

# “Take Me Home”: Hearing the Voice of Poetic Identity and Language Development in EFL Poetry Writing

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research is to explore poetic identity in EFL poetry writing by EFL learners as to know their language development. Poetic identity is the representation of poetry as a language expression that serves as the representation of community sense. EFL learning in this context is the medium to produce the poetry from which the learners learn to invent their identity as to invent their language. This study is a case study with the subjects of study are 29 EFL learners in Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha who wrote poetry writing as their product of learning in poetry course. Each of them wrote 2 poetry which were analyzed based on the poetic identity analysis with Hanauers' method. From the result of analysis, the voice of poetic identity represents the poets' voice of self-identity in life (fear, love, and hope) and voice of freedom. This study also illustrates how language is developed to construct meaning and ideas within the mindful and meaningful literacy learning.

**Key words:** poetry; poetic identity; language development; literacy learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

The use of poetry as learning media and learning instruction in EFL context has been done through years of development. The focus of poetry learning is to cultivate human minds in the power of language. It represents human experience in the most expressive ways. The expression of ideas, issues, imagination and social criticism through poetry can engage human's emotions, intelligence, and language sensitivity. Poetic language has interdiscursivity and intertextuality which enables it to represent the issues of personal, social, political and all aspects of life that attached to human. In EFL young learners, when they write poetry, they refer to previous discourses they read and implement it when writing their own poetry. This interdiscursivity applies when children learn to write poetry (Certo, 2015). It also has the power to enable the learners to do intertextuality when they write the poetry as the response of other poetry. In its very fundamental principle, poetry has the power to represent self-identity in the EFL learning (Addinna, 2017). Moreover, poetry is used to explore personal and individuality of experience that can build a new meaning (Hanauer, 2012). Widdowson (1994) stated that language is both a means of communication and representation of community sense. As poetry is the representation of community, it lies also sense of individuality inside it. Therefore, it is urgent to specify the poetic identity in the poetry

production. This poetic identity has not been much explored in language classroom. This study will focus more on how poetic identity is found and developed in the context of EFL poetry writing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The structure of poetry is built upon many aspects, namely; words, words arrangement in the form of lines, lines arrangement in the form of stanzas, stanzas arrangement to form the poetry. Apart from the structure, vision and voice of the poetry are two basic foundation of poetry. Each of the lines in poetry contains the careful selections of words, condensed idea, and metaphors. Thus, creative process behind poetry writing is very challenging. It needs a complex skills; literacy, creativity, productivity, and sensitivity. In the context of EFL, poetry writing can be cultivated through mindful process of inventing the language (Piscayanti, 2021). Barrett, Harris, & Nixon (2020) studied on how to combine poetry and mindfulness in higher education. The main goal of study was to develop mindfulness action in a creative new space in higher education. This research is a case study research and used interview as the data. The result showed the use of mindful learning can develop students' creativity in the sense that they make reflections during the creative process to keep the mindful work. This shows that poetry is an effective channel to show expression and

creativity.

Kirkgoz (2014) conducted a research about how poems can promote language learners' creative writing. How poems can develop EFL students' creative writing. This study started with the meaning of creativity and how important creativity is, in the context of learning foreign language. English poems are then produced to show their creative writing skills.

Another research is done by Iida (2016) in which he showed a finding that poetic identity can be found in EFL poetry writing through the learners' real experience. This study specifically supports Hanauer's finding (2012) that poetry can be meaningful literacy instruction in EFL learning context. This also supports the study that language is identity which is trying to be delivered by the users of the language (Norton, 1997). In 2020, Piscayanti, Ratminingsih and Utami did a research on the effect of mindfulness on poetry writing and it showed that poetry writing is effective in delivering the ideas and the expression of EFL learners as their responses to the community issues. It shows that poetry is reflection of poetic identity of the learners.

Gloria Park applied poetic inquiry into her personal history in which she found many perspectives of her life identity through many stages of life and many roles as multiple identities in which through poetry she could define herself as more personal, academic and professional (Park, 2013). Her poetic identity is strongly revealed because she explored herself thoroughly through poetry. The language used can be an effective tool to express self-identity. Metaphors as figurative language used in poetry help the representation of ideas in poetry. According to Yang & Peng (2021) metaphor is a window to explore writers' identity in poetry.

Certo (2015) found that poetry is also a representation of interdiscursivity and intertextuality that help learners make their poetic language. Poetry is a symbol of many issues and many ideas are put together in one condensed structure of lines, stanzas and verses. This is a result of many skills involved in language namely linguistics skills, emotional skills and intellectual skills. Poetry is complex with linguistics aspects and within its structure there are syntactic and pragmatic aspects (Nofal Dr., 2012). This is why writing a poetry is very challenging, it is saying much in very careful and selected words.

Regarding many findings on poetry and its complexity, and its role in language learning actually there should be a lot of research done on

poetic identity. However, the previous studies did not put a focus on how the poetic identity is revealed, especially in the context of higher education in Bali, Indonesia. In this study, the focus will be how to explore the voice of EFL learners' poetry as to know their poetic identity and language development in higher education especially in the context of Bali, Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Goal**

The research goal is to explore poetic identity in EFL poetry writing by EFL learners as to know their language development.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

There are 29 EFL learners in this study with their poetry that they write during the poetry course in the 2020/2021 academic year of English Language Education Ganesha University. The mindful-based course was done over 8 weeks to gain the results. The data were collected during the process of writing from the mindful journal that they write every meeting. The poetry is produced from those process in which the poetry is developed from the beginning of words until the completion of poetry. The last stage is to choose the best two poetry from each student to be analyzed. The subjects of study in this current study are 3 EFL learners with 6 poetry that become the representation of the analysis.

### **Analyzing of Data**

The analysis is done through Hanauer's analysis of poetic identity which involves the analysis of context of poetry, content of poetry and linguistics analysis of poetry. From those analysis, the language development of poetry was interpreted and reflected.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The first two poetry that will be discussed here is written by I Gede Astika (a pseudonym), a 21 years old EFL poet, male. He wrote two poetry in the EFL poetry project. The first one is as follows.

Window in a Dream  
What did I see in the window  
No, maybe that's just my feeling  
but there was a roar from outside the window  
Who is that I ask  
Suddenly fell silent

When I opened the window  
I witnessed a terrible incident

Someone who fell with a red liquid  
I shouted. Stiffed.  
As if I did not believe

I tried to scream but could not  
I turned and I saw a black shadow  
My eyes were open but I was like a statue  
Until I realized and woke up  
Crying fear because of that

The context of this poetry is a feeling of fear. As he saw someone fell off with a red liquid. Could it be someone real? Because when he turned, it was just a black shadow. What is the black shadow? Why would it be there? In this poetry, Gede wanted to share his experience on fear. How can the fear appear from the window. How can he be so out of words. Stiffed and could not move. Until he realized and woke up. Then he cried of fear.

The content of poetry about a young man's feeling on something fearful, something intimidating, shocking and surprising. The scene in poetry is clear, that he was afraid of what he saw. As we can also read that the structure of poetry is relatively effective and short, compact and condensed.

From the stylistic analysis from linguistics and literary we can see that the poetry is simple by using denotation meaning. He does not show any of metaphors, imagery, personification or anything else. From the choice of words, he prefers the short and compact words. This is to represent the event which has a deep effect yet quick in time.

The voice that he wants to present through the poetry is the feeling of fear. That he admits the feeling and wonders why. By the word window, he opened the story of fear feeling, surprising yet shocking. And finally it leaves questions, why would that happen. It remains a mystery though we know that it is just a dream. This could be also a symbol that every fear we face is just temporary, not a long term fear, and sometimes it happens just in a dream, not in reality.

The second poetry he wrote is as follows.  
Injuries from Injustice

Poor boy in a crowd of animals  
What the animals did  
Nobody dared to help him  
They just laughed and watched the incident  
Indeed very cruel and heartless

The animals kicked him from behind  
Flushed him harshly with foul water  
Held and locked him in the toilet  
The boy shouted for help  
To escape from this prison

When opened the boy was pushed  
He was injured and looked down  
As if red and blue were mixed  
This scar and also hurt  
Hard to forget and erase

This poetry seen from the context is the voice of sadness and the feeling of unaccepted. The boy is trapped in a very unfortunate situation, where he could not escape and could not help himself. Because he is powerless and weak, unable to ask for help. Around him is a group of animals, though we know 'the animals' could not be real animals. But maybe human beings. Seen from the choice of words, animals here could not do such a cruel thing to a human. But human can do it to another human. So this poetry in context is a symbol of unfortunate and injustice condition of a poor boy trapped in a bad society.

From the content we can see that the moments from moments portrayed in the poetry is unfortunate moment, from the beginning until the ending. The moments when the boy is kicked from behind and flushed by foul water, then pushed and locked in a toilet were real sad moments where he could not defend himself. The group of 'animals' only watched and did not help. What actually happened. It seems that the boy was lonely and alone trapped in the bad situation.

From the linguistic analysis, the words used are metaphor and depersonified such as in the 'animals'. Actually 'animals' here is the 'human beings' however because their behaviour is not better than animals, so they are used as a metaphor or depersonified as 'animals'. The definition of this is strengthened by the words like cruel, heartless, and harsh. They witnessed the bad thing happened but did not help.

In the overall voice, this poetry represents the unfair life in which humans do not help other humans, in which justice is far from reality. If you are powerless, weak, and alone, nobody will help you, even the society knows and notices.

This could be a protest for the society that could not do anything if a powerless individual is in need of help. They want to help you if they get something in return. Maybe this is a voice of truth in recent condition.

From the two poetry written by I Gede Astika,

the poet wants to represent two voices, first is the search for self-feeling and identity, for being in the state of fear. It is more personal and individual search for feeling. Meanwhile in the second poetry, the poet wrote a more intense poetry about injustice, this is not the voice of his own, but a voice for others to reflect and think about. That the reality is unfair and unjust. This is a symbol of society in real face when they treat a poor boy, the weak and powerless human, nobody helps. It represents the prison in reality, where a boy is trapped in a poverty. The voice the poet wants to share is the search for justice and freedom.

The next two poetry are written by Santi Dewi (pseudonym), 21 years old EFL learner, female, as follows.

Shut-In  
Behind the window  
The anxious walk in  
Shadow the past and future

I just freeze  
Without moving or talk  
Without no one and nothing

I just freeze  
Staring at the water that  
fall from the deep sky

I keep freezing  
Suddenly my body feel cold  
My sight is far away  
I try to finish the anxious  
I suddenly realized  
That I could never finish

I keep freezing  
In the same place  
Thinking about the same thing  
To finish what I never could

In this poetry Santi is representing her identity as longing for something. It is the same feeling over and over again. This is a feeling that she could not control but in the same place, thinking the same thing, she thinks she could finish it but she could not. Here the context of poetry is a sad atmosphere where she can not do much to change it. There is a bigger power than herself that she could not handle.

From the content of poetry, the poet wants to deliver the feeling of longing to something, search for freedom from anxiety and chaotic

feeling. She keeps mentioning 'freezing' for many times, as if the cold can not be handled.

From the linguistic analysis, she used metaphors such as freeze, freezing, as to compare herself with the cold ice. She is in the same place freezing means that she is not changed from the situation. This could represent her feeling and voice to be free. The voice here is the search for freedom.

Next poetry is as follows.

Take Me Home  
The old window runs  
Toward its fate into a new house  
I saw the color creased  
As did not want to go

I regret myself, because  
I can not lend my hand  
Even my lips are locked by fear

I saw you deeply  
Hoping I can pick up you someday  
"Take me home" you said  
"To the real place"  
"To be the real me"  
The place where all the memories started

Keep the memories in yourself  
Then I will remember you  
In a dusty corner of the house  
A warm home,  
That's getting colder since you're gone

This poetry is about an old window who is separated from the old home to the new house. The 'I' in this poetry could be anything, could be a part of the old home who can not do anything to help the old window to be still in the old home. The 'I' here can not help because it does not have power to stop the old window from being moved. It can be seen that the power here in this context is the owner of the new house who moved the old window in the old home to the new house. While 'I' here can be the old door, who has been the partner of old window for years.

The content of poetry is longing for self-identity, missing the old version of self, which is wished to be always maintained.

The linguistic analysis is the use of metaphors for old window which represents old self with old home as a self home. Now part of the new self is the new house. Which is barely welcomed and celebrated. The old self is still the power of main self. Not the new one.

The voice she wants to deliver is that self is changed, identity may be changed but it will forever be stuck with the original self. Or in other words the new self can not be separated from the old one.

From the two poetry the poet develops her language in representing feeling. Feeling can be described and symbolized with so many expressions. In the first poetry she uses the case of being lonely and sad however in the second poetry she uses the feeling of home identity, which is changed by the new voice of identity. Both old and new identity haven't been engaged in such a perfect fit.

Other two poetry are from Gita Wahyu (a pseudonym), 21 years old EFL learner, female. Her first poetry is as follows.

Faded

I  
Am  
Ghosting you  
You were wasting me  
Throw without a thought  
Tied me up, on your footsteps  
My wind were blown and whispered  
Ran well on your skinny brain  
Told you exactly the time's up  
Get ready to sink down  
It is not a mixed-up  
About me  
On  
U

From this poetry the poet talks about the fact of ghosting, in which the character in poetry is ghosting her lover because her lover is ghosting her first. Ghosting is a condition where one of couple lovers make a bizarre relationship by not giving information to his/her couple without any notifications. In this context the poet wants to show that she is the victim of ghosting so she is giving a revenge. The structure of the poetry also is unique because it follows the skeleton of a shape. The challenge is to create lines that is suitable for the design.

The content of the poetry is the poet wants to show the effect of ghosting on her and she is giving back a revenge. It can be seen from the last four lines.

The linguistics analysis is a combination of metaphors and irony. The metaphor can be seen in 'get ready to sink down' where the self is compared to a ship that can be sink. Another one is 'my wind were blown and whispered' in which

the mind and the wind are put alike where mind and wind both have 'flow and current'. It has also the irony which is stated in 'ran well on your skinny brain'. Skinny is usually for body, but skinny brain is like an irony to a small brain, that can not function well. The voice that the poet wants to share is that don't give a promise on anything anyhow.

The next poetry from Gita Wahyu is as follows.

**Hmm...**

Tik tok tik tok tik tok tik tok tik tok...

Uhh... who are you?

Smells like rotten lucky

Could you open your mouth? I mean speak louder, please.

I couldn't recognize either I am me, or I was me. Who I used to be?

This is just a wall.

No.

It could be a prison.

Why?

I found no reason.

I just listen to tik tok tik tok tik tok tik tok

Up there. Just a whisper.

Can you hear?

Whirling around my head.

Inside.

In this context, this poetry is a metaphor to time, as a prison for freedom, where the poet used tik tok tik tok as a clue for time and wall which is put as metaphor for a prison.

The content of the poetry is about the time and the prison and hope for the better future.

The linguistic analysis of the poetry is the poetry uses metaphors such as wall as a prison and tik tok tik tok as time.

The overall voice that is intended to be shared is about time as a prison and a message that if you can make use of the time wisely you will likely be successful.

The language is developed through these poetry in which in the first poetry the poet wants to describe about her feeling and self-identity of love while the second poetry talks about freedom. Her language is developed from the language of cynical and direct, to the wiser metaphor and lyrics.

### **Voice of Self-Identity**

Poetry has been used to convey self-identity for ages. The language it used is the

representation of poetry voice of identity. In the first analysis, context of writing is done to analyze the 'why' poetry is written, 'in what situation', and 'in what purpose'. Here the self-identity is revealed. In 'why' aspect, this analysis is done to search for the writers' reason and ideas on the topic. Here also self-identity is represented. In the 'what situation', the analysis is focused on the writers' atmosphere of writing, how the idea is born and what situation attached to it. Further, 'in what purpose' the analysis is based on writers' voice and vision through the poetry.

Poetry is an effective channel to use in portraying the voice of community from which the poet is born. It is the identity of individuals which contains cultural beliefs, society sense and culture. In terms of self-identity, this study revealed that there are three poetry that search for self-identity in their poetry, namely "Window in A Dream" by I Gede Astika, "Shut In" by Santi Dewi and "Take Me Home" by Santi Dewi. From those poetry it can be seen that search for self-identity is done by articulating feelings, describing the emotions in such a way, that it represents the part of self. In "Window in A Dream" for example, I Gede Astika explains his fear as the temporary shocking feeling. Feeling fear is a part of self-identity that is constructed by accepting and understanding the emotions. Poetry is the way individual represents his/her voice of identity through poetic expressions. The study goes along with a research from Adinna (2017) who supports the idea that poetry is the way the poets choose to find his/her theme, poetic language, and device to suit their sense of identity.

Iida (2016) in his research also found that L2 poetry writing can be used to express to convey the poetic identity of the poets. His work described how the L2 learners can express their study abroad experience through haiku writing. It reveals that poetry can be the effective tools to explain experience in its purest forms.

From the perspective of language and identity theory according to Norton (1997), the poetry refers to how the understanding of the world is constructed. How that relationship is built upon the time and space and relate them for the future. This is also in line with Hanauer's finding (2012) that the idea of teaching poetry writing is for the language learning expression. It is in the sense that a language learning is widening and deepening individual understanding and individual expression. Another study reveals that poetry can not be separated from its linguistics

reality, that poetry is not just a tool to express something, but a language of reality which contains linguistics reality (Al-Zubaidy, 2014). Poetry has everything inside it, from phonological structure, to morphological and syntactical structure of language, makes it a completely language development learning.

Voice of self-identity through love and hope can also be seen from the poetry of "Faded" by Gita Wahyu and "Injuries from Justice" from I Gede Astika. In "Faded" the Gita Wahyu tried to speak about her search of love however it is in the cynical way. It is not about love in positive manner that builds the relationship between man and woman perfectly, but in contrast, a negative way. However it still can be felt that the writer is longing for love, a true love. While in "Injuries from Justice" it can be seen that love is not there, only hatred and judgment. However the search of love and hope are questioned. Such as how can human being so mean and heartless. Is there love remained. Is there hope to be searched? The poet uses the expression to review life as it is in their eyes.

### **Voice of freedom**

In search for freedom, it can be seen that the poetry "Injuries from Injustice" by I Gede Astika, and "Hmmm..." by Gita Wahyu are the poetry that contain search for freedom sense. From both poem the language can be described as the medium from which the idea of freedom is reviewed, reinterpreted and reconstructed. In "Injuries from Injustice" I Gede Astika articulated the idea of how freedom should be reviewed, for whom is the freedom gained, and how it should be reinterpreted from many different point of views. In "Hmmm..." Wahyu Gita tried to convey the idea of freedom from different perspective. She borrows the metaphor of time to show that time is prison. From the language learning perspective, L2 poetry writing can be the medium from which the idea of personal expression is valued as learning process. The idea of freedom from the perspective of poet can be deeper and wider because language of poetry extends the language in such a way. In the poetry, the poets use metaphors. As in "Injuries from Injustice" the metaphors used are negative metaphor such as "animals" which actually refer to human beings. Metaphor can be strongly used in poetry because of its power. Metaphors are used to express freedom and sense of belonging in poetry (Yang & Peng, 2021). In the context of language learning, metaphors are extension of

language that can be the representation of language development. Metaphors are creation, construction and development of language. Poetry in this context use metaphors to represent life in a perspective the poet uses. Writing poetry enables learners to express their thoughts on life experience (Hanauer, 2004). This enriches the understanding of life from different point of views. Furthermore another study on poetry also emphasizes on how important is poetry in the language learning as it promotes literacy, community building, and emotional health (Mittal, 2016). This is because poetry is used to express feeling and this is promoting self-thoughts, build connection to community of thinkers and at the same time build emotional well-being.

### Meaning for literacy language

As stated by Hanauer (2012) the whole perception of what learning a language is changed if in the literacy learning, there are real, meaningful and personal expression in the centre of learning. Poetry helps the learners to formulate language in a unique fashion (Hanauer, 2004). Unique language, personal, and intimate self-context language makes poetry special to create authenticity of language. This made poetry very special in language learning context because the language is developed personally by inventing the language on the poets' perceptions of the language. Furthermore, the linguistics aspects of poetry enable poetry to be a freedom of expression in which its linguistics liberation could not be assessed with the standard grammar rules, instead it should be analyzed with deep understanding and thorough grammar knowledge (Nofal Dr., 2012).

In this language learning development, narrative reflection is used to gather information of how the poetry is developed through a process. The process covers from which the language is developed to make meanings and to make a new perspective of the world. Poetry is used to construct meaning. Poetry serves not only as a medium of teaching but also a teaching method to stimulate creativity and self-expression, as well as to increase motivation (Gönen, 2018). The power of poetry is here to express voice of self-identity, to inquire and to discover more 'unheard' self-voice. This is also supported by the finding of study that creates self-inquiry as poetic inquiry, a way to discover self and reflect self through poetry (Fernández-Giménez et al., 2018).

In 2016, Iida conducted a research on poetic

identity in second language writing to explore EFL learners' study abroad experience as he found that poetry is the way the L2 learners search and construct their poetic identity for life (Iida, 2016). This is supporting this current study that poetry can be the medium to express the life identity.

Hanauer in his study (2012) on L2 poetry in the language classroom stated that L2 poetry writing is a way of putting the learners' voice at the centre of learning and this is how learning is more humanizing. In this sense poetry is the voice of the language learners from which they channel their ideas, thoughts, and inspirations towards poetry they create. Still, the issue is, how does it happen, what starts at the beginning, middle and end, that needs to be explored.

The very meaning of poetry is that is a means for writers to express themselves using a specific rhetoric (Iida, 2008). A specific rhetoric here can be seen from the metaphors used and other figurative language. The representation of ideas and thoughts are articulated through the choice of words. Poetry will stimulate their creativity and productivity through which language can be developed (Öunç, 2014). Poetry serves as a medium of expression and production of language, where learners benefit a lot from the process of writing.

### CONCLUSION

Poetry is the way to construct meaning of self-identity and to articulate language learning in a way that ordinary language can not express. The way the poets see the world from their point of views help the understanding of the world with language. Therefore language develops, language evolves and expands. This research's strength is showing the power of poetry in building the power of language to represent identity. This research has limitation on the subjects of study so that further research with bigger number of subjects is needed to widen and deepen the research perspectives.

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