

Exploring the Impact of Autobiographical Poetry Writing on Perceptions, Emotions, and Desires in Indonesian EFL Students

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Abstract

While there is a growing interest in poetry writing, it is important to explore students' experiences of writing poetry related to their meaningful lived experiences in an English as a Foreign Language setting. The study aims to investigate students' perceptions, emotions, and desires toward the activity of autobiographical poetry writing. Valid responses were obtained from 143 EFL students through a Qualtrics online survey, which examined their experiences in composing autobiographical poetry and its impact on their perceptions, emotions, and desire to learn poetry. The participants came from ten universities across various regions in Indonesia. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis revealed that participants perceive writing autobiographical poetry to be a challenging experience due to technical language and poetic style. They also demonstrated a range of emotions, notably fear and anxiety, despite believing that the activity is beneficial. Although most of them experienced many challenges in autobiographical poetry writing, they expressed a desire to continue learning how to write poetry in the future. Participants were able to express their personal experiences in meaningful ways through their poems despite their anxiety about poetry writing. Hence, this study can serve as a stepping stone toward integrating poetry into Indonesian EFL curricula as a form of meaningful literacy.

Keywords: autobiographical poetry writing, literacy skills, higher education, language teaching

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1. Introduction

The landscape of language instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts has evolved, encompassing not only cognitive but also emotional and aesthetic dimensions that resonate with and engage with students' lives, impacting their academic achievement (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022a; Shakki, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Learning a language constitutes a journey of broadening and intensifying the avenues through which an individual comprehends, interprets, and expresses personal insights within social contexts, integrating cognition, emotions, and aesthetics to shape identity and understanding (Derakshan & Shakki, 2019, 2020; Hanauer, 2012; Tett, 2011). In addition, effective learning experiences occur when students can develop their creativity and imagination through language activities connected to real-life situations (Richards, 2013). In this context, EFL educators are encouraged to design learning experiences that enable students to forge creative connections between students' personal narratives, self-exploration, and language learning.

Teaching poetry, a creative writing, can be a valuable tool for learning experiences and creative expressions that enhance students' linguistic competences, imagination, and freedom through specific language forms. Through poetry, students can directly engage with various mediums and draw from personal experiences to activate their imaginations while exploring language creatively, thus, enhancing the learning process and making it more enjoyable (Bhandari, 2023; Munteanu & Tolico, 2022). Introducing students to poetry serves as an avenue for creative exploration through the use of words and imagination, inspiring them to express their emotions and experiences when it is integrated into the instructional design of a writing class for a second language or foreign language or in the curricular framework (El Khoiri, 2017; Hanauer & Liao, 2016).

Teaching poetry, however, poses various challenges in the EFL classroom. For instance, in Japan and Indonesia, there is a focus on grammar or linguistic form rather than language content (Iida, 2016). Some EFL teachers concentrate on students' understanding of classical poetry through specific poetic patterns and rhetorical styles, while providing limited to no opportunities for students' language production and creative interpretation (Hanauer, 2010; Kuswardhani et al., 2022). Due to a lack of

poetry writing experiences, pedagogical fear on teaching poetry writing, and the romanticized notion of teaching classic poetry as the ideal model in the classroom, EFL teachers may lack motivation to teach poetry writing (Blake & Snapper, 2022; Masbuhin & Liao, 2017). Consequently, students are not exposed to poetry that relates to their real-life experiences, they may struggle to comprehend and fully engage with it (Dymoke & Hughes, 2009; Villanueva, 2016).

Given this complexity, there is a growing demand for more empirical studies in the EFL context, particularly in places like Indonesia, to examine EFL college students' exposure to various types of poetry writing that can evoke meanings from their life experiences. Some studies have explored EFL students' poetry writing (Hanauer, 2010; Iida, 2012a), specifically in the Indonesian context (Fithriani, 2021; Sari et al., 2020). However, more research is needed to delve into students' poetry experiences and how they engage in meaningful literacy (Kim & Park, 2020). The current study discusses EFL college students' experiences with poetry writing and how their perceptions, emotions, and desire to compose poetry are influenced by their poetry writing, prompting to meaningful language learning experiences. Utilizing autobiographical poetry as a means of self-discovery through personal experiences and insights within creative writing, the study employs the genre of poetry writing to explore students' experiences of language learning.

Previous studies only focus on how autobiographical poetry writing improves students' language skills without considering the factors of students' feelings (perceptions, emotions, and desires, specifically) thoroughly. Although some involve students' perception and motivation, they separately investigate those two variables. Furthermore, its specific implementation in the Indonesian context has not been explored. Hence, the current study attempted to investigate whether autobiographical poetry writing experiences influence Indonesian EFL students in the process of poetry writing.

Research Question

Therefore, this study focused on the following research question:

How do the experiences of autobiographical poetry writing among Indonesian EFL students influence their perceptions, emotions, and desires to learn poetry writing?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Original Creative Writing

Creativity is described as the capacity to solve problems in unique and valuable ways relevant to goals; perceive new meanings and form new connections between things; generate original and imaginative thoughts and ideas; and use imagination and experience to create new possibilities. These abilities are primarily framed in terms of verbal creativity indicators, such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Although research on the creativity of EFL students' writing is limited, the existing studies often utilize these verbal indicators to assess creativity (Kim et al., 2024; Ghufroon & Ermawati, 2018). While everyone can be creative, the degree of creativity exhibited by an individual depends on their ability to break free from fixed ideas (Kenett et al., 2018).

Creative writing involves a complex array of cognitive processes, including idea generation, which involves a writer deliberately and strategically searching for ideas, evaluating them, and translating significant ideas into text to meet the requirements of a writing task (Woo et al., 2023). In a classroom setting, students often face challenges in idea generation, mainly because EFL learners have fewer words, skills, and memory resources than native speakers (Lin & Chang, 2020). Students may also not receive adequate writing instruction and feedback from teachers (Butterfuss et al., 2022).

Several studies have explored pedagogical strategies to enhance students' perceptions in creative writing, with collaborative writing emerging as particularly effective in EFL contexts. Collaborative writing could improve idea generation among novice, intermediate, and advanced EFL writers (Moonma & Kaweera, 2021). While collaboration is beneficial, finding a suitable collaborator can be challenging for students both inside and outside the classroom. The use of artificial intelligence is also a strategy that can be used, especially Natural Language Generation (NLG), which is an AI process that produces human-readable language texts from information (Woo et al., 2023). EFL students' use of NLG tools might facilitate idea generation, which is crucial for creative writing. Workshops where students learned to write stories using both their own words and those generated by NLG tools revealed that these tools could help students in idea generation and evaluation. Techniques such as brainstorming and

mind mapping are also significant in creative writing production (Kim et al., 2021). These specific instructional methods help reduce the performance gap between students with high and low creative abilities.

Furthermore, creativity encourages more active participation and a greater focus on producing elaborate and meaningful written ideas, which is particularly important in EFL contexts due to the challenge of competently producing text in a second language (Kim et al., 2024). While research indicates that creativity enhances writing performance, being creative while negotiating meaning in a foreign language can be difficult (Jaelani, 2017). This highlights the need for more instructional support to foster creativity, as EFL writing students have identified insufficient support as a factor contributing to a lack of creativity in their writing (Rababah et al., 2018). Thus, instructors should consider ways to provide instructional support to promote creativity in EFL writing courses.

2.2. Autobiographical Writing in EFL context

Incorporating poetry writing into second language education can create a more humane learning environment (Hanauer, 2012). The choice of poetic genres for this purpose is justified by the nature of poetry itself. Specifically, poetry is described as a literary work that conveys the author's personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions (Hanauer, 2004). It emphasizes the use of self-referential language, which helps both the reader and the writer gain a fresh perspective on the depicted experience, thought, or feeling. This description promotes an open, liberating, and accessible approach to poetry by focusing on personal experiences and emotions. Furthermore, the self-referential use of language allows individuals to draw from a wide range of resources, including textual, linguistic, multilingual, cultural, aural, spatial, and visual modes.

Anthropologists have discovered that engaging in autobiographical writing, such as journaling or other forms of expressive writing, can serve as a valuable tool for exploring and processing challenging life experiences (Parson et al., 2022). This practice not only facilitates new perspectives but also enables individuals to assert their rich-lived experiences with linguistic and cultural backgrounds as assets while fostering their agency through what's termed "autobiographical power" (Myers, 2016;

Yigitbilek, 2022). Since status of bilingualism/multilingualism has played a crucial role in shaping and constructing various identities, the utilization of autobiographical power becomes a significant tool to expose students' experiences in exploring the target language (Asadolahi & Nushi, 2021). Marlatt and Cibils (2018) argue that autobiographical writing can help their participants like pre-service teachers to explore and reimagine their identity by engaging their life narratives, fostering creativity, and honing writing skills. This kind of learning process mediated by autobiographical writing is crucial for students' language acquisition and personal growth.

In the EFL context, autobiographical writing allows the writer to utilize memory, imagination, and personal experience to explore and comprehend the self (Hanauer, 2010). In this case, the deep reflection and emotional engagement inherent in literacy tasks, such as poetry, contribute to making them meaningful (Kim & Park, 2020). Scholarly research supports the efficacy of poetry as a compelling instrument for exploring individual lived experiences, such as mourning (Hanauer & Liao, 2016), earthquake survivors' narratives (Iida, 2016), experiences of studying abroad (Hanauer, 2010), living in rural contexts (Kristiantari et al., 2023), and surviving during Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown (Sharma, 2024). Such literary practices contribute to the evolution of the meaningful literacy framework, a crucial cornerstone of poetry writing that resonates with individuals' lived experiences (Hanauer, 2010). This form of literacy is beneficial for educators as it facilitates an understanding of students' perceptions and emotions through reflexive exercises (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022a). Consequently, writing poetry in a foreign language frees EFL students from the constraints of grammatical and structural precision in English, encouraging them to appreciate their diverse resources and enjoy the writing process.

2.3. Perception, Emotion, and Desires in Poetry Writing

Some studies have investigated the influence of perception, emotion, and desire in poetry writing separately. Poetry writing has shown positive effects on students' outcomes (Aladini & Farahbod, 2020; Atsushi & Chamcharatsri, 2020; Liao & Roy, 2017). Poetry writing also has significant effects on students' emotional engagement (Hanauer, 2010; Hanauer & Liao, 2016). Students' willingness (desire or motivation)

also influences their writing improvement (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022; Mauludin et al., 2023).

The incorporation of poetry into language writing experiences for EFL students has influenced positive perceptions. It fosters a positive outlook on the poetry writing process, with students demonstrating enthusiasm for creative and meaningful poetry composition (Aladini & Farahbod, 2020; Hanauer & Liao, 2016; Liao & Roy, 2017). As part of creative writing, poetry writing involves both positive and negative memories for students, leading to reduced stress and a more personalized focus (Atsushi & Chamcharatsri, 2020; Hanauer & Liao, 2016). It also enhances students' confidence and willingness to share their work due to the absence of competition and lower expectations compared to academic writing experiences. Poetry ignites a sense of potential and excitement, transforming language and poetic form from obstacles to conduits of creativity (Myhill & Wilson, 2013). In terms of skills mastery, it expands students' vocabulary and assists them in learning new words and selecting appropriate language to convey their emotions (Iida, 2012b; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023). The enhancement of second language (L2) linguistic awareness can be observed as a result of the participants' engagement in negotiating the construction of meaning within a structured framework.

Related to students' emotions, poetry serves as a catalyst for emotional engagement in language learning, enabling students to interact with their personal memories and internal thoughts (Hanauer, 2010; Hanauer & Liao, 2016). Various studies have explored emotional expression in students' poetry, triggered by evocative recollections of past experiences (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Hanauer, 2010; Iida, 2012b). It allows emotional writing to enter and interact in the classroom (Chamcharatsri, 2013). The task of conveying emotions within a set format provides students with the opportunity to navigate the process of creating, refining, and expressing meaning, resulting in the cultivation of a stronger sense of individual voice (Iida, 2012b). This encourages the growth of their internal reflections, emotions, and ownership over their writing (Hanauer & Liao, 2016).

Language choice and cultural context in poetry writing influence emotional expression (Iida, 2016; Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022b). It also enables students to

unearth and engage with latent emotions (Hanauer & Liao, 2016). Poetic writing assists students in exploring their feelings, which functions as therapeutic tool and aids in self-narrative healing and empathy (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Chalise, 2023; Hanauer & Liao, 2016; Sharma, 2024). Furthermore, EFL students could initiate their emotions in their poems through story sharing beforehand (Fithriani, 2021). Hence, poetry writing, infused with emotional expression, facilitates self-exploration and understanding in second language learning (Hanauer, 2010).

Furthermore, the desire of learning poetry in EFL context has a strong connection with their motivation in learning the language. In an EFL writing class, motivation holds significant importance as one of the crucial factors influencing students' achievement, as it mirrors their individual qualities of persistence and perseverance (Mauludin, 2021; Mauludin et al., 2021). Students' low anxiety in learning the language holds essential factor in the success of the learning process (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022; Mauludin et al., 2023). Research indicates that creative writing elicits more favorable experiences compared to academic writing (Hanauer & Liao, 2016).

Previous studies indicate how the utilization of literacy writing enhances students' engagement. Students tend to experience positive emotions as they are given the opportunity to utilize and refine their rhetorical, linguistic, and structural skills in both their primary and secondary languages (Iida, 2017). The nuanced rhetorical and linguistic techniques are beneficial for students to articulate a wider range of emotional vocabulary (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Kuswardhani et al., 2022; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023). Additionally, they expand their vocabulary repertoire, which enriches their language learning process. Thus, poetry serves as a vital platform for students to convey their experiences using the available rhetorical and linguistic strategies, offering an authentic context for language negotiation (Hanauer, 2004; Kim & Park, 2020). Given that motivation plays a crucial role in language learning, employing a form of writing that minimizes negative reactions is inherently significant, and creative writing appears to offer this potential (Hanauer & Liaou, 2016). This factor alone would validate the importance of integrating creative writing into a second language literacy curriculum.

Based on the studies above, the combined influence of the three variables (perceptions, emotions, and desires) on the process of poetry writing has not been

thoroughly explored, particularly in the Indonesian context. Specifically, in the case of autobiography, there has not been any specific study in Indonesia that examines its connection to students' perceptions, emotions, and desires, as previous studies have focused on the "general" poetry writing experience. Hence, the current study aims to investigate whether autobiographical poetry writing influences students' perceptions, emotions, and desires.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Subjects

Participants comprised 143 EFL students from 10 universities across various regions in Indonesia, including Sumatra, West Java, Central Java, Sulawesi, Maluku, and NTT. The homogeneous sampling technique was employed. Participants' first language was Bahasa Indonesia, while English served as their second or foreign language. Of these, 114 were enrolled in English Education programs, while 29 majored in English Literature. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25. Among them, 37 were male, and 106 were female. All data were collected from participants under the supervision of Indiana University of Pennsylvania's IRB board (Log #17-258).

3.2. Instruments

The instruments in this study are derived from Kaldina's (2018) study consisting of survey questions for pre-and post-test and essay questions, which the researchers utilized in this study. While Kaldina's (2018) study prompt centered on pantun, an Indonesian culturally-based poetry form, the writing prompt employed in this study focused on autobiographical poetry. The prompt of autobiographical poetry aims to elicit and contemplate participants' poetic encounters, encompassing their understanding and background as English language learners (Hanauer, 2004, 2010). Refer to Figure 1 for the writing prompt and Figure 2 for an example of an Autobiographical poetry.

Figure 1
Writing Prompt

Direction: In this section, you will be asked to remember **a significant or memorable experience** that happened when you were learning English. Please take a minute and think carefully about all the details of that experience.

Directions: After you have thought about this experience, think carefully about your feelings or emotions toward that learning experience.

PLEASE WRITE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POETRY DESCRIBING THIS EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING ENGLISH. An Autobiographical poetry is a poem about your life experience. Try to describe the moment in your poem so clearly that somebody reading your poem could visualize your experience too. There are NO particular rules in writing this poem, and it does not necessarily have to rhyme. Be creative and have fun!

Figure 2
Example of an Autobiographical Poetry

ENGLISH LEARNING

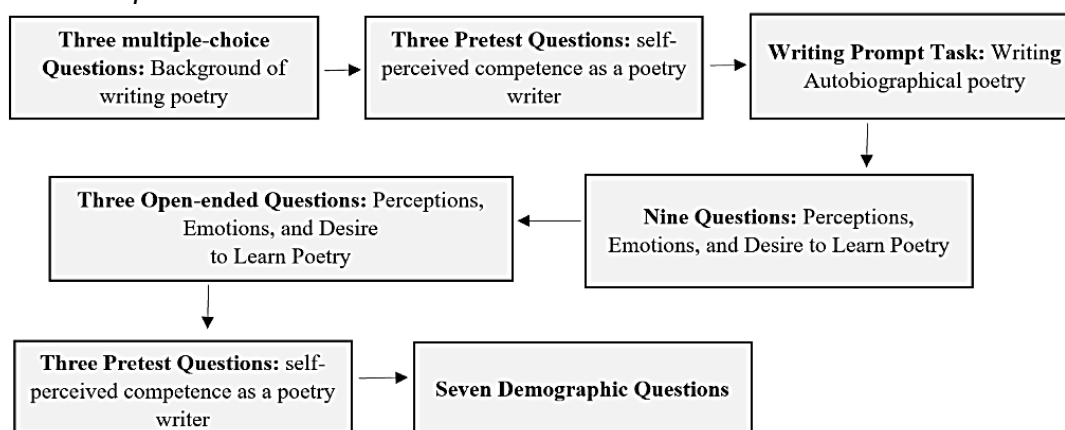
There is a time when my English learning
is hard to memorize new words
is puzzling to string them to sentence
is tough to put them in paragraph
But I know, there is a time when my English learning
is interesting to tell something in my mind
is thrilling to compose a poem
is exciting to talk with foreigners
There is always a time for me to learn English (IOT)

The prompt comprises 17 questions, encompassing: a) Three inquiries concerning the background of poetry writing, b) Six pretest and posttest questions, c) Three open-ended questions, and d) Nine closed questions regarding perceptions, emotions, and the desire to learn poetry. Questions in sections (b) and (d) employ a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree").

Additionally, seven demographic questions were included to examine participants' backgrounds. All questions and the writing prompt underwent workshops and validation through trials with several L2 students before distribution to the participants. Quantitative variables in this study consist of questions addressing the rating of

emotions, perceptions, and desire to learn poetry writing, along with demographic variables. Qualitative data include participants' emotions and desire to learn poetry writing in their class. Refer to Figure 3 for the flow of data sources.

Figure 3
The Flow of Data Sources



3.3. Data Analysis Procedures

For data analysis, various methods were employed. Descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS 20 was utilized to explore participants' perceptions of writing autobiographical poetry. Paired t-tests were conducted based on the normal distribution of the data. These tests aimed to examine the participants' pre- and post-test ratings regarding their self-perception as a good writer, their ability to write poetry in English, and their confidence to learn new types of English writing through composing autobiographical poetry. Additionally, descriptive statistical analysis and thematic analysis were utilized to analyze participants' positive and negative emotions in composing autobiographical poetry, as well as to explore their desire to learn poetry writing.

4. Results

Descriptive analysis is conducted by finding out students' perceptions, emotions, and desire to learn poetry writing in English. The variables of perception are presented in number 1 and 2. The variables of emotion are number 3 and 4, while the variables of desire to learn poetry writing are in number 5, 6, 7 and 8. From the table 1 below, it is apparent that the means for all variables approximately is three on rating 1-7 scales. The point 3 shows somewhat disagreement of students' response with the given statements except for the emotion variable in number 4 that is higher one point than the rest, meaning that participants felt neutral regarding their anxiety in writing a poetry.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of Perceptions, Emotions, and Desire to Learn Poetry

No	Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Writing Autobiographical poetry gave me confidence as a writer	3.16	1.49
2	Writing Autobiographical poetry is easy	3.82	1.53
3	Writing Autobiographical poetry was an enjoyable experience	3.10	1.61
4	Writing Autobiographical poetry made me feel anxious	4.16	1.51
5	Writing Autobiographical poetry made me reflect on my English learning Experience better	2.95	1.65
6	Writing Autobiographical poetry made me understand my life better	3.03	1.62
7	I would like to learn to write poetry in English in my class	3.09	1.86
8	I would like to write poetry more in English in class	3.16	1.75

Table 2*Paired -Sample T-Test result on difference Between Pretest and Posttest*

Item	Pretest		Posttest		t-test	p
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
I am a good writer in English	3.95	1.30	3.88	1.43	.67	.50
I can write poetry in English	4.67	1.40	4.68	1.45	-.06	.95
I am confident that I can learn new types of creative writing in English	5.05	1.37	5.07	1.41	-.13	.89

Note. $p > .05$

A paired t-test was conducted to examine pretest and posttest on the perception of themselves as good writers and their poetry writing ability in English before and after composing autobiographical poetry. Table 2 below presents the Means and Standard Deviations for each item in the pretest and posttest.

The data show that there was no significant difference in the scores for pretest ($M = 3.95$ $SD = 1.30$) and posttest ($M = 3.88$ $SD = 1.43$) on their perception of themselves as a good writer in English condition; $t(142) = .67$, $p = .50$. There was no significant difference in the scores for pretest ($M = 4.67$ $SD = 1.40$) and posttest ($M = 4.68$ $SD = 1.45$) on the perception of their ability to write in English condition; $t(142) = -.061$, $p = 0.95$. There was also no significant difference in the scores for pretest ($M = 5.05$ $SD = 1.37$) and posttest ($M = 5.06$ $SD = 1.41$) on their perception of their ability to write in new types of creative writing in English condition; $t(142) = -.13$, $p = 0.86$. These results from pretest to posttest suggest that EFL college students' experiences on autobiographical poetry writing does not influence the way they perceive themselves as good writers nor give positive perception toward their poetry writing ability in English.

Thematic analysis aims to determine students' emotions and desire to learn poetry writing from three open-ended questions. Table 3 provides themes for each question, including participants' emotions on poetry writing, benefits, and challenges in learning poetry writing. The examples shows participants' responses to the themes

(p=participant). For instance, p.2 (participant 2) responded that he is excited in learning poetry writing. The table shows that students' emotive responses on poetry writing range from 44% of positive responses to 40 % of negative responses while the rest felt neutral on poetry. Growing the desire to learn poetry writing, 58 % of students thought that this activity could improve their language skills while 42 % thought poetry could invoke self-expression and creativity. However, 77 % of students agreed that limited language skills could be the challenge in poetry writing, while 15 % pointed out lack of motivation, and the rest blamed teachers' approach as the challenge for writing poetry in the class.

Table 3*Thematic Analysis of Emotions and Desire to Learn Poetry Writing in English*

Themes	Sub-Themes	Ratio	Examples
Emotions on Poetry Writing	Positive Response	44 %	I am excited (p.2) I am so happy and will do my best (p.6)
	Neutral Response	16%	I feel average (p.14) I feel okay (p.106)
	Negative Response	40 %	I feel scared (p.44) I feel worried and don't believe I can do it (p.28)
Benefits of learning poetry writing	Language skill and style	58 %	Improve our English skills and thinking (p.142) Get new knowledge and linguistic skill (p.33)
	Creative self-expression	42 %	Can express something in English (p.32) You can express what you feel (p.61)
Challenges in learning poetry writing	Language style	77 %	Limited rhythmic vocabulary (p.139)
	Teacher's approach	8 %	How the teacher teaches poetry the classroom (p.8)

Themes	Sub-Themes	Ratio	Examples
	Lack of motivation	15 %	No inspiration (p.20) No imagination (p.143)

*Note: p= Participant

5. Discussion

5.1. Students' Perception of Autobiographical Poetry Practices

Based on descriptive statistical analysis in table 1, most students perceive the autobiographical poetry as an easy activity; however, they lack confidence in identifying themselves as writers. One key point drawn from this is that students find it easy because the directions afford them freedom, with no specific rules to follow. This direction allows them to express their feelings and reveal their personal voice. Students view creative writing as a means to nurture their internal reflections, emotions, and sense of ownership (Hanauer & Liao, 2016; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023). EFL students value this form of writing because it offers emotional engagement, enhances self-understanding, and enables the reliving of memories. Although students might not encountered any life-threatening traumatic events like in Japan's earthquake (Iida, 2016) or Pandemic Lockdown (Sharma, 2024), yet they still could express any potential trauma related to learning language, the experiences which might be overlooked in their daily language instruction. Furthermore, EFL students demonstrate the ability to articulate their immediate reactions and emotional issues, indicating proficiency in expressing and comprehending highly personal experiences through expressive writing (Fithriani, 2021; Iida, 2016; Kim & Park, 2020).

However, students exhibit low confidence in identifying themselves as good writers. Besides the practicality of conveying their emotions, students find it challenging due to a lack of necessary vocabulary and understanding of stylistic forms to write poetry effectively. Consequently, their experience with writing poetry does not simultaneously bolster their self-perception as confident or skilled writers. One key reason behind this perception, as reflected in their responses, is the belief that writing is a complex task due to their limited vocabulary. This belief could be attributed to their

limited literacy practices, which have primarily focused on language comprehension rather than production (Hanauer, 2012; Kuswardhani et al., 2022). Although this current study provided the participants to write freely without any linguistics restriction, yet the choice of words could be limited due to their vocabulary repertoire.

Table 2 shows that the implementation of autobiographical poetry does not significantly reflect students' skills as good writers. The findings suggest that EFL students may struggle to comprehend poetry texts provided in the classroom, resulting in confusion and a lack of appreciation for poetry instruction (Liao & Roy, 2017). Despite being given the instruction of "no specific rules," which should afford them freedom, they feel uncertain due to a lack of confidence in knowing whether their approach is correct. Additionally, the pressure of classroom expectations leads them to view personal expression as subject to evaluation. This significant finding highlights students' tendency to hold unrealistically high expectations of poetry, as indicated in Liao's study (2017), potentially leading to increased emphasis on grammar, resulting in a diminished perception of their writing abilities (Hanauer & Liao, 2016).

Furthermore, their ineffective communicative encounters may be closely linked to their learning methods and the objective of learning English within the EFL framework (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022a). Indonesian students are typically "expected" to approach language study by prioritizing correctness in language usage and memorizing as much L2 linguistic knowledge as possible, aiming for success in entrance exams or English proficiency assessments. Consequently, they may consistently encounter difficulties when required to employ English in real-world contexts (Iida, 2017). These obstacles serve as a reality check, indicating that their English language curricula might not adequately prepare them for utilizing English for diverse purposes. This study could serve as a prompt for language curricula to broaden their scope, encouraging Indonesian students to recognize the significance of English for communicative intents.

5.2. Students' Emotion of Autobiographical Poetry Practices

Table 1 reveals that students exhibit a wide range of emotions following their experiences with poetry writing, spanning from anxiety to exhilaration. Based on the three items, students predominantly felt anxious, did not find the experience enjoyable,

and believed their English skills did not improve. This poetry writing experience has been revealed as an emotional process involving varying degrees of perceived difficulty (Hanauer & Liao, 2016). In contrast to Liao's findings (2018) where poetry writing was seen as a liberating process by EFL learners, participants in this study felt apprehensive about writing their poems due to a lack of extensive experience in writing that draws upon their past experiences and emotions. In situations where a cultural barrier hinders the expression of emotions and when the emotional resonance of a language is diminished, it tends to be easier for EFL learners to express certain emotions in their native languages (Chamcharatsri, 2013). These findings are strikingly different with Kaldina's (2018) study, where students enjoyed writing *pantun* due to cultural familiarity, while participants in this current study have struggled with the style, composition process, and emotional expression in English poetry.

Although students expressed their negative emotions, few found joy in writing poetry as they stated in open-ended responses, given their first-time experience with unrestricted poetry writing in the form of autobiographical poetry. Students enjoyed the opportunity to express themselves with limited vocabulary or poetic style. This study resonates Iida's findings, demonstrating how EFL students reflect on their learning experiences through poetry writing as it is relevant to their personal experiences. Hence, EFL students can ignite their ideas and imaginations through their personal lives and experiences (Fithriani, 2021; Hanauer, 2010; Sari et al., 2020).

The current study has illustrated the interconnectedness of emotions and language acquisition. As evidenced by the thematic analysis, while some students demonstrate enthusiasm, they also contend with feelings of fear and anxiety regarding their performance. The inclusion of poetry writing in EFL instruction aims to enhance learners' understanding and articulation of personal experiences (Kim & Park, 2020). EFL students recognize the significant role emotions play in their language learning journey, underscoring the importance of addressing emotions in L2 education (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022a; Makovskaya & Radjabzade, 2022). It is imperative in language learning like in poetry writing to prioritize individual learners and actively employ the target language for self-expression (Bhandari, 2023; Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Iida, 2016; Munteanu & Tolico, 2022). The process of acquiring a new language entails motivation, dedication, and emotional investment, with learners deeply engaged

emotionally in the learning process (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022; Mauludin & Prasetyo, 2024).

Moreover, the current study has shown that autobiographical poetry writing serves as a valuable genre allowing EFL students to reflect on their learning experiences and express their emotions (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Fithriani, 2021; Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2022a; Kuswardhani et al., 2022; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023). It also demonstrates that poetry writing enables students to articulate their experiences in their distinct writing style, unrestricted by grammatical constraints or poetic styles (Myhill & Wilson, 2013). Consequently, poetry writing holds significant potential for promoting emotional expression in EFL learning, fostering self-expression skills, and enhancing EFL linguistic awareness. Eventually, poetry writing has the potential to revolutionize L2 learning, making it more personal, humanistic, and meaningful in literacy practice.

5.3. Students' Desire of Autobiographical Poetry Practices

Table 1 reflects that students perceive autobiographical poetry writing not necessarily as enhancing their understanding of life or increasing their willingness to write poetry in English in the classroom as it is found in the study Marlatt and Cibils (2018). However, the thematic analysis indicates that most students believed the activity could improve their skills. While some EFL students showed considerable interest and enthusiasm, expressing excitement and commitment to composing their autobiographical poetry, others expressed fear and self-doubt, suggesting potential obstacles to fostering a love for poetry writing. Despite no writing workshop to prepare them for writing poetry, as in previous studies (Fithriani, 2021; Kristiantari et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2020), this study found that students perceived poetry writing as a tool for improving their English skills and cognitive abilities, while also viewing it as a medium for creative self-expression (Kim & Park, 2020; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023). However, they also identified challenges such as the complex language style of poetry, the teaching approach, and a lack of motivation that could deter their interest.

Students' reluctance to engage in poetry writing primarily stems from a lack of vocabulary. EFL learners often harbor negative sentiments toward the challenges associated with accurately expressing themselves and meeting the expectations

outlined in writing instructions (Hanauer & Liao, 2016). While several previous studies show students' desire to learn poetry writing due to teachers' role and cultural values (Abidin & Wai, 2020; Kaldina, 2020), the current study shows that students' deficiency in rhythmic vocabulary heightens their anxiety about performing well and identifying themselves as confident writers. Their anxiety levels significantly impact their proficiency in mastering EFL knowledge, and their attitudes toward EFL learning are greatly influenced by their perception of their ideal L2 self (Lee et al., 2017; Mauludin & Prasetyo, 2024; Sumaryani et al., 2024) adding to their lack of previous training in poetry writing. The concept of the ideal L2 self entails utilizing students' skills to avoid unfavorable outcomes in L2 learning (Khazaie & Ketabi, 2023; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). Consequently, students' intrinsic motivation, including their objectives in learning a target language and their determination to excel in it, correlates positively with their academic achievement (Carreira et al., 2013). Therefore, students' apprehension about making mistakes due to their limited vocabulary significantly affects their inclination to write autobiographical poetry.

While this study adapted Kaldina's instruments on exploring autobiographical poetry, contrasting with Kaldina's study (2018) showing positive student perceptions towards writing 'pantun', a local Indonesian poetry form, the current study did not incorporate extensive pre-training exposing students to poetry writing or provide a thorough understanding of autobiographical poetry. They relied solely on a sample poem and the instructions provided in the study. This underscores the significant role of teachers' instructions and modeling in bolstering students' motivation to complete classroom tasks (Mauludin et al., 2023).

5.4. Effects of Poetry Writing on Students' Linguistic Skills

The findings reveal that students need to develop significant linguistic skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and genre knowledge, for writing poetry. EFL students show the ability to express immediate reactions and emotional issues, emphasizing the importance of vocabulary proficiency for conveying and understanding personal experiences through expressive writing (Fithriani, 2021; Iida, 2021; Kim & Park, 2020). As a result, their vocabulary and structures are explored and expanded to

achieve these goals. Despite allowing participants to write freely without linguistic constraints, the study found that students' vocabulary choices could be limited by their existing vocabulary repertoire, highlighting the need for EFL learners to master specific vocabulary to express their feelings effectively.

Additionally, the study indicates that students often have unrealistically high expectations of poetry, leading to increased emphasis on grammar (Hanauer & Liao, 2016; Paradita et al., 2025). Fear and anxiety about grammatical mistakes hinder students' ability to express their thoughts, resulting in poor performance due to limited grammar skills and low confidence levels. With appropriate guidance, students can be motivated to understand poetry as a form of expression, gradually improving their grammar skills. Teachers can help students realize that perfect grammar is not necessary for conveying their expressions, and by encouraging self-expression, students can enhance specific grammar skills to improve their writing process.

Lastly, autobiographical poetry writing can enhance students' knowledge of various genres as communication tools. It provides a valuable genre for EFL students to reflect on their learning experiences and express emotions (Fithriani, 2021; Kuswardhani et al., 2022; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023). Poetry writing allows students to articulate experiences in their unique style, closely related to the recount genre, as they recall and narrate their memories using different writing styles. Thus, poetry writing can be a tool for improving genre writing skills and cognitive abilities while serving as a medium for creative self-expression (Kim & Park, 2020; Suwastini & Dewi, 2023).

6. Conclusion

The current study aims to investigate students' perceptions, emotions, and desires regarding poetry writing through the practice of autobiographical poetry writing. The findings reveal that although students perceive the writing instruction as easy, they lack confidence as poetry writers. Additionally, the activity did not significantly improve students' positive perception of themselves as proficient writers. While some students experienced mixed emotions, such as fear and anxiety during the poetry writing activity, they believed that the practice was beneficial for enhancing their English skills. Despite the negative emotions expressed by students, the activity positively highlighted

autobiographical poetry writing as a valuable tool for expressing emotions. Validating students' emotions in the classroom allows teachers to provide more opportunities for self-expression and linguistic awareness. Furthermore, although most students displayed a low desire to engage in autobiographical poetry writing due to their lack of vocabulary, they believed the practice was beneficial for improving their vocabulary and creative thinking. The low desire may be attributed to students' unfamiliarity with the concept and framework of autobiographical poetry writing itself.

Unlike previous studies, the current study focused on eliciting responses from EFL college students regarding the autobiographical genre of poetry. This study introduces a new approach for incorporating different genre of poetry writing, which is an autobiographical poetry, into the EFL curriculum, which has traditionally emphasized classical types of poetry. It provides an alternative for EFL teachers to diversify their teaching approaches to poetry writing. EFL teachers should assess their perceptions of poetry writing and determine how it can be used to explore students' ideas and imaginations, thus contributing to meaningful literacy instruction in the classroom. Additionally, EFL teachers should focus on enhancing language skills, creating a supportive and engaging learning environment, and fostering motivation to ensure continued interest in poetry writing.

However, there are several limitations to this study. The data collected was limited to a few items on the questionnaire and did not include in-depth interviews to explore students' specific perceptions, emotions, and desires regarding writing autobiographical poetry. Further research should include more items and focus on pre- and post-writing process results. Additionally, the study did not assess the effectiveness of poetry writing in improving students' linguistic awareness and skills. Further research should investigate the specific linguistic skills benefiting from poetry writing activities. Finally, the study was conducted in the Indonesian higher education context with only Indonesian students, so the results may vary based on cultural settings. Further research in a heterogeneous learning environment will provide better insights into the factors influencing students' perceptions, emotions, and desires in autobiographical poetry writing.

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