Students' Perception on Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing Class: Impressions and Facts

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Abstract

This study investigates students' perceptions of integrating local wisdom into creative writing, focusing on poetry in the Indonesian educational context. The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews, to explore students' experiences, engagement, and challenges in writing poetry that reflects their cultural heritage. Findings reveal that while students generally perceive local wisdom integration positively, enhancing both cultural connection and creative expression, they also face notable challenges, particularly related to language translation and personal relevance. The study underscores the need for culturally responsive pedagogy that balances local content with creative freedom, fostering deeper engagement in creative writing education.

Keywords: *Local Wisdom, Creative Writing, Poetry, Students Perception, Teaching English*

INTRODUCTION

Poetry, with its rich language and evocative imagery, transcends mere communication. It delves into the depths of human experience, expressing emotions and ideas in a way that prose often struggles to capture. Hanauer (2012), a prominent advocate for meaningful literacy, aptly states, "…with poetry as a form of meaningful literacy, students learn about themselves, about the presence of others, and the diversity of thought and experience..." This quote underscores the vital role poetry plays in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of language.

In the context of English language learning in Indonesia, poetry offers a unique and engaging platform for students to develop their proficiency. By analyzing and deconstructing poetic structures, students gain valuable insights into grammar, vocabulary usage, and figurative language. Immersing themselves in the rhythm and flow of poems fosters an appreciation for the nuances and beauty of the English language. Moreover, poetry encourages

students to think critically, unpacking layers of meaning and symbolism present within the verses.

Furthermore, incorporating poetry into English language learning fosters a connection between the English language and Indonesian culture. Students can explore poems that celebrate the rich heritage of Indonesia, weaving local wisdom and traditions into their original creations. This allows them to express their unique identities and perspectives while solidifying their grasp of English. By embracing the power of poetry, both students and educators can unlock a world of creative possibilities within English language learning in Indonesia.

Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture has implemented the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) curriculum, emphasizing student creativity and exploration. Within this framework, the subject previously known as "Poetry" under the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) has evolved into "Creative Writing: Poetry." This shift reflects a significant change in learning objectives.

Instead of composing short, general paragraphs, students now engage with the art of poetry, a form that utilizes imagery and metaphor to express ideas and emotions. The newly developed creative writing materials aim to equip students with the necessary skills to understand and write poems, ultimately leading them to create original works. This aligns perfectly with the *Merdeka Belajar* principles, which encourage students to be "creative" in their approach to writing poetry. As educators, our role is to guide and inspire students in their journey towards crafting original poems.

Prior to composing original works, students are introduced to different poem structures through sample short paragraphs. These structures serve as stepping stones for creating specific types of poems, including adjective placement poems, bio-poems, contrast poems, and so on. Through this guided exploration, students gain the theoretical foundation needed to apply their knowledge in writing poems that incorporate local wisdom. Ideally, these poems do not only respect their environment but also showcase it through creative expression. In essence, students are encouraged to use poetry as a tool to depict their culture, customs, local heroes, and historical narratives.

To obtain input for the improvement of the teaching and learning of creative writing, a study is designed to explore students' perception on incorporating local wisdom into creative writing, particularly in writing poems. The research questions are as follows:
1. What are the students' perceptions about creative writing?
2. What are the students' perceptions about incorporating local wisdom into creative writing?
3. What are the students' impression of incorporating local wisdom into creative writing?
4. What are the facts of students' creative writing?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Local Wisdom

Local wisdom refers to the indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, traditions, and values specific to a particular community or region. It plays a significant role in shaping identities and cultural continuity. Integrating local wisdom into the education system, particularly in creative writing classes, has been an area of growing interest. Scholars have explored how embedding local cultural elements in curricula helps in preserving traditions and fostering a deeper understanding of one's cultural heritage.

I Wayan Dana's (2013) study on Balinese local wisdom in education emphasizes how the inclusion of local traditions in classroom instruction improves student engagement and understanding. Dana asserts that when students engage with content rooted in their cultural context, they experience a greater connection to the material, leading to more meaningful learning experiences. In a similar vein, Japar et. al (2022) research on multiculturalism and

local wisdom in Indonesian classrooms found that students showed higher levels of motivation and interest when the curriculum incorporated cultural knowledge from their own communities. These findings suggest that integrating local wisdom into creative writing classes could foster a sense of belonging and relevance for students, as they see their culture reflected in the curriculum.

Local wisdom's role in creative writing also contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. By encouraging students to write stories, poems, and essays that draw upon traditional customs, folklore, and local values, educators can ensure that these cultural elements continue to thrive in modern contexts. This practice also allows students to develop a unique voice that reflects both their personal experiences and their cultural background, leading to richer and more diverse literary outputs.

Creative Writing and Meaningful Literacy

Creative writing as a pedagogical tool is closely linked to the development of meaningful literacy, a concept championed by David Ian Hanauer. Meaningful literacy refers to literacy practices that are personally significant and relevant to the individual's life experiences and cultural identity. In the context of creative writing, meaningful literacy is achieved when students are able to express themselves through writing that resonates with their own lived experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Hanauer (2012) posits that when students write about topics that matter to them—such as their cultural heritage—they engage more deeply with the writing process. This engagement leads to better writing outcomes, as students are more motivated to invest effort into their work. Hanauer's research emphasizes that creative writing provides students with a platform to explore their identities and express their voices in a way that is both reflective and transformative. Incorporating local wisdom into creative writing aligns with the principles of meaningful literacy by making the writing tasks culturally relevant and personally meaningful for students. When students draw from their own cultural experiences, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over their writing, leading to higher levels of engagement and satisfaction. This approach not only fosters creativity but also helps students develop a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage.

Additionally, Poetry, in particular, is an ideal form for promoting meaningful literacy because of its inherent focus on emotion, imagery, and personal reflection. Poetry often requires readers and writers to engage with language in a highly symbolic and concentrated way, exploring layers of meaning through metaphor, sound, rhythm, and form (Holland-Bat & Miller, 2023). This creative process invites a deep engagement with words, their meanings, and their emotional impact. In relation to Hanauer's meaningful literacy, poetry offers a unique space for self-expression. When individuals write poetry, they often draw from their inner emotional landscapes, shaping words to capture feelings and ideas that may not be easily expressed in everyday language. This process makes poetry writing an intimate and highly personal act of literacy, reinforcing the connection between language and personal meaning.

Students' Perceptions of Local Wisdom in Creative Writing

Students' perceptions of incorporating local wisdom into creative writing classes are generally positive, as many appreciate the opportunity to explore their cultural identities through writing. Research by Erica N. Walker (2017) on culturally relevant pedagogy found that students were more engaged and motivated when their cultural backgrounds were reflected in the curriculum. This finding is echoed in studies on creative writing, where students reported feeling a stronger connection to their work when they were encouraged to write about topics that were personally significant, such as their local traditions and values.

However, there are challenges associated with this approach. Some students may feel disconnected from certain aspects of local wisdom, especially if they have not been exposed to these cultural practices in their daily lives. This disconnect can make it difficult for them to incorporate local wisdom into their writing in a way that feels authentic. Additionally, students may struggle with balancing the creative freedom that comes with writing fiction or poetry with the constraints of adhering to traditional cultural norms.

To address these challenges, educators must provide support and guidance to help students navigate the complexities of integrating local wisdom into their creative writing. This could involve offering workshops or discussions on the importance of cultural heritage in creative expression, as well as providing examples of how other writers have successfully incorporated local wisdom into their work.

METHOD

In conducting the research, the researcher uses an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. In an explanatory sequential design, the data is gathered sequentially in two phases: quantitative followed by qualitative. This design consists of collecting quantitative data first and then collecting qualitative data to help the researcher in explaining or elaborating on the quantitative results (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

In this study, quantitative data is needed to answer the first and second research questions emphasize on student's perception about incorporating local wisdom into creative writing. To collect the quantitative data, the research uses a survey. Then, qualitative data is needed to answer the last research question about the facts of students' creative writing. The qualitative data is collected by using semi-structured interview.

The study was conducted at English Study Program, Language and Art Department, Teachers Training and Educational Science Faculty, Pattimura University. The study was conducted for 3 months. The subjects for quantitative data are 100 EFL students while the subjects for qualitative data were 10 EFL students from the fourth semester of English Study Program enrolled in creative writing class: poetry.

RESULTS
Quantitative Results

This section dives into the quantitative results from a study that explores how students feel about bringing local wisdom into their creative writing. Based on average scores from responses to different statements, the findings provide insight into students' experiences and views on incorporating local themes into their poetry. The findings are categorized into four elements: Students' Perceptions of Creative Writing, Students' Perceptions of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing Poetry, Students' Impressions of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing, and The Facts of Students' Creative Writing.

Table 1. Result of Questionnaires

No	Elements	Statements	Mean	Level
1	Students' Perception About Creative Writing	7. Crafting local-themed poems in English was a stimulating new experience for me.	3.72	High
		9. Writing poems based on local wisdom improved my creative writing skills	3.80	High
		10. I felt more connected to my culture while writing poems that incorporated local wisdom.	3.95	High

		12. I am more confident in writing poems that reflect my local environment and culture.	3.64	High
		Total	**3.77**	**High**
2	Students' Perception About Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing Poetry	1. I found incorporating local wisdom into my poetry writing to be beneficial.	3.72	High
		8. I believe that incorporating local wisdom into creative writing can enhance student engagement.	3.85	High
		11. The incorporation of local wisdom into poetry should be a regular part of the creative writing curriculum.	3.84	High
		Total	**3.80**	**High**
3	Students' Impression of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing	3. Writing poems based on local themes made my work more relevant to my environment and community.	3.80	High
		4. Integrating local wisdom into creative writing classes enhanced my engagement with the subject.	3.64	High
		14. Overall, I have a positive impression of incorporating local wisdom into creative writing classes.	3.87	High
		Total	**3.77**	**High**
4	The Facts of Students' Creative Writing	2. Learning about local wisdom helped me write my poems.	3.77	High
		5. I faced challenges in putting local content for my poems	3.38	Medium
		6. The challenges of incorporating local wisdom into poetry were outweighed by the benefits	3.03	Medium
		13. The process of integrating local wisdom into my poems required significant effort.	3.67	High
		Total	**3.46**	**Medium**

Students' Perception About Creative Writing

The first category looks at students' overall perceptions of their creative writing experiences, specifically focusing on crafting poetry with local themes. This category had an overall mean of 3.77, which falls within the "High" range, indicating a generally positive outlook.

Students found crafting local-themed poems in English to be an engaging and refreshing experience. This based on the statement "Crafting local-themed poems in English was a stimulating new experience for me", as reflected in the mean score of 3.72. This suggests that students enjoy incorporating local topics into their writing, finding it both intriguing and invigorating. Additionally, the statement "Writing poems based on local wisdom improved my creative writing skills " scored an average of 3.80, indicating that students felt the inclusion of local wisdom bolstered their creative abilities. This result emphasizes the educational value of integrating local culture into the curriculum.

The highest score in this category, at 3.95, was for the statement "I felt more connected to my culture while writing poems that incorporated local wisdom." This highlights a significant benefit of using local wisdom as a bridge between students' personal and cultural identities, allowing them to deepen their connection to their heritage through creative writing. Lastly, the statement " I am more confident in writing poems that reflect my local environment and culture." received a mean score of 3.64. Although this score is still relatively high, it

suggests that while students did gain confidence, there is room for additional support to further boost their self-assurance as they explore local themes in their writing.

Students' Perception About Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing Poetry

This category specifically explored students' views on the integration of local wisdom into the poetry-writing process, with an overall high mean of 3.80. For the perceived benefits, students responded favorably to the statement "I found incorporating local wisdom into my poetry writing to be beneficial," with a mean score of 3.72. This suggests that students recognized the value local wisdom brought to their poetry, as it enhanced both their creative process and the relevance of their work.

When it came to engagement, the statement "I believe that incorporating local wisdom into creative writing can enhance student engagement" received a mean of 3.85, indicating that students strongly believe local wisdom positively influences their involvement with the material. This finding underscores the motivational aspects of using culturally relevant content, as it appears to resonate deeply with the students.

Finally, the statement "The incorporation of local wisdom into poetry should be a regular part of the creative writing curriculum" achieved a mean score of 3.84, reflecting a desire among students for the sustained inclusion of local wisdom in their curriculum. This finding highlights a demand for structured integration, which would support both their creative skills and cultural literacy, allowing them to explore and express their cultural heritage through poetry consistently
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Students' Impression of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing

This This category delves into students' general impressions and the perceived relevance of integrating local wisdom into their creative writing activities. The overall mean for this section was 3.77, suggesting a generally positive reception among the students. When examining the relevance to their environment and community, students agreed with the statement "Writing poems based on local themes made my work more relevant to my environment and community," which achieved a mean score of 3.80. This high score indicates that local-themed creative writing resonates with students, as it allows them to root their work in familiar and meaningful contexts that reflect their surroundings and community.

In terms of engagement, the statement "Integrating local wisdom into creative writing classes enhanced my engagement with the subject" received a mean score of 3.64. While students overall found that local wisdom boosted their engagement, this slightly lower score suggests some variability in the degree of engagement. This could be attributed to individual differences in interest or prior familiarity with local themes, which might influence how deeply they connect with the material.

The highest score in this category, with a mean of 3.87, was for the statement "Overall, I have a positive impression of incorporating local wisdom into creative writing classes." This high level of agreement demonstrates that students generally value the incorporation of local wisdom and feel that it positively contributes to their learning experience. Their favorable impression suggests that they perceive this approach as both relevant and beneficial, enhancing their connection to their cultural background through creative expression.

The Facts of Students' Creative Writing

Despite the positive perceptions, students faced some challenges when integrating local wisdom This category reflects the variability in students' experiences with integrating local wisdom into their poetry, as evidenced by an overall mean score of 3.46, categorized as "Medium." This medium rating suggests that while some students encountered significant challenges during the creative process, others may have found it less difficult. For instance, the

statement "Learning about local wisdom helped me write my poems" received a high mean score of 3.77, indicating that many students appreciated the support this knowledge provided. However, the medium score of 3.38 for the statement "I faced challenges in putting local content for my poems" suggests that incorporating these themes was not uniformly difficult across the group; rather, some students struggled more than others, possibly due to varying degrees of familiarity with local content.

The lowest score within this category was 3.03 for the statement "The challenges of incorporating local wisdom into poetry were outweighed by the benefits." This lower score highlights that while students generally recognized the advantages, some found the obstacles substantial enough to affect their creative process, pointing to a mixed reception of the experience. Additionally, the statement "The process of integrating local wisdom into my poems required significant effort" garnered a high score of 3.67. This suggests that even those who did not find it particularly challenging still acknowledged the effort-intensive nature of the task. The mixed experiences reflected in these scores imply that while the integration of local wisdom holds educational value, some students would benefit from additional resources or support tailored to their varying levels of familiarity and comfort with local themes.

Qualitative Results

In order to gain deeper insights into the integration of local wisdom within a creative writing class, a qualitative approach was deemed essential to complement and expand upon the quantitative findings. The initial quantitative analysis revealed that while three of the four key elements— Students' Perception about Creative Writing, Students' Perception about Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing Poetry, Students' Impression of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing—achieved high mean scores, the element concerning The Facts of Students' Creative Writing was only at a medium level.

This finding suggests that while students demonstrate familiarity with and appreciation for local wisdom and creative writing in theory, there is room for further development in applying this knowledge to their own writing. To address this gap, the researcher conducted an interview aimed at uncovering the specific challenges, perceptions, and insights of students regarding their creative writing process. The interview questions are aimed at going deep into the elements of the fact of students' creative writing to answer the gap. The themes of the findings are based on the close coding from the theories of Dana (2013), Putra & Gita (2020), Hanauer (2012), Walker (2017), and Ida (2016). The themes include local wisdom and cultural connection, meaningful literacy and personal engagement in creative writing, and students' recommendations and perceptions on integrating local wisdom into creative writing.

Local Wisdom and Cultural Connection

The following findings are based on the interview results (highlighting key themes identified during the sessions. Participants shared diverse perspectives on the impact of writing poetry rooted in local themes, particularly regarding cultural connection and personal expression. The insights reveal a complex relationship between local wisdom and individual writing practices, emphasizing both the importance of cultural appreciation and the value of creative freedom in the writing process.

1. How did writing poems based on local themes influence your connection to your culture and environment? Can you share any specific instances or poems where this connection was particularly strong?

- Cultural Connection and Personal Interest

<div align="center">Excerpt 1: P1</div>

"Writing poems based on local themes didn't really enhance my connection to my culture or environment"

Excerpt 2: P5
"Uhm, I felt more connected when writing about local things like *Sasi*, but I'm not sure how much it will matter for teaching. It was just a nice way to reflect on the culture."

- As an Academic Exercise

Excerpt 3: P1
"It felt more like an academic exercise than a meaningful creative endeavor."

- Cultural Appreciation

Excerpt 4: P2
"Writing about local themes helped me appreciate my culture a bit more. For example, writing about a traditional dance was interesting to learn about."

Excerpt 5: P3
"Writing poems based on local themes deepened my connection to my culture and made me more aware of my traditions"

- Cultural Preservation and Modern Connection

Excerpt 6: P4
"The poem felt particularly powerful because I was able to connect the imagery of the land and sea with the cultural importance of conservation. This experience made me appreciate how poetry can serve as a bridge between modern life and traditional wisdom."

- Cultural Preservation and Educational Value

Excerpt 7: P7
"This process reminded me how valuable our local traditions are, especially in an educational setting."

- Creative Freedom and Personal Connection

Excerpt 8: P9
"I felt connected to my culture, but honestly, I connect more with my writing when I'm free to choose any topic. Writing should reflect all aspects of life, not just cultural roots."

- Cultural Pride and Expression

Excerpt 9: P10
"I felt proud to put those stories and ideas into my work."

In conclusion, the interview reveals that writing poems based on local themes had diverse impacts on participants' cultural connection. While some felt it deepened their appreciation for traditions and fostered pride in cultural preservation, others viewed it more as an academic exercise than a meaningful experience. A few participants noted that such themes helped bridge modern and traditional values, especially regarding cultural conservation, while others felt stronger connections when free to explore broader topics. Overall, cultural-themed writing can enhance cultural pride and awareness, but its significance varies, with some valuing creative freedom over cultural focus.

2. What do you perceive as the main benefits of integrating local wisdom into your creative writing? How has it influenced your overall writing skills and confidence?

- Improved Writing Skills and Confidence

Excerpt 10: P1

"I learned more about the diversity of local traditions and how they can be represented in literature."

Excerpt 11: P4

"It has expanded my vocabulary and improved my descriptive abilities by encouraging me to convey complex cultural concepts in English. It also boosted my confidence, especially when I realized that I could express ideas that were deeply personal and rooted in my heritage."

- Creativity and Cultural Value

Excerpt 12: P2

"It also made me think creatively about how to express cultural elements. Even though I'm not great at poetry, it showed me different ways to be creative and value cultural heritage."

- Confidence and Unique Voice

Excerpt 13: P3

"Integrating local wisdom into my creative writing has given me more themes to explore, making my poetry more unique and meaningful. This has boosted my confidence in my writing skills."

- Creativity and Confidence

Excerpt 14: P5

"I think it helped me be more creative, especially with difficult words, but I'm not sure if it's really important for my future career. It made me more confident, though."

Excerpt 15: P9

"It helped me understand cultural expression, but freedom in writing has been more beneficial for improving my creativity and confidence."

Excerpt 16: P6

"I'm more confident when I'm not limited to just one theme."

- Language Learning and Cultural Expression

Excerpt 17: P7

"Even though I'm still building my confidence in English, this experience showed me that bringing local wisdom into the classroom can make lessons more relatable and engaging for students. It also helped me improve my writing skills little by little, as I learned to express complex cultural ideas in another language."

- Confidence and Creative Growth

Excerpt 18: P8

"It improved my ability to express cultural ideas, but I think writing freely has built my confidence more. Both have been valuable for my growth."

- Cultural Expression and Writing Skills

Excerpt 19: P10

"It strengthened my ability to connect cultural ideas with creative writing. I think it made my writing more meaningful, especially when sharing it with others who understand the culture."

In short, integrating local wisdom into creative writing has positively impacted writers by enhancing their skills, confidence, and creativity. Many participants reported improved vocabulary, descriptive abilities, and a greater capacity to convey complex cultural ideas, which enriched their writing and boosted self-assurance. This approach encouraged them to explore unique themes, fostering a distinctive voice and deepening their connection to cultural heritage. Additionally, some found that expressing cultural ideas in English also supported language learning, making writing both relatable and engaging. While cultural expression played a vital role, the freedom to explore different themes was also essential for personal growth and confidence. Overall, local wisdom has proven to be an asset in their creative journeys.

Meaningful Literacy and Personal Engagement in Creative Writing

In exploring the integration of local wisdom into poetry, students revealed a spectrum of experiences that shaped their creative processes and classroom engagement. While some found profound connections to their heritage through the infusion of cultural elements, others grappled with feelings of disconnection due to personal interests in non-local themes. Language barriers and the challenge of translating Ambonese concepts into English further complicated their efforts, leading to a range of strategies for expressing local wisdom. Overall, this process fostered a sense of shared cultural exploration, though the impact varied greatly among individual participants based on their backgrounds and preferences.

3. Can you describe your overall experience with incorporating local wisdom into your poetry writing? How did it impact your creative process and engagement with the class?

- Lack of Personal Connection

Excerpt 20: P1
"While I enjoy writing and exploring different creative outlets, integrating local wisdom has been challenging. I often feel disconnected because my interests lie more in other hobby and other non-local content."

- Cultural Connection and Personal interest

Excerpt 21: P2
"Writing poems using local wisdom was interesting but not really my thing. I prefer playing games and listening to music."

Excerpt 22: P10
"I loved incorporating local wisdom—it gave my poems a unique touch. It was inspiring to bring cultural heritage into my writing"

- Cultural Connection and Language

Excerpt 23: P4
"Incorporating local wisdom into my poetry has been both fulfilling and challenging. It deepened my connection with my roots and gave me a new perspective on how language and culture intertwine. The use of local Ambonese words, even when untranslatable into English, made me more aware of the power of language. It sparked engaging discussions in class"

Excerpt 24: P5

"It made me think more about my culture and how to express it in English, but sometimes it was hard to fully translate the local ideas."

- Engagement and Class Participation
Excerpt 25: P4
"This process strengthened my creative thinking and my engagement with classmates, as we were all navigating a shared cultural experience"
Excerpt 26: P5
"It did help me stay engaged with the class, though."

- Personal Interest and Cultural Exploration

Excerpt 27: P6
"I really enjoyed the class, especially the creativity it encouraged. Writing with local wisdom was interesting, but I also felt like I wanted more freedom to explore other themes and styles beyond Ambonese culture."
Excerpt 28: P8
"I liked writing with local wisdom because it added depth to my poems, but I also enjoy experimenting with broader themes."

- Personal Goals and Language Challenges
Excerpt 29: P7
"I'm really passionate about teaching, so I hoped this class would help me become better at it. However, since I'm not very comfortable with English yet, writing poems was difficult"

- Personal Preference and Creative Freedom
Excerpt 30: P9
"It was interesting, but I prefer writing without restrictions. While local themes were meaningful, I feel my creativity flows better when I have no limits."

In conclusion, the interview responses highlight a diverse range of experiences among students incorporating local wisdom into their poetry writing. Some participants found this process personally fulfilling and culturally enriching, noting that it deepened their connection to their heritage and enhanced their awareness of language's cultural power. However, expressed challenges in feeling a strong connection due to personal interests lying outside of local themes or difficulties with language translation. While some valued the unique cultural perspective local wisdom brought to their work, others preferred more creative freedom to explore broader topics. Overall, the experience fostered both engagement and a sense of shared cultural exploration within the class, though the degree of impact varied based on individual interests and comfort with cultural content.

4. What specific challenges did you encounter when generating content based on local wisdom for your poems? How did you address these challenges?

- Religious Belief and Local Wisdom Conflict
Excerpt 31: P1
"One of the main challenges I faced was finding inspiration from local themes that I don't necessarily connect with. My religious beliefs also create a barrier because some local customs and wisdom don't align with my faith"

- Motivation and Interest

Excerpt 32: P2

"The hardest part was staying motivated to write poems. I'm more into music and gaming, so thinking in poetry was tough. Also, I didn't feel very connected to the topics since they don't match my main interests"

- Cultural Understanding

Excerpt 33: P3

"The main challenge I faced was trying to fully understand my culture and the values I wanted to include."

- Language Challenges

Excerpt 34: P4

"One of the biggest challenges was encountering words or phrases in the Ambon language that didn't have a direct English equivalent."

Excerpt 35: P5

"Well, the main challenge was untranslatable words in Ambonese. I usually left them in the poem or explained them in English"

- Creative Restriction

Excerpt 36: P6

"The main challenge was feeling a bit restricted to local ideas. I love writing, and sometimes I wanted to write about other topics."

Excerpt 37: P9

"I struggled with feeling limited. Sometimes, I wanted to write about completely different topics, so I had to find ways to adapt local wisdom without feeling confined."

- Language and Cultural Expression

Excerpt 38: P7

"One of the biggest challenges I faced was expressing my ideas in English, especially when it came to capturing the essence of local wisdom."

- Cultural Authenticity and Personal Voice

Excerpt 39: P8

"The challenge was staying authentic to local wisdom while still expressing my own voice. I found blending both together was the best approach, even though it was tricky."

- Creative Problem-Solving

Excerpt 40: P10

"Some local concepts were hard to translate into English, but that just pushed me to be more creative in how I expressed them."

In generating poems based on local wisdom, the interviewees faced several challenges, each requiring unique approaches to overcome. Conflicts between religious beliefs and local traditions sometimes hindered inspiration, as some cultural practices did not align with personal faith. Maintaining motivation was difficult, particularly when interests like gaming or music

differed from poetry. Cultural understanding also posed issues, as participants had to navigate complex local values and customs. Language barriers, especially with Ambonese words lacking direct English equivalents, demanded creativity in expression—some opted to retain untranslatable words or provide explanations. Creative restrictions, feeling confined to local topics, required adaptation to maintain personal voice while honoring cultural authenticity. Ultimately, participants managed these challenges through creative problem-solving, blending cultural elements with individual expression and using inventive strategies to bridge linguistic and conceptual gaps.

Students' Recommendations and Perceptions on Integrating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing.

Students emphasized the importance of flexibility and diverse resources in creative writing classes that incorporate local wisdom. They suggested allowing for various forms of expression beyond poetry and enabling students to choose themes that resonate with their interests. Additionally, inviting local elders and providing cultural resources, such as glossaries, could enrich the learning experience and deepen students' understanding of their heritage.

5. Based on your experience, what suggestions would you have for future creative writing classes that aim to incorporate local wisdom? Are there any specific resources or approaches that you think would enhance the learning experience?

- Flexibility and Diverse Resources

Excerpt 41: P1

"For future creative writing classes, I would suggest offering more flexibility in choosing themes. Allowing students to explore local wisdom while also incorporating their personal interests and beliefs could make the process more engaging."

- Diverse Expression

Excerpt 42: P2

"For future classes, it would be better to let students choose different forms of expression, not just poetry. Some might prefer writing songs, making art, or creating game stories based on local wisdom."

- Additional Resources

Excerpt 43: P3

"I would suggest introducing more resources, such as stories, to help us as students better understand local wisdom."

- Cultural Resources and Language Support

Excerpt 44: P4

"Inviting local elders or cultural experts to share stories and explain traditional practices would give students a richer understanding of the material. Additionally, having a bilingual dictionary or glossary of common untranslatable words in Ambonese could help students navigate language barriers more easily."

Excerpt 45: P5

"Uhm, maybe bringing in local elders to explain things would help. Also, having a glossary for the untranslatable words would make things easier. I think that could improve the experience."

- Creative Freedom and Flexibility

Excerpt 46: P6

"I'd suggest giving students the choice to incorporate local wisdom, but not making it the main focus. Letting us write more freely would make it more engaging for those who want to explore different topics."

Excerpt 47: P8
"Allow more flexibility. Let students choose when and how to incorporate local wisdom, so they can explore their full range of creativity."

Excerpt 48: P9
"Encourage students to explore any topic they're passionate about, with local wisdom as an option rather than a focus."

- Language Resources and Support
Excerpt 49: P7
"For future creative writing classes, I think it would be helpful to provide more resources that focus on how to incorporate local wisdom into English writing. Maybe offering examples of poems or stories that do this well could give students like me a better starting point."

- Cultural Resources and Deeper Understanding
Excerpt 50: P10
"Keep the focus on local wisdom but provide more cultural resources to help students dig deeper into their heritage and its expression in writing."

In short, students emphasized the importance of flexibility, diverse resources, and cultural support to enhance creative writing classes that incorporate local wisdom. Many suggested allowing students more freedom to explore their interests and choose varied forms of expression, such as songs, art, or game stories, rather than limiting them to poetry. They also highlighted the value of additional cultural resources, including stories, bilingual glossaries, and examples of writing that integrate local wisdom. Inviting local elders or cultural experts to share knowledge could deepen students' understanding and engagement with the material. Overall, the students recommended balancing the focus on local wisdom with opportunities for creative freedom to foster a more enriching learning experience.

DISCUSSION
Students' Perception of Creative Writing
The students' positive perception of creative writing, especially in exploring local themes, aligns closely with Hanauer (2012) meaningful literacy framework. Hanauer posits that literacy becomes meaningful when it allows students to connect deeply with their personal and cultural identities, making learning experiences both significant and personally relevant. The high mean score of 3.77 in this study reflects that student saw creative writing as not just a task but as a platform for self-expression and cultural connection. This aligns well with Hanauer's insights, as students shared that writing with local themes allowed them to explore a unique voice and purpose in their writing.

Interview responses illustrate this perception. Student 3 expressed that integrating local wisdom made their poetry "more unique and meaningful," a statement that highlights both creative engagement and identity formation. Additionally, Student 4 mentioned how writing with local themes expanded their vocabulary and descriptive skills, underscoring the educational benefits of linking creative expression to cultural knowledge. These insights

reinforce Hanauer's claim that meaningful literacy extends beyond technical skill-building to create a space where students can explore their identity, experiences, and heritage.

However, as some students like Student 1 noted, writing with a focus on local wisdom sometimes felt like an "academic exercise" rather than an authentic creative outlet. This indicates that while meaningful literacy enhances engagement, students benefit from flexibility in interpreting cultural themes. Providing optional prompts or opportunities to blend personal interests with cultural content could enhance this engagement, ensuring that creative writing remains a personally meaningful and motivating endeavour for all students.

Students' Perceptions of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing

The study found a favorable view among students toward incorporating local wisdom into their creative writing, with a high mean score of 3.80. This supports the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), which suggests that when the curriculum reflects students' cultural backgrounds, it boosts motivation, engagement, and academic success. By integrating local wisdom into poetry, students felt their writing was enriched and culturally relevant, bridging their academic work with their personal and community heritage.

Student 2 shared that the experience helped them "appreciate their culture," reinforcing the idea that culturally relevant pedagogy enables students to value their cultural heritage and identity. This aligns with findings by Dana (2013) and Putra & Gita (2020), who observed that students connect more with content when it reflects their cultural background. Student 10 also noted that local themes made their work feel "more relevant to environment and community," highlighting the connection between culturally embedded content and increased engagement. These responses support the idea that incorporating local wisdom is not just an academic exercise; it enables students to deepen their connection to their heritage and community.

However, some students experienced challenges in making local themes feel personally relevant. Student 1, for example, felt that the process sometimes felt more like a formal task than a true creative exploration, echoing Erica Walker (2017) observation that students may struggle with culturally relevant themes if they lack familiarity or personal connection. To address this, educators might provide options for students to interpret local themes in ways that resonate with them individually, thus aligning the content with both cultural relevance and personal engagement.

Students' Impressions of Incorporating Local Wisdom into Creative Writing

The overall positive impression of integrating local wisdom into creative writing, with a mean score of 3.77, highlights the impact of cultural sustainability as discussed by Dana (2013) and Ida (2016). Cultural sustainability theory emphasizes the role of education in preserving and promoting cultural knowledge, helping students connect with and carry forward their heritage. By rooting their poetry in local themes, students experienced a stronger connection to their environment, making the process of writing more meaningful and community centered.

For instance, Student 4 observed that writing poetry with local themes "strengthened their creative thinking," reflecting Ida (2016) view that cultural content enhances student engagement by fostering both personal and communal connection. Similarly, Student 7 mentioned that the integration of Ambonese words that lack direct English equivalents allowed them to connect modern life with traditional wisdom, highlighting how cultural sustainability can bridge traditional and contemporary identities. This perspective aligns with Putra & Gita (2020) findings that cultural knowledge in education fosters a sense of identity and pride.

However, some students found varied levels of connection, as not all felt equally engaged with local themes. Student 1, for example, noted that local themes felt more like an academic requirement than a personal exploration, illustrating the importance of cultural relevance being balanced with student choice. By allowing students to select the depth and focus of their

cultural themes, educators can enhance both engagement and personal connection, ensuring the content is not only educationally valuable but also personally significant.

Facts of Students' Creative Writing

While students largely appreciated integrating local wisdom, they also encountered substantial challenges, as indicated by the medium mean score of 3.46. This finding reflects meaningful literacy challenges as outlined by Hanauer (2012), who noted that multicultural literacy can be hindered by linguistic and cultural complexities. The qualitative data provided further depth, showing that students struggled with translating certain Ambonese concepts into English, revealing a need for more resources and support.

Language barriers were a prominent theme, with Student 5 mentioning difficulties in translating Ambonese words into English, often leaving the terms untranslated or explained within the poetry. This struggle resonates with Hanauer's theory, which highlights that language barriers can create obstacles in expressing culturally significant ideas. Additionally, Student 4 mentioned that writing with local wisdom required creative thinking to overcome linguistic challenges, underscoring the importance of additional resources like bilingual glossaries or cultural guides to support students in navigating these complexities.

Other students found it challenging to fully understand and represent local values in their creative work. Student 3 noted that understanding the depth of local wisdom posed difficulties, indicating that structured guidance could help students authentically connect with these cultural themes. To address this, educators might consider workshops or discussions with local cultural figures, which would provide both context and inspiration, reinforcing cultural relevance while easing students' understanding.

Moreover, some students like Student 6 expressed a preference for more creative freedom, feeling somewhat restricted by the focus on local themes. This view echoes Walker (2017) findings that culturally relevant pedagogy is most effective when it allows flexibility, enabling students to explore themes that resonate individually. Student 9, who also valued creative freedom, emphasized that their creativity flowed best when they could explore broader themes. To balance cultural relevance and creativity, educators could introduce local wisdom alongside broader themes, enabling students to build a sense of ownership over their work while fostering cultural pride.

CONCLUSION

The main focus of this research is a study on students' perceptions of integrating local wisdom into poetry creative writing courses. The results were overwhelmingly positive among students, and the researchers found that writing poems on local themes not only improved students' creative writing abilities but also deepened their connection to cultural heritage. Through the infusion of local knowledge, traditions, and values into instruction, students were able to express themselves more deeply and personally, creating writing experiences rooted in their own lives and surroundings. This approach aligns with the objectives of Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, which emphasizes innovation and exploration, suggesting that incorporating culturally relevant content can be a powerful tool in language education.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study underscores the educational benefits of learning embedded in one's own culture. Students gained improved writing skills, including the nuanced use of descriptive language to communicate complex cultural concepts, and many felt more confident expressing themselves artistically. These skills may contribute to better academic performance and beyond, where nuanced expression and cultural literacy are highly valued. Students also reported that creating poetry with local themes made the learning process more engaging and relevant. They felt empowered when writing about regional themes and

found it exciting to blend their cultural identity with the English language—a way to creatively represent their local environment while enhancing linguistic proficiency.

However, the study also highlights some challenges that students faced. Integrating local wisdom required translation—not only linguistically but also culturally—into English, and sometimes students struggled to find equivalent expressions for certain local concepts. Additionally, some students expressed a desire for more freedom in choosing their creative writing topics, as they felt limited by focusing solely on local themes. This suggests a need for a balanced curriculum that allows students to explore a range of themes while engaging with local content. Addressing these challenges may increase the educational impact of culturally integrated creative writing programs.

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