



AN ANALYSIS ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS DIFFICULT IN WRITING POETRY BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini menganalisis kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris dalam menulis puisi berdasarkan pengalaman pribadi. Menulis puisi adalah keterampilan kompleks yang membutuhkan kompetensi linguistik, kreativitas, dan kemampuan untuk menyampaikan emosi dan citra secara efektif. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan mahasiswa Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang memiliki pengalaman sebelumnya dalam menulis puisi. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan utama yang dihadapi mahasiswa, faktor-faktor penyebabnya, dan bagaimana kesulitan-kesulitan ini terwujud dalam karya tulis mereka. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun sebagian besar mahasiswa menunjukkan minat yang moderat hingga tinggi dalam menulis puisi, mereka menghadapi tantangan yang signifikan, termasuk kosakata yang terbatas, pemahaman yang kurang tentang bahasa kiasan dan perangkat puisi, kesulitan dalam mengatur struktur puisi, dan tantangan kognitif dalam mengubah pengalaman pribadi menjadi bentuk ekspresif dan artistik. Faktor afektif seperti kepercayaan diri kreatif yang rendah dan ketidakpastian dalam memilih pengalaman pribadi yang bermakna semakin memperburuk kesulitan-kesulitan ini. Studi ini menyoroti perlunya dukungan instruksional yang terstruktur, termasuk pengajaran eksplisit tentang perangkat sastra, latihan pra-penulisan yang terarah, dan kesempatan untuk umpan balik reflektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis puisi mahasiswa. Wawasan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang persimpangan antara pengalaman pribadi dan penulisan kreatif, menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi pendidik, pengembang kurikulum, dan peneliti yang berupaya

meningkatkan pengajaran puisi di kelas bahasa.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the difficulties faced by English language students in writing poetry based on personal experience. Writing poetry is a complex skill that requires linguistic competence, creativity, and the ability to convey emotions and imagery effectively. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students of the English Education Department who had prior experience in writing poetry. The study aimed to identify the primary challenges students encounter, the contributing factors, and how these difficulties manifest in their written outputs. The findings reveal that while most students show moderate to high interest in poetry writing, they face significant challenges, including limited vocabulary, insufficient understanding of figurative language and poetic devices, difficulties in organizing poem structure, and cognitive challenges in transforming personal experiences into expressive and artistic forms. Affective factors such as low creative confidence and uncertainty in selecting meaningful personal experiences further exacerbate these difficulties. The study highlights the need for structured instructional support, including explicit teaching of literary devices, guided pre-writing exercises, and opportunities for reflective feedback to enhance students' poetry writing skills. These insights contribute to understanding the intersection of personal experience and creative writing, offering practical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers seeking to improve poetry instruction in language classrooms.

Keywords: poetry writing, personal experience, writing difficulties, EFL students, creative expression

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four fundamental language skills that plays a crucial role in the process of language learning and communication. As a productive skill, writing requires students not only to transfer ideas into written form but also to organize thoughts coherently, use appropriate vocabulary, and apply grammatical rules correctly. According to Nunan (2021), writing is a complex cognitive activity that

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demands a high level of linguistic competence and critical thinking, making it one of the most challenging skills for students to master. Writing ability, therefore, refers to the capacity of an individual to express ideas, feelings, and information in a clear, organized, and meaningful way through the written medium. In the context of language education, developing writing ability is considered an essential goal, as it reflects not only a student's language proficiency but also their intellectual and communicative competence.

Within the domain of writing, poetry stands as one of the most distinctive and expressive literary forms. Poetry writing is not merely about producing rhyming lines; rather, it is a form of artistic expression that combines language, emotion, imagery, and rhythm to convey meaning in a condensed and powerful way. Sayuti (2022) defines poetry as a form of written expression that uses language aesthetically and imaginatively to evoke emotional responses and create vivid images in the reader's mind. Writing poetry demands that students possess not only language skills but also a deep sense of creativity, sensitivity to language nuances, and the ability to manipulate literary devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, and personification. These requirements make poetry writing a particularly demanding task for students, especially for those who are still in the process of developing their overall writing competence.

One approach commonly used in poetry instruction is writing based on personal experience, which encourages students to draw from their own lives, memories, emotions, and observations as the primary source of poetic content. This approach is grounded in the belief that personal experience serves as an authentic and meaningful foundation for creative expression. Hermawan and Lestari (2023) argue that writing poetry based on personal experience enables students to connect language learning with real emotional and reflective processes, making the activity more meaningful and personally relevant. When students write from personal experience, they are expected to translate lived moments into poetic language, selecting words and images that capture the essence of their feelings and experiences. However, despite the seemingly accessible nature of this approach, many students still encounter significant difficulties when attempting to transform personal experiences into well-crafted poems, highlighting the complexity of the task.

The motivation for conducting this research stems from the observable challenges that students face when engaging in poetry writing tasks based on personal experience in the classroom. In many educational settings, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, students are frequently assigned poetry writing tasks, yet their outputs often reveal recurring patterns of difficulty, including poor use of literary devices, limited vocabulary, structural inconsistencies, and a lack of emotional depth. These problems indicate that despite exposure to poetry as a literary genre, students have not fully internalized the skills necessary for effective poetic composition. Furthermore, limited research has specifically addressed the intersection of personal experience as a writing stimulus and the particular difficulties encountered by students in poetry writing, making this an area that warrants closer academic investigation.

Based on the background described above, this research seeks to identify and analyze the specific difficulties that students experience when writing poetry based on personal experience. The problems that this study aims to address include: (1) What are the primary difficulties faced by students in writing poetry based on personal experience? (2) What factors contribute to these difficulties? and (3) How do these difficulties manifest in students' written outputs? By answering these questions, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges involved in personal-experience-based poetry writing and to offer insights that can inform pedagogical strategies for improving students' poetry writing skills. The findings of this study are expected to be beneficial for teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers who are interested in enhancing the quality of writing instruction in language classrooms.

Literature Review

a. Writing

Writing ability has been extensively studied as a core component of language learning and literacy development. Scholars in applied linguistics and language education have long recognized writing as a multi-dimensional skill that involves both lower-order processes, such as spelling and grammar, and higher-order processes, such as planning, organizing, and revising ideas. Pratama and Setiawan (2021) describe writing ability as the capacity to produce coherent, purposeful, and contextually appropriate texts that effectively communicate the writer's intentions to the intended audience. This definition underscores the importance of not only linguistic accuracy but also communicative effectiveness. In the context of foreign language learning, writing ability is further complicated by the need to operate in a second or foreign language, which imposes additional cognitive demands on the writer. Students must simultaneously manage language form and content production, making writing a cognitively taxing activity that requires sustained practice and guided instruction.

b. Writing Poetry

Poetry writing, as a specific form of written expression, has attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years due to its unique characteristics and its potential as a tool for language development. Unlike expository or narrative writing, poetry writing operates within a distinct set of conventions and aesthetic principles that require writers to engage with language at a deeper, more creative level. Rahayu and Widodo (2022) explain that poetry writing involves the deliberate selection and arrangement of words to create aesthetic effects, emotional resonance, and layered meanings, distinguishing it from other forms of written discourse. The ability to write poetry requires students to develop sensitivity to sound, rhythm, imagery, and figurative language, all of which are elements that are not typically emphasized in conventional writing instruction. As a result, students who are accustomed to functional or academic writing often find the transition to poetry writing particularly challenging, as it demands a fundamentally different orientation toward language use.

The use of personal experience as a basis for poetry writing is a pedagogical approach that has gained considerable support in the literature on creative writing education. This approach is rooted in expressivist writing theory, which posits that authentic self-expression and personal reflection are essential components of meaningful writing experiences. Sari and Maulana (2021) contend that when students are encouraged to draw from their own lives and emotions, they become more motivated and invested in the writing process, as the content is directly relevant to their personal identities and experiences. This approach also aligns with the principles of learner-centered instruction, as it places the student's own knowledge and experience at the center of the learning activity. However, research has also shown that writing from personal experience can be emotionally challenging for some students, as it requires them to articulate complex feelings and memories in a new language, which may not always offer the vocabulary or structures needed to capture the full depth of personal experience.

Several studies have investigated the difficulties that students encounter in poetry writing, and the findings consistently point to a range of linguistic, cognitive, and affective challenges. Kurniawan and Anggraeni (2022) identified vocabulary limitation as one of the most frequently reported difficulties in poetry writing, with students expressing frustration at their inability to find words that accurately and vividly convey their intended meanings. Limited vocabulary not only restricts the expressive range of students' poetry but also impedes their ability to experiment with sound patterns and figurative language. In addition to vocabulary issues, students also struggle with understanding and applying poetic devices such as metaphor, personification, and imagery, which are essential tools for creating effective poetry. Fitriani and Yusuf (2023) further noted that many students lack confidence in their creative abilities, leading to a tendency to produce safe, formulaic poetry that adheres to surface-level conventions without demonstrating genuine creative engagement.

Beyond vocabulary and creativity, structural and organizational difficulties also present significant obstacles for students in poetry writing. Wulandari and Handayani (2023) found that students often struggle with decisions about line breaks, stanza organization, and the overall structure of their poems, as these elements do not follow the same conventions as prose writing. Many students attempt to impose prose structures on their poetry, resulting in pieces that lack the rhythmic and visual qualities characteristic of effective poems. Moreover, students frequently report difficulty in achieving a balance between clarity and ambiguity in their poetic expression, as poetry often relies on suggestion and evocation rather than direct statement. Nasution and Lubis (2024) also highlighted that the absence of adequate scaffolding in poetry instruction further compounds students' difficulties, as many students receive insufficient guidance on the specific skills and strategies needed for effective poetry composition.

When poetry writing is specifically grounded in personal experience, additional layers of difficulty emerge that are not typically present in more open-ended or topic-assigned poetry tasks. Students are required not only to recall and reflect on personal events but also to select and transform those experiences into artistic and linguistically sophisticated forms. Hidayat and Permata (2021) observed that students often experience difficulty in the selection process, as they are uncertain about which personal experiences are appropriate or meaningful enough to serve as the basis for a poem. This uncertainty can lead to paralysis or avoidance behavior, with students choosing superficial or trivial experiences that do not provide sufficient emotional depth for effective poetic expression. Furthermore, the process of transforming personal narrative into poetic language requires students to shift from a chronological, factual mode of thinking to a more associative, imaginative, and sensory mode, which represents a significant cognitive and creative challenge that many students are unprepared for without targeted instructional support.

2. METHODS

a) Research Design

Qualitative research is research that provides information about the "human" aspects of an issue, including behavior, ideas, views, emotions, and interpersonal relationships (Tscholl et al., 2019) in (Oranga and Matere, 2023). Based on this, the method used in this study is qualitative research. This study aims to analyze the difficulties experienced by students in writing poetry based on personal experience. The researcher focuses on exploring students' interest, experience, difficulties, and factors influencing their ability in writing poetry.

b) Data source

The primary data of this study were obtained through questioners. The participants were students of the English Education Department who had experience in writing poetry, especially in the context of classroom learning. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had relevant experience related to poetry writing.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information about students' interest in writing poetry, their previous experiences, the difficulties they face, especially in terms of idea development and diction, as well as the factors that influence those difficulties. Therefore, interview data served as the main source of information in this study.

c) Data Collection

Data collection in this study was conducted through questionnaires. Questionnaires were used to gather information about students' experiences and perspectives in writing poetry. According to Creswell (2015), questionnaires are useful for collecting data from participants in a structured and efficient way. Therefore, questionnaires were considered appropriate to obtain relevant data related to students' interest, experience, and difficulties in writing poetry.

The questionnaires were distributed to students of the English Education Department who had experience in writing poetry based on personal experience. Through these questionnaires, the researcher obtained data related to students' interest in writing poetry, their previous experience, the difficulties they face in writing poetry especially in determining ideas, structuring poems, and choosing diction as well as the factors that influence those difficulties.

d) Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. According to Creswell (2015) said that data analysis procedures are the processes of converting data into new information. This research was conducted through several systematic steps. First, the researcher organized the data obtained from the questionnaire by collecting all respondents' answers. Second, data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on information relevant to students' difficulties in writing poetry based on personal experiences. Third, the data were categorized into several themes such as difficulty in finding ideas, limited vocabulary, use of figures of speech, poetry structure, and emotional expression. Fourth, the researcher interpreted the data by explaining each category to find patterns and factors influencing these difficulties. Finally, the results of the analysis were presented descriptively to provide a clear and systematic overview of the research findings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The data obtained from the Google Form questionnaire indicate that students' interest in writing poetry based on personal experience varies across several levels. The majority of respondents (50%) reported being quite interested, suggesting a moderate level of engagement toward poetry writing activities. Furthermore, 20% of the students expressed that they are very interested, while another 20% indicated that they are interested. These findings demonstrate that a considerable proportion of students hold positive attitudes toward poetry writing. In contrast, only 10% of respondents reported being not interested, and none selected lack of interest. This implies that negative perceptions of poetry writing are relatively minimal among the participants. Overall, the findings reveal that students tend to demonstrate a moderate to high level of interest in writing poetry based on personal experience, although a majority remain within the "quite interested" category rather than exhibiting strong enthusiasm. The distribution of students' interest in writing poetry based on personal experience is presented in Figure 1. The diagram shows that the majority of students (50%) are quite interested, followed by 20% who are interested and 20% who are very interested. Meanwhile, only 10% of students reported not being interested, and no students indicated a lack of interest.

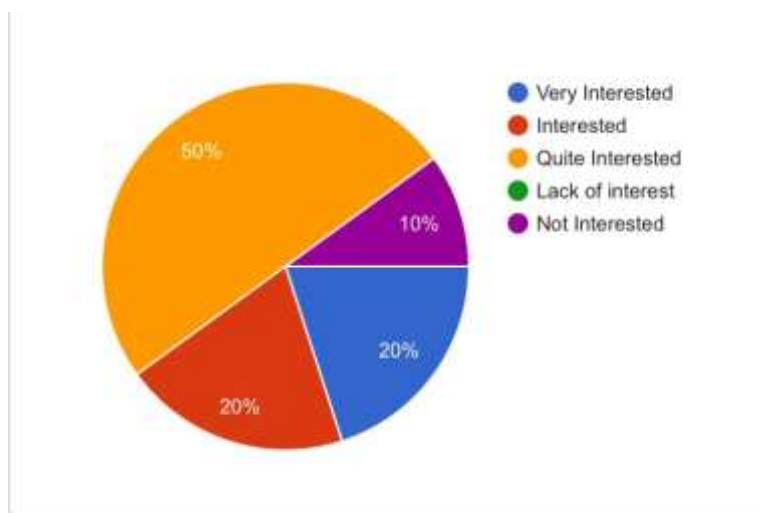


Figure 1. Students' Interest in Writing Poetry Based on Personal Experience

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that students generally demonstrate a positive, yet moderate, level of interest in writing poetry based on personal experience. The predominance of the “quite interested” category indicates that, while students do not reject poetry writing, they have not yet developed a strong level of engagement. From a student perspective, this condition may reflect uncertainty in initiating the writing process, difficulties in expressing ideas, and limited confidence in their creative abilities. This is consistent with Kurniawan and Anggraeni (2022), who argue that limited vocabulary significantly constrains students' ability to convey ideas effectively in poetry writing.

In addition, the proportion of students who reported being “interested” and “very interested” highlights the potential of poetry writing as an engaging learning activity. Writing based on personal experience allows students to express their own emotions and thoughts, making the activity more meaningful. This finding supports Sari and Maulana (2021), who state that the use of personal experience enhances students' motivation due to its relevance to their lives. Similarly, Hermawan and Lestari (2023) emphasize that personal experience facilitates a deeper connection between emotional expression and language use in writing.

Nevertheless, the presence of students who reported being “not interested” indicates that certain challenges remain. From the students' viewpoint, these challenges may include difficulties in generating ideas, limited vocabulary, lack of understanding of figurative language, and problems in structuring poems. Such difficulties may reduce students' motivation and lead to disengagement. This finding aligns with Fitriani and Yusuf (2023), who found that low creative confidence negatively affects students' performance and interest in poetry writing.

Moreover, the dominance of moderate interest suggests that many students are still in the process of developing their competence in poetry writing. They require further guidance and practice to enhance both their skills and confidence. Wulandari and Handayani (2023) note that students frequently encounter structural challenges, such as organizing lines and stanzas, which can hinder their ability to produce well-constructed poems.

Furthermore, poetry writing demands not only linguistic competence but also creativity and sensitivity to language. For many students, this represents a significant challenge, particularly for those who are more accustomed to conventional forms of writing. As stated by Rahayu and Widodo (2022), poetry writing involves the use of imagery, rhythm, and figurative language, which requires a higher level of creative and cognitive engagement.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings imply the need for more effective instructional support. Providing clear guidance, examples, and structured practice can help students overcome their difficulties. Nasution and Lubis (2024) emphasize the importance of scaffolding in assisting students to gradually develop their ability in poetry writing.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English language students encounter a range of significant difficulties when writing poetry based on personal experience. The findings reveal that while the majority of students demonstrate a moderate level of interest in poetry writing, many have not yet developed the confidence,

vocabulary, or creative competence necessary for effective poetic expression. The primary difficulties identified include limited vocabulary, insufficient understanding of figurative language and literary devices, challenges in structuring poems, and the cognitive complexity involved in transforming personal experiences into artistic written forms.

These difficulties are further compounded by affective factors such as low creative confidence and uncertainty in selecting personally meaningful experiences suitable for poetic expression. Many students tend to default to superficial or formulaic approaches, which limits the emotional depth and artistic quality of their poems. The absence of adequate instructional scaffolding also plays a crucial role in perpetuating these challenges, as students frequently lack the specific guidance needed to navigate the distinctive demands of poetry writing.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educators implement more structured and supportive approaches to poetry instruction, including explicit teaching of poetic devices, guided pre-writing activities, and opportunities for reflective feedback. Future research may explore the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions in addressing the difficulties identified in this study, as well as examine the role of digital tools and collaborative writing strategies in supporting students' development as poetry writers

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