	Ideas are arranged into recognizable poetic lines	Lineation/stanza or- ganization is clear and coherent
Poetic-linguis- tic accuracy	Spelling and mechanics	Many errors inter- fere with meaning	Frequent errors but meaning remains understandable	Minor errors; gen- erally readable	Accurate spelling, capitalization, and mechanics

Appendix B. Selected Anonymized Excerpts from Coded Poems

This appendix provides selected anonymized excerpts used to illustrate the thematic analysis. The full anonymized coding matrix for the 67 poems is retained by the authors and can be shared subject to child-protection and privacy constraints. Original Indonesian wording, including non-standard spelling, is retained where available.

Code	Title	Short excerpt	Thematic codes
S01	Indonesia Negeriku	aku cinta indonesia / negeri yang amat kaya / budaya dan tradisi	IND, CTA, BUD
S04	Aku Anak Indonesia	meski aku tinggal di Malaysia / aku tetap anak Indonesia / bahasaku tetap kujaga	IND, MIG, SGB
S05	Negeri yang Indah	gunung hijau laut biru / sawah luas menunggu rindu	ALM, IND, MIG
S11	Sanggar Belajarku	di sanggar aku membaca / menulis puisi tentang Indonesia	SGB, IND, MIG
S23	Lagu Indonesia	lagu Indonesia Raya kunyanyikan / pelan-pelan aku hafalkan / hatiku terasa pulang	BDR, CTA, MIG
S27	Persahabatan Nusantara	berbeda warna berbeda nama / kami tetap bermain bersama	PRS, BUD, IND
S38	Rindu Bahasa	kadang aku salah mengeja / tetapi aku mau mencoba / bahasa Indonesia kujaga	SGB, MIG, IND
S41	Rumah yang Jauh	Indonesia rumah yang jauh / tapi namanya dekat di tubuh	MIG, IND, CTA
S50	Anak Sanggar	di sanggar aku menulis / kata Indonesia terasa manis	SGB, MIG, IND
S63	Doa Anak Migran	aku anak di rantau jauh / menulis doa sepenuh tubuh	MIG, CTA, IND
S67	Puisi Kecil untuk Negeri	puisiku kecil sederhana / tapi cintaku besar padanya / Indonesia tanah airku	CTA, IND

Appendix C. Code Key

Code	Meaning
IND	Indonesia as homeland/negeri/tanah air
CTA	Love of homeland/cinta tanah air
BUD	Culture/tradition/Nusantara
BDR	National symbols such as flag, Garuda, Pancasila
PHL	Heroes/struggle/independence
ALM	Natural richness and landscape
PRS	Unity/harmony/gotong royong
SGB	Learning/sanggar/literacy experience
MIG	Migrant longing/distance from Indonesia