

## **BUILDING THE STUDENT CHARACTER THROUGH OUTDOOR ACTIVITY TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the world of education, teaching literature is not only aimed at introducing literary works, but also at shaping students' characters through understanding the values. One of the ways to do that is conducting outdoor activity, which provides direct and contextual experience in connecting literature with real life. The objective of the research is to describe the strategies to build students' characters in Introduction to Literature course through outdoor activity at University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri. This research used qualitative approach in which the subjects included the course lecturer and two students who participated in the outdoor activity. To collect data the researcher employed observation in the field, interviews, and document analysis. The study found that in the outdoor activity took place at Joyoboyo Forest Park Kediri. At the end of the activity, the students produced poems as the project. The activities, such as environmental observations, group discussions, and writing environmental-themed poems could build students' character. Those activities developed the characters such as cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, and environmental awareness. The researcher recommended to other lecturers to do further integration of main course materials and outdoor activities, as it helped the students understand the materials of the course easily.

**Keywords:** character education, introduce to literature, outdoor activity, student project, students' character.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Character education is a fundamental part of the Indonesian education system, as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. The main objective of character education is to strengthen and develop moral values in students so that they are reflected in their behavior. In addition, character education aims to correct negative student behavior, build harmonious relationships with family and society, and ensure that academic education functions as a means of strengthening character.

In accordance with Law No. 20 of 2003, character education is part of national education, although its implementation still needs improvement. This approach aims to develop not only students' academic intelligence but also their moral values, including honesty, responsibility, and empathy. The role of national education is crucial in

shaping individuals with dignity and good manners, contributing to the overall goal of improving the nation's character and competence. Education, therefore, is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about character development, as success depends on both technical skills (hard skills) and self-management skills (soft skills).

Character education is the process of forming individuals into human beings with character in various dimensions, such as heart, mind, body, and feelings and intentions (Samami in Yusuf, 2019). The Indonesian government defines character education as education in values, morals, and ethics that aims to help students understand and apply the concepts of good and bad in everyday life. Character education involves a conscious effort to form understanding, concern, and strong moral values. Thus, character education plays a role in forming individuals who are ethical and useful to society.

The scope of character education includes various aspects, namely thinking (critical, creative, innovative thinking, and openness to science and technology), sports (discipline, cooperation, endurance, and competitive spirit), heart training (honesty, responsibility, courage, and patriotism), and feelings and intentions (tolerance, social concern, cooperation, and work ethic). These four aspects form noble values that are interrelated and must be applied holistically in everyday life, both in the family, school, and community environments.

One of the factors that influence character formation is put forward by Thomas Lickona in Susanti (2013) who divides character into three main aspects: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior. According to him, good character includes an understanding of goodness, a commitment to goodness, and real actions in doing good. These three aspects must become habits in the mind, heart, and actions of individuals so that good character can be formed as a whole.

One way to instill character education in schools and campuses is through sharpening learning and example from educators. As Wahono (2018) said, modeling and habits must be reflected in programs at schools or campuses. It is an effort to grow and develop various students' characters. Among the various educational strategies, the outdoor learning program has been implemented as a unique and effective approach. Outdoor learning involves activities such as exploration, adventure, and observation, where students directly experience the learning process in a natural setting. These activities foster independence, teamwork, and a stronger connection to the real world,

engaging students in sensory learning through sight, hearing, and touch. Outdoor learning allows students to develop a deeper understanding of their surroundings and encourages practical application of their experiences in daily life.

Outdoor learning activity emerged as a solution to the boredom in the conventional education system which tends to be monotonous and based on memorization. This approach is more flexible and emphasizes creativity and student initiative by utilizing the environment as a learning medium. According to Purnomo (2017), outdoor learning involves nature exploration activities with in-depth observations documented in worksheets. Education outside the classroom also involves adventure activities such as hiking, camping, and environmental exploration to enrich the learning experience.

There are some benefits of outdoor learning. It provides benefits in various aspects of student development. Physically, outdoor activities improve muscle strength, balance, and motor coordination. Socially, students learn to interact with friends and the surrounding community. Emotionally, they are trained to recognize their own abilities, ask for help, and respect others (Kardjono, 2017). Meanwhile, intellectual development occurs through direct interaction with real objects that make the learning concept more concrete.

Furthermore, outdoor learning is more interesting than classroom learning because it provides a more real direct experience. Students are more motivated, active, and think more creatively because they face real challenges. This learning also increases the creativity of teachers and students, encourages socialization with the community, and creates a more communicative and balanced learning atmosphere in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In addition, students' characters are more formed with values such as discipline, responsibility, and concern for the environment.

Unlike conventional classroom-based education, outdoor learning is not just about moving lessons outside but creating an immersive experience that fosters behavioral change. Students participate in activities that enhance their awareness, responsibility, and engagement with their environment. Through games, experiments, competitions, and case studies, students learn in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, which helps build confidence, encourages discussion, and promotes active participation. The program is designed to be flexible, with different themes each year, ensuring dynamic and

meaningful learning experiences (Erwin, 2015).

According to Ansori (2015), outdoor learning can be realized in various forms, such as super camps, live-ins, study tours, field work, expeditions, outbound, and environmental exploration. Its implementation consists of the preparation, implementation, and follow-up stages in class. Teachers play a role in providing motivation, directing field investigations, and evaluating learning outcomes. The use of the environment as a learning medium requires careful planning so that educational goals are achieved optimally.

Realizing that character education plays a vital role in realizing Indonesia's national development vision, teachers and lecturers must integrate character education in their classes. At Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri (UNP Kediri), the English Language Education Study Program has adopted specific strategies to strengthen students' character development. One of the subjects that the lecturer implemented the character education by having outdoor learning.

Besides having outdoor activity, lecturers can apply Project Based Learning (PjBL) in order to facilitate student learn many things. In this learning model, students are assigned to create a project. The process of creating the project helps them develop their character. According to Thomas (2000), PjBL is a model that organizes learning around projects, where students actively explore real-world problems and challenges. This approach not only facilitates knowledge acquisition but also nurtures soft skills. Nurhajati (2017) stated that by providing various learning experiences, lecturers could stimulate students to practice critical thinking, become open-minded, establish communication with others, take initiative, be creative, and build self-confidence. Furthermore, Kavlu in Anggaira (2022) emphasized that teachers using PjBL can enhance students' language proficiency as well as their social communicative competence. Supporting this, Aghayani in Setiawan (2020) found that PjBL had a significant effect on students' writing ability, especially when carried out collaboratively in a supportive environment. These findings indicate that PjBL contributes significantly to both academic and character development.

The researcher was interested in observing the class of Introduction to Literature at the English Department, UNP Kediri. Based on the preliminary study, this course included an engaging component—outdoor activity in one of its sessions. The main

objective of the course was to develop students' understanding of literature through direct and interactive experiences. According to Rosenblatt's (1995) transactional theory, readers make meaning from texts through interaction between the reader and the text, influenced by the context. The Introduction to Literature course exposed students to a wide range of literary genres such as poetry, prose, drama, and essays, encouraging them to analyze and interpret literary works critically. This kind of experiential and contextual learning supports the development of interpretative skills and appreciation of literature, in line with Kramsch's (1993) view that literature enhances learners' cultural awareness and critical reflection.

One of the materials taught in Introduction to Literature is Poetry. In this course, poetry is introduced not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a tool to develop students' linguistic, analytical, and creative skills. According to Lazar (1993), the use of poetry in language learning can enhance learners' sensitivity to language, encourage personal engagement, and improve analytical abilities. Students are guided to examine poetic elements such as figurative language, imagery, rhythm, and structure. This analysis aims to deepen their understanding of literary meaning and the cultural significance embedded within poetic texts, aligning with Widdowson's (1975) argument that literary language provides opportunities for language and cultural enrichment.

One of the unique aspects of this course was the outdoor activity, which provided students the opportunity to engage with literature in a natural setting rather than in a traditional classroom. This approach is rooted in the theory of experiential learning by Kolb (1984), which emphasizes learning through experience and reflection. Engaging with nature allowed students to activate their senses and creativity, fostering better communication and character growth. The open environment served as a stimulus for imaginative thought, especially when students were tasked with composing poetry based on their direct observations.

This approach allowed students to connect poetry writing with environmental awareness, making literature a means of reflection and advocacy. In line with the concept of eco-literature and ecological criticism (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996), students developed sensitivity to environmental issues while expressing their ideas through poetry. Through observation sessions in Joyoboyo Forest Park, they described natural elements, crafted figurative language, and composed poetry inspired by their

surroundings. This hands-on experience not only fostered critical thinking and creativity but also nurtured ecological consciousness, echoing Orr's (1992) belief that all education is environmental education.

The novelty in this study lies in the integration between Project-Based Learning (PjBL), literary education especially in the form of poetry writing and increasing environmental awareness through an outdoor-based experiential learning approach. This study uniquely combines the creative process of writing poetry with direct experience in nature, namely in Joyoboyo Forest Park, which makes it different from conventional approaches that are usually carried out in the classroom. Through contextual poetry writing based on direct observation of natural objects, students not only develop linguistic and aesthetic competence, but also gain a deeper understanding of ecological values. This innovation also combines a multidisciplinary approach that connects literature with environmental education—an aspect that is still rarely touched on in traditional literary pedagogy. In addition, the use of nature as a learning medium functions as a means of fostering creativity, building empathy, improving critical thinking skills, and instilling a sense of responsibility towards the environment. Thus, this study contributes to the development of more holistic educational practices, where PjBL is utilized as a bridge between language learning, character education, and strengthening the values of desire.

Several previous studies have supported the integration of experiential learning and poetry writing within educational settings. For example, Husamah (2018) emphasized that outdoor-based learning can significantly enhance student engagement and creativity in literary production. However, his study primarily focused on general creative writing, without incorporating a structured project-based framework or a strong ecological dimension. In contrast, the present study adopts Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as its core instructional model, embedding poetry writing within a structured series of activities that emphasize planning, collaboration, reflection, and presentation, all conducted in a natural environment.

Nugraha et al. (2018) similarly explored the potential of environmentally themed PjBL in fostering poetic expression and environmental awareness. Nonetheless, their approach largely treated environmental issues as thematic content rather than using the physical natural environment as a direct source of experiential input. This study

advances the concept by positioning the natural setting—specifically, Joyoboyo Forest Park—not merely as a theme, but as an active, sensory, and reflective learning space where students engage directly with their surroundings to inspire their poetic creations.

Furthermore, while Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory has been widely applied in educational contexts to support the development of abstract thinking through concrete experience, this study uniquely operationalizes all four stages of Kolb's learning cycle—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—within the framework of literary education. Students interact with nature (concrete experience), reflect on their observations, conceptualize literary elements through analysis, and finally apply their insights in the form of original poetry writing (active experimentation).

Another key distinction lies in the fusion of poetry writing and environmental advocacy. Previous studies tend to treat these as parallel but separate educational goals. In contrast, this research integrates them into a singular pedagogical purpose: using poetry not only as an artistic and linguistic exercise but also as a tool for ecological reflection and character formation. Students are encouraged to express environmental values and develop ecological awareness through their creative work, thereby aligning literary learning with broader sustainability objectives.

The novelty of this study resides in its integrative pedagogical approach that combines Project-Based Learning, contextual poetry writing, and ecological awareness within an outdoor experiential framework. Unlike prior research, this study places the natural environment at the center of both process and content, enabling students to construct knowledge and meaning through direct interaction with nature. This holistic model fosters not only literary competence and creative expression but also promotes environmental sensitivity and personal character development—offering a contemporary and interdisciplinary innovation in literature education.

Based on the description above, the researcher was interested in conducting research with the aim: to describe the lecturer's strategies to build students' characters in the Introduction to Literature course at Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri.

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore how the outdoor learning program at UNP Kediri contributes to student character development. The study aims to capture the experiences and perspectives of both the students and the lecturer, providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of outdoor learning on student character development. The study focuses on the learning process and the formation of character values through direct experience in outdoor activity.

The findings of this research, derived from three primary instruments—observation, interviews, and document analysis—demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating Project-Based Learning (PjBL) with outdoor experiential learning in enhancing students' literary and ecological competencies. Observations conducted during the outdoor activity at Joyoboyo Forest Park showed that students were highly engaged, actively collaborating, and creatively composing poetry based on their direct interactions with nature. Interviews with the lecturer and two active students further confirmed that the natural setting inspired deeper reflection and expression, fostering not only creativity but also personal and environmental awareness. Document analysis, which included the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), teaching materials, and student poetry projects, revealed a clear alignment between instructional goals and actual learning outcomes. The student projects exhibited rich use of figurative language and vivid environmental imagery, indicating that the outdoor, project-based approach successfully facilitated contextual understanding and expressive writing. Together, these findings affirm that the combination of PjBL and outdoor learning creates a holistic and impactful educational experience in literature instruction.

Data analysis followed the model by Miles and Huberman in Suryana (2007), consisting of three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and summarizing relevant information, while data display organized findings into meaningful categories for easier interpretation. Conclusions were drawn through verification, ensuring that results were valid and reliable. To enhance data validity, the study applied techniques such as extended observation, persistent observation, and triangulation. These methods ensured the accuracy and credibility of the research findings, contributing to a deeper understanding of how outdoor learning fosters character development among students.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

The present study examines the integration of outdoor experiential learning within the Introduction to Literature course at UNP Kediri. It specifically focuses on how literary concepts—most notably, the art of poetry—are applied by students through direct interaction with nature. This approach is grounded in the belief that real-life experiences can enhance the understanding and internalization of abstract literary theories, especially when those experiences are structured to promote both creativity and reflection. The core activity was conducted in Joyoboyo Forest Park, Kediri, under the theme "GO GREEN". This location was selected for its rich natural environment, which served as both a subject and a source of inspiration for students' literary work. By positioning students within a natural setting, the learning process extended beyond the classroom walls, enabling them to engage all senses while observing environmental phenomena. The theme underscored the project's dual objective: literary expression and the development of ecological consciousness.



Figure 1. Reciting Poems

The learning activity was structured into three stages: pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity. Each stage was designed to guide students through a process of preparation, engagement, and reflection. The pre-activity stage focused on building awareness of the learning goals and equipping students with the necessary knowledge of poetic elements. This foundation aimed to prepare students mentally and technically for the creative tasks ahead. During the main activity, students conducted observations in small groups, discussed their findings, and began translating their experiences into poetry. The outdoor setting not only provided content for their creative work but also

fostered collaborative learning, critical thinking, and public speaking through group discussions and individual presentations. In this way, the activity integrated academic, artistic, and personal development.

The next stage is the revision and finalization of the poems based on feedback given by lecturers and fellow students. This process allows students to re-evaluate the choice of diction, style of language, rhyme, and the message they want to convey so that their poems are stronger and more meaningful. After being refined, the final version of the poems is collected and the best works can be published in campus media or compiled in the form of a digital anthology. Thus, this project is not only a place to develop student creativity, but also a place for them to spread awareness of the importance of environmental conservation through literature. Through poetry, they not only learned to process words aesthetically, but also contributed to voicing concern for nature and building ecological awareness among the wider community.

### **Learning Activities**

The learning activity began with a preparation stage that the students were asked to be present on time and receive direction from the lecturer regarding the objectives and rules of the activity. After that, the opening session was carried out with a joint prayer and interactive games to build a pleasant atmosphere and increase student enthusiasm. These games were designed to foster self-confidence and create a supportive and interactive learning environment. The following is the description of the outdoor activity.

#### **1. Pre-activity**

At 07.00 WIB, the students arrived at the location to adjust to the surrounding environment before starting the learning. They then gathered at a predetermined point to receive direction from the lecturer regarding the rules, objectives, and schedule of the activity. After that, attendance was taken to ensure the presence of all participants, as well as an initial step in building effective coordination. As part of the preparation, they were also asked to prepare personal equipment such as stationery and logistics so that they could participate in the activity optimally.

The activity began with a joint prayer as a form of spiritual reflection and an

expression of gratitude towards nature. This prayer aimed to instill the values of spiritual awareness and togetherness among participants. After that, the students were invited to take part in interactive games such as "Say YES, YES!" and "Say OK, OK!" which were designed to build enthusiasm and increase solidarity among participants. This activity not only created a more fluid and enjoyable atmosphere, but also helped students in building good communication with fellow participants.

Various positive characters were formed in the initial session of this activity, especially discipline and responsibility. Students were taught to be on time, follow the rules, and prepare their own needs before the activity began. In addition, aspects of cooperation and collaboration were also trained through interactions during games and briefings.

## 2. Main-activity

The students who participated in outdoor learning activities in the Joyoboyo Forest Park were given the opportunity to conduct direct observations of the surrounding environment, including flora, fauna, and existing ecosystems. In small groups, they discussed their findings to better understand how each element in nature interacts with each other. This discussion not only aimed to increase students' ecological insight, but also trained them to think critically and analyze natural phenomena more systematically. With a collaborative approach, each group member had an important role in drawing conclusions and preparing reports on their observations.



Figure 2 Group Discussion

After the group discussion, the students were challenged to present their findings individually in front of their friends and lecturers. This presentation aimed to practice public speaking skills while increasing their confidence in conveying information clearly and systematically. In addition, as a form of implementation of environmental awareness, they were also asked to convey an invitation to preserve nature through persuasive speeches. Through this activity, they not only learned to understand the concept of ecology, but also acted as the agents of change who are able to invite the community to care more about the environment.

This activity not only provided academic experience, but also instilled positive character traits in students, such as responsibility, cooperation, and concern for nature. With an approach based on direct experience, the students gained a deeper understanding of the environment and the importance of maintaining ecosystem balance. Outdoor learning in the Joyoboyo Forest Park proved that learning carried out outside the classroom could train them cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, and environmental awareness

As real evidence of this activity, a collection of student poems with the theme "GO GREEN" was documented in the form of writing and video recordings during the poetry reading. Photo documentation also shows how students enthusiastically wrote, discussed, and read their poems. This activity proves that poetry can be a powerful educational tool, not only to express the beauty of nature, but also as a means to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. By combining art and ecological literacy, students not only learn to write poetry, but also foster a sense of love and responsibility for nature. The following poem is the example of the students' final projects.



Figure 3. Poem Made by the Students

### 3. Post- activity

After the entire series of outdoor learning activities in the Joyoboyo Forest Park were completed, the students gathered for a reflection session. In this session, they were invited to reflect on the experiences they had gone through and identify valuable lessons learned. The open discussion was guided by the lecturer with several reflective questions, such as "What was the most memorable thing about this activity?" or "How do we protect the environment after this activity?". With this discussion, students not only recalled important moments in the activity, but also understood the impact of the experiential learning they had gone through.

This reflection also became a means for students to develop character, especially in terms of honesty and self-awareness. Through reflection, they could honestly evaluate how far they had learned, what they understood, and how this activity affected their mindset towards the environment. In addition, discussions with their friends fostered empathy and social awareness, because they learned to understand other people's perspectives and realized the importance of the individual's role in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. This activity built an understanding that every small action towards nature has a greater impact on the community and the surrounding environment.

In closing, the reflection session ended with a prayer together as a form of gratitude for the experience that had been gained. Students are encouraged to appreciate the opportunity to learn in the outdoors and appreciate the role of nature as a source of inspiration and learning. This joint prayer also strengthens aspects of spirituality and gratitude, instilling the value that learning is not only about knowledge, but also about building deeper relationships with oneself, others, and the environment.

One of the main values developed in this activity is concern for the environment. This program could instill various values. The students learned to follow a predetermined activity schedule, work together with group members, and complete tasks with full responsibility. They are also encouraged to develop an honest attitude in reflecting on their learning, both in recognizing the challenges faced and in expressing opinions during discussions. By combining academic elements and character building, this program proves that outdoor learning can be an effective method in building students' personalities. In addition to improving intellectual skills, students also learn to become more responsible, creative, and caring individuals for the environment and others.

### **Results of event activities and data collection**

This study explores a case of outdoor literary learning activity conducted in the Introduction to Literature course at Universitas Negeri PGRI Kediri, which aimed to integrate literary theory with real-world ecological experiences. The findings are organized into five thematic categories that emerged from observations, field notes, student outputs, and reflection sessions.

#### **1. Integration of Literary Theory and Real-Life Experience**

One of the central findings of this study is the discovery that outdoor learning plays a vital role in bridging the gap between abstract literary concepts and students' real-life experiences. When learning takes place in natural environments, such as Joyoboyo Forest Park, students are no longer confined to classroom theories but are encouraged to actively engage with their surroundings. This context allows them to make personal connections between the subject matter and what they observe directly in nature.

During the activity, students were asked to observe elements of the natural world—trees, wind, birdsong, and the overall forest atmosphere. These observations became the raw material for their creative expression. Equipped with prior instruction on poetic devices such as figurative language, stanza structure, rhyme, and rhythm, students began to translate their sensory experiences into lines of poetry.

Immersion in the natural environment appeared to foster a deeper emotional engagement with the subject matter. The setting provided not just visual inspiration, but also emotional and reflective space for students to process what they saw and felt. This emotional connection helped elevate their poetic creations beyond technical exercises, allowing for the emergence of genuine and meaningful expression.

A concrete example of this integration can be seen in a student's use of the metaphor "the forest is the breath of life." This line was inspired by the student's encounter with the stillness and vitality of the forest environment. Such metaphorical expression demonstrates that students were not merely applying learned techniques; they were experiencing and internalizing the poetic process in a meaningful and personal way.

Through this experiential learning approach, students were able to create poetry that was not only aesthetically expressive but also carried ecological messages. Their works reflected both creativity and awareness, showing how literature can be a powerful medium to promote environmental conservation. Ultimately, the integration of observation, reflection, and literary technique resulted in learning that was both intellectually and emotionally impactful.

## **2. Development of Self-Expression and Confidence**

Through the poetry recitation phase, students were given the opportunity to express their emotions and ideas in a verbal format. This stage became a pivotal moment where students could transfer their written creativity into oral expression. The act of reading aloud allowed them to bring their poems to life and communicate not only the literal meaning of their words but also the emotions embedded within them. In doing so, students experienced firsthand how literature, especially poetry, can be a powerful medium for personal expression.

The recitation activity was designed to train students in essential aspects of verbal

delivery, including proper intonation, clear articulation, and emotional nuance. These elements are vital in ensuring that the message and feeling of a poem reach the audience effectively. Students had to consider how their voice, pauses, and rhythm could influence the listener's interpretation of the poem. This required a level of awareness and intentionality in speech that many had not practiced before, pushing them to develop both technical and expressive speaking skills.

Beyond the technical aspect of oral performance, this activity contributed significantly to the development of students' verbal communication abilities. For many of them, it was the first time they had to present literary work in front of their peers in a performance setting. This challenge encouraged them to step outside of their comfort zones and practice speaking in a way that demanded clarity, presence, and emotional connection. As a result, students gradually built confidence in their capacity to convey ideas meaningfully through spoken language.

The impact of this poetry reading was particularly visible among students who were previously passive or hesitant to speak during classroom discussions. These individuals began to show noticeable changes in their willingness to participate and engage with others. For instance, one student shared that "Reading my poem aloud helped me find my voice and made me feel heard," indicating a shift in their self-perception and communication identity. The experience of being listened to and acknowledged by peers helped cultivate a sense of self-worth and communicative confidence.

This transformation suggests that creative expression, when nurtured in a supportive and open environment such as outdoor learning, can significantly foster personal growth. Specifically, it highlights the role of literature as a tool not only for artistic expression but also for developing skills in public speaking and emotional literacy. In these outdoor sessions, students were not merely fulfilling academic requirements—they were also exploring and affirming their voices in ways that contributed to their holistic development literacy as an individual.

### **3. Strengthening of Character and Social Awareness**

Outdoor learning in this context was not merely an academic exercise but also a vehicle for character development. Through its carefully structured design, the activity



extended beyond the transmission of literary knowledge and engaged students in moral and social learning. It encouraged them to embody values that are essential not only in academic settings but also in real-life interactions and civic responsibilities. This form of learning emphasized holistic development, where attitudes and behaviors were shaped alongside intellectual growth.

The preparatory phase played a significant role in embedding positive character traits. Students were informed in advance about the need to be punctual and responsible, which helped them to mentally prepare for the demands of the activity. The expectation to bring personal learning tools and necessary supplies was not merely logistical; it functioned as a practical exercise in self-management and accountability. This reinforced the idea that active learning requires active preparation, and that responsibility begins with oneself.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the activities nurtured interpersonal values such as cooperation and empathy. Students worked in groups during discussions and presentations, which required them to listen actively, respect differing perspectives, and contribute constructively. These interactions, though centered on literary and ecological content, became opportunities for social bonding and collective problem-solving. Such experiences are vital for building communication skills and a sense of mutual respect among peers.

Interactive games, conducted during the opening session, added a dynamic layer to the learning experience. Designed to foster enthusiasm and engagement, these games also served a deeper function—they broke down social barriers and created a positive emotional climate. This allowed students to feel more comfortable expressing themselves, forming connections with classmates, and building a sense of community. The light-hearted nature of these games complemented the serious academic goals by enhancing emotional readiness and group cohesion.

Finally, the reflection sessions at the end of the activity brought all elements of character education into focus. Students were invited to articulate what they had learned, not only in terms of content but also in terms of personal growth. They listened to their peers' insights, shared their own experiences, and collectively discussed the environmental themes they had explored. This process fostered a sense of shared responsibility, as students realized that their individual actions could influence broader

ecological outcomes. Reflection, therefore, became a moment of both self-awareness and communal awareness, reinforcing the role of outdoor learning in shaping responsible and empathetic individuals.

#### **4. Ecological Literacy through Literary Creation**

The implementation of the project successfully established a strong connection between ecological awareness and literary expression. Through this initiative, students were encouraged to observe the environment closely and channel their reflections into poetic form. This approach allowed them to internalize environmental messages and express their understanding of nature's value using the language of literature. Rather than relying on didactic methods, the project enabled students to explore ecological themes through creative expression, making the learning process more meaningful and personally engaging.

The poems produced by students revealed not only their growing technical skill in literary composition but also a sincere concern for environmental issues. The imagery, metaphors, and messages within the poems frequently highlighted the beauty and fragility of the natural world. By writing about forests, rivers, animals, and other elements of the ecosystem, students were able to depict their direct experiences and raise awareness through an aesthetic lens. The poems, therefore, became a medium not only for artistic exploration but also for ecological reflection and advocacy.

The creative process allowed students to translate complex environmental concerns into accessible and emotionally resonant literary works. In many of the poems, themes of preservation, balance, and respect for nature were emphasized, suggesting a deepening of students' ecological literacy. This literacy was not only conceptual but also expressive—students learned to use language effectively to convey the urgency of protecting the environment. Such poetic engagement indicated that students were not merely absorbing environmental knowledge but were also becoming active communicators of ecological values.

An example that stands out is a line from one student's poem: "Nurture the Earth as you nurture your soul." This poetic statement encapsulates the dual awareness the students developed—an artistic sensitivity and an ecological consciousness. The line suggests that caring for the environment is intrinsically linked to one's inner well-being,

a perspective that reflects both creative maturity and moral responsibility. Through such expressions, students revealed an ability to make profound connections between personal values and global environmental issues.

Moreover, the impact of these poetic works extended beyond the classroom setting. Several of the poems were considered strong enough to be published in campus media or compiled into a digital anthology. This external recognition not only validated the students' creative efforts but also amplified the reach of their ecological messages. As tools of advocacy, the poems served as a bridge between academic learning and public awareness, demonstrating the power of literature to inspire action and foster a culture of environmental stewardship among the wider community.

## **5. Holistic Learning and Personal Reflection**

The final stage of the outdoor learning activity was a structured reflection session, carefully facilitated by the lecturer. This session served as a critical moment for students to pause, think back on their experiences, and articulate what they had learned throughout the program. Unlike typical classroom reviews, this reflection was not only cognitive in nature but also emotional and philosophical, inviting students to explore the meaning behind their actions and observations during the activity. The atmosphere was made intentionally calm and open to allow every student the space to contribute honestly and comfortably.

During the session, students were encouraged to engage in self-evaluation. They were prompted to reflect on their individual learning journeys, the challenges they faced, and the moments that stood out most to them. In doing so, they could internalize the knowledge they gained, recognize their personal growth, and appreciate how the outdoor setting enriched their understanding. The act of sharing these reflections also created a collective learning moment, where students learned not just from their own insights but also from the perspectives and stories shared by their peers.

A key element in this process was the use of guided reflective questions posed by the lecturer. Questions such as "What touched you the most in today's experience?" and "How do you view nature differently now?" were powerful in prompting deep introspection. These questions did more than just recall factual learning; they encouraged students to explore emotional connections and shifts in perception. The

responses gathered during this session illustrated how outdoor literary learning could spark meaningful personal transformation.

One response in particular captured the essence of this change. A student expressed, “I used to see forests as just trees. Now I see them as life.” This simple yet profound statement reflected a deeper ecological awareness that had been awakened through direct engagement with nature. It showed that the activity had not only conveyed literary knowledge but had also fostered a more empathetic and spiritual connection to the environment—one that was internalized and personally meaningful.

Ultimately, the reflection session played a crucial role in consolidating the entire learning experience. It allowed students to process their journey not just as a series of tasks or assignments, but as a holistic encounter with nature, self, and others. Through this process, they developed greater self-awareness, cultivated a sense of gratitude for the environment, and began to consider the ethical dimensions of human interaction with nature. This holistic reflection enriched their educational experience and planted seeds for future ecological responsibility and creative expression.

## **Discussions**

The Introduction to Literature course aims to help students understand literature as both an artistic and cultural expression of social realities. Students study poetry, prose, and drama, focusing on how literary works reflect cultural values and social norms, while also building critical thinking and analytical skills. Learning activities combine theory and practice, including creative writing of poems, short stories, and drama scripts. Students also perform folklore-based dramas to enhance communication and teamwork. Literature is also used as a medium to support English language learning. Through analyzing texts, students improve vocabulary, grammar, and contextual language use in a meaningful way. This integrated approach makes language learning more engaging while deepening students’ literary understanding. It encourages them to explore language both creatively and critically. Overall, the course helps students develop 21st-century skills such as creativity, communication, and problem solving, while fostering appreciation for literature's beauty and relevance.

The results of this study indicate that the outdoor learning program in the Joyoboyo Forest has successfully integrated character education with academic

learning. This program instills the values of cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, and concern for the environment through direct experience in nature. This activity not only enriches academic understanding but also shapes students' character through real interaction with the environment, as emphasized by Kardjono (2017).

Experiential learning involving natural challenges has been shown to improve student cooperation and independence. Husamah's study (2018) showed that nature exploration and environmental observation encouraged group discussions and better interpersonal communication. In addition, writing environmental poetry activities helped students understand global issues and express their ecological awareness creatively.

Outdoor learning activities also contribute to building student tolerance and empathy. Based on Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984), direct involvement in observation and presentation trains students in solving problems together and appreciating differences of opinion. In addition, the incorporation of local literary and cultural elements, such as writing the poem "Go Green," provides broader insight into the values of sustainability and cultural heritage.

The entire program emphasizes the importance of a holistic learning approach that integrates academic, creative, and character aspects. Outdoor learning not only creates an active and collaborative learning atmosphere but also forms individuals who have moral integrity and social competence. With direct experience in nature, students are prepared to become a generation with strong character, able to compete globally, and contribute to maintaining environmental sustainability.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the Introduction to Literature course at UNP Kediri, focusing on the process how character education is conducted through outdoor activity. The findings indicate that the students actively engaged in literary analysis and creative writing, incorporating cultural heritage into their works. The outdoor activity at Joyoboyo Forest combined academic learning with character building, fostering values such as cooperation, responsibility, discipline, and environmental awareness. Through direct engagement with nature and collaborative activities, students not only improved their literary and language skills but also developed a deeper appreciation for social and

environmental issues.

Based on the findings, several suggestions are proposed for lecturers, universities, and future researchers. Lecturers are encouraged to continue using experiential learning methods and incorporate contemporary issues into literature-based assignments. Universities should support outdoor learning initiatives by providing necessary facilities and collaborating with external organizations to enhance experiential learning opportunities. Future research could explore the long-term impact of outdoor learning on student performance, character development, and professional readiness, as well as investigate its applicability in other disciplines. These recommendations highlight the importance of integrating innovative, holistic approaches in higher education to ensure both academic excellence and personal growth.

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