



Poetic Identity and Mindful Literacy in EFL Classroom: A Way to Invent Freedom in Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

The research of poetic identity and mindfulness in EFL context has been an impactful wave in recent years. The learning explores how the students reveal and construct their identity in the form of poetry. Poetry is the representation of deepest voices in the personal context of the learners. With mindful learning, the learners achieve their personal freedom to express their deepest voices. Through this mindfulness-based poetic identity learning in EFL poetry classroom, a personal point of view is deeply investigated through the poetry. This is qualitative research which explores the combined methodology of poetic identity of Iida's theory, narrative inquiry and poetry theory. The subject were 28 students in poetry class who were taught in mindfulness-based learning with focus on poetic identity writing and narrative inquiry, equipped with poetry journal assessment. The findings reveal that poetry could elevate meaning making, respect deepest voices, builds language identity, and boosts language authenticity. This research deepens the perspectives that literacy learning can be best taught by mindfulness-based learning and poetic identity writing,

through which freedom in language learning is experienced and sensed in the meaningful way.

Keywords: mindfulness-based learning, poetic identity, mindful literacy

Introduction

Mindfulness-based learning has been researched immensely in the last 20 years. Langer who introduced the concept of mindfulness as an action of novelty seeking in 1989 kept familiarizing the concept until today. She developed mindful learning in 2000 which has stimulated many researchers in the language learning. Her concept based on four main principles, namely novelty seeking, multi-perspectives oriented, contextually rooted, and productive driven. She believed that novelty seeking enables the learner always to try something new and never wants repetition. Multi-perspectives enable the learner to have flexibility in minds, always see other options as other possibility if one does not work. Context is where ideas are rooted in society. While productivity refers to the responses that builds creativity and the possibility of making something new.

These principles made a big impact in language education landscape. Piscayanti (2021) has found how to develop mindfulness-based learning in poetry course. Later in 2021 Piscayanti strengthened the mindful research by inventing the voice of identity through mindfulness-based learning. In 2022, she further found poetry invented voice through imagery, sound and sense, self-culture. Later this was strengthened by Piscayanti et al. (2024) who found that mindfulness-based poetry writing can invent deepest voice of the poets, stimulates openness and self-acceptance. This goes along with findings of Yang and Peng (2021) who found that poetry through its elements of figurative language is effective to stimulate identity in second language learning. Barrett et al. (2019) finds that poetry in second language learning is effective in higher education.

These findings proved that mindfulness-based learning is an area of very deep exploration. In this context, the researchers want to investigate more what aspects that have not been explored in the previous study. There have been limited research found on the context of language learning, poetry and identity. The research focused on the implementation of poetry writing in mindful context, yet there is not much exploration done on how the poetic identity is formed. First, how figurative language works in the poetic identity. Second, how narrative inquiry is used to gain the narrative of personal voice of the poets through authentic assessment of learning.

This research wants to see how poetic identity is developed through poetry figurative languages, how narrative inquiry works in the voice of identity construction, and how the daily journal keeps tracking the progress of the writing.

Literature Review

Liaqat et al. (2024) found that mindfulness is one of the ways to make an evolution of culture. The very basic principle of mindfulness is to seek something new in everything. The evolution starts when there is a need to always open new perspectives,

accept the changes, and rooted in the context. By having a constant novelty of seeing things, the minds are more creative and productive. These are the chains of changes that can save the worlds from repetitive perspectives. This research leads to enormous research on mindfulness. This concept goes in the context of literacy learning in EFL. Many have found that mindfulness and literacy learning go together and make a powerful impact in language learners. In the context of poetry and second language learning, Nilandari et al. (2024) believes that poetry is one of the ways to construct literacy learning. Martin (2019) even believed that poetry is the most effective ways to teach literacy. Iida (2016) also found that poetry in second language learning has made the writers create their identity. This is why he recommended teaching second language through poetry. Poetic identity is the representation of identity through poetry language devices such as figurative language, voice and meaning of poetry.

Poetry according to Choi (2025) is the most condensed form of literature. Joshi and Subedi believes that poetry is the voice of inner truth (2024). Therefore, using poetry in second or foreign language learning helps the learners to be truthful about themselves where they find identity and voice in their most personal delivery as found in Tanasale et al., (2025), and Piscayanti (2022).

In this context, (Piscayanti, 2021, 2022a; Piscayanti et al., 2024) found that poetry involves mindfulness and create a powerful impact on the language learning. It invents identity in its purest and condensed form. Poetry is not only possible to make things greater in personal delivery, but also moving and touching. Poetry gives the world beyond words can explain. However, to make things meaningful in deeper ways, literacy learning allows the narratives behind poetry speaks for themselves.

Narrative inquiry is study about human experience. It is an approach to know how personal story makes a world. In other words, how a narrative is formed based on personal stories (Piscayanti et al., 2023). It is one way of knowing how an identity is constructed. Therefore, a narrative inquiry is used as an assessment to consider in poetry writing process.

Assessment in poetry has been found to be a bit challenging because it needs more than just an evaluation, but a deep dive to the meaning of poetry. Therefore, assessment here involves narrative inquiry where learners write the meaning of their story behind the poetry. Secondly, it records the progress of each development of language, structure, and invention of identity. The basic principle in literacy is meaning making. In the context of EFL learning Prastikawati et al. (2024) finds that assessment literacy is needed in learning. The EFL learners have the elevated level of assessment literacy during the process of learning, where they observed themselves and found their meaning in learning.

In the context of cultural inclusivity, poetry serves as self-culture tools to represent identity in the most personal approach. Inclusivity in language and culture helps boost the language learning especially in foreign language learning (Coloquit & Makmuroh, 2025). Therefore, the idea of this research is to investigate the followings. Firstly, how

poetic identity is constructed through figurative language of poetry. Secondly, how narrative inquiry is applied to construct the meaning in poetry.

Methodology

This research was qualitative research with an analysis of poetry and an exploration of poetic identity through figurative language, assessed with narrative inquiry through poetry journal. The data is gained through poetry written by the learners, analyzed by poetry theory, and assessed by authentic assessment journal of poetry writing. The analysis was compared and cross-analyzed with the narrative inquiry of the learners where they write their own narratives, and construct their meaning in poetry writing.

The participants of the research are 28 learners who joined poetry class. They were all given mindfulness-based learning, poetry courses, poetry writing practice, and poetry assessment. After that they were given time to explore the narratives behind their stories, where they write their meaning construction. The analysis of the narratives will then compare to the analysis of poetic identity and the process of writing. Poetic identity is examined through figurative language using the theory of poetry Choi (2025) and Klarer (2004). The narrative inquiry was analyzed through descriptive analysis using cross-case analysis (Cresswell, 2009).

Results and Discussion

UNSPOKEN APOLOGIES

By Lia Marisa

*Apologies never spoken.
It became a silent witness to an event
That came without warning
Breaking the warmth that I had not even had the chance to enjoy.
Only wounds remained,
And sorrow that grew like parasites
On the cracked walls of my heart.
I often asked,
"Why me?"
"Why this family?"
"Why... Dad?"
So many hopes were never conveyed,
So much of your love that I never had the chance to receive.
All wasted by time
That passed without looking back.
And until today,
I still wonder:
Should I be the one to forgive?*

*Or rather...
Should I be the one to apologize?
Now I stand in adulthood,
But my soul is sometimes still a child
Looking for you in the silence.
Swayed,
Like a ship that has lost its way in a gloomy sea.
I began to understand
That even iron can melt at high enough heat.
Then why can't I,
A princess,
Soften my heart?*

*Maybe it's because my heart has hardened,
Used to keeping to myself the pieces of love
That I should have shared with you.
But if even ice can melt,
And night can turn to dawn,
Maybe one day...
There's room for "sorry"
To be born, not from the lips,
But from the soul that finally accepts.*

The poetic identity found through Figurative Language is as follows.

1. Metaphor

- "Sorrow that grew like parasites on the cracked walls of my heart"
Sadness is likened to a parasite that grows on the cracked walls of my heart, depicting emotional wounds that continue to grow. She imagines that parasites keep growing in her heart and her mind.
- "A ship that has lost its way in a gloomy sea"
A metaphor about a soul that is adrift in uncertainty and emptiness. It makes a feeling of absurdity at all means.

2. Personification

- "Apologies never spoken. It became a silent witness..."
An apology is personified as a "silent witness", giving a human character to an abstract concept.
- "Time that passed without looking back"
Time is depicted like a human walking without turning around.

3. Imagery

- "Standing in adulthood... my soul is still a child..."
A visual and emotional image of the conflict between an adult body and a soul that is still wounded like a child.

- “Ice can melt, and night can turn to dawn...”
Natural imagery that depicts the possibility of change and hope.
- 4. Connotation
 - Words such as “iron,” “melt,” “princess,” and “soul” have emotional and symbolic meanings that go beyond their literal meanings.
- 5. Denotation
 - A sentence such as “Apologies never spoken” denotatively states that no apology was ever made, but connotatively describes a hidden wound.
- 6. Irony
 - “Should I be the one to apologize?”
Irony arises because the father should be the one apologizing, but the son questions whether he should be the one to do so.

The Narrative Inquiry

I wrote the Unspoken Apologies poem based on my personal experience as a child from a broken home, who grew up without the presence and love of a father. Since childhood, I have often questioned where my father figure was in my life both physically and emotionally. That absence created wounds that were difficult to heal and affected the way I saw the world, especially in understanding love and trust. This poem is a space for me to voice things that have only been kept in my heart about longing, anger, and confusion over my role in a relationship that was never whole. Through this poem, I try to string words together from the wound, while also finding the meaning of the word "sorry" that was never said.

This poetry is identified through poetic identity, that the poet is unsure and unstable, full of doubts. However she finds the guide, the two bright stars that light her way. She is guided through and she finds the way to keep walking.

The freedom from fear is experienced and sensed, through her own invention, through the vision and the figurative language.

Her powerful poetry is strengthened by the power of self-acceptance and openness.

Stupid Beauty Standard

By Cindy Agatha

*“Life is a lemon”, he said
And I was too dumb to paid
Now, sleeping in blue and pain
Yet trying hard what to gain*

*Pretty flowers pose for attentions
Unlike those in other dimensions
Tell me something to make a switch
Ended up to create the itch*

*Since birth, oh how I wait and wait for them
For just the wind who gets my problem
Love myself, I always do
Still you see me as a taboo*

*Reality hits like hurricane
Who said I'm not glad with this?
Day and night thank God for Oasis
Guess just them that keep me sane*

The poetic identity found in the figurative languages in the poetry is as follows.

1. Metaphor

- a. ““Life is a lemon”, he said”

This shows that social life is like a lemon that looks good on the outside but gives sour or disappointing results.

2. Personification

- a. “Pretty flowers pose for attentions”

This shows that flowers do not actually pose the way humans do, which is illustrated by the beautiful women because flowers are the prettiest type of plant that everyone has in mind.

- b. “For just the wind who gets my problem”

This shows that the wind cannot actually understand the problems that humans have like humans do, that there was no one who would listen and understand her problems at that time.

- c. “Reality hits like hurricane”

This shows that reality cannot actually hit people the way humans do, as an illustration of how much reality hurt because of her high expectations.

3. Imagery

- a. “Now, sleeping in blue and pain”

This shows that the word “blue” is the colour of sadness and the word “pain” gives a painful feeling so that the readers can imagine the feelings.

4. Connotation

- a. “Unlike those in other dimensions”

This shows that plants in “other dimensions” or plants other than the flowers (the beautiful women) are not considered beautiful and are treated unfairly.

- b. “Still you see me as a taboo”

This shows that women who are not considered beautiful will always be considered “taboo” or bad to society no matter how much they try their best to change themselves.

5. Tone

- a. “And I was too dumb to paid”

This shows her regret for being fooled and that is what made her frustrated about the beauty items bought even though she knew clearly what the root of her problem was.

- b. "Ended up to create the itch"

This shows her disgust with beauty standards that make her waste her money because her beauty items give her unsatisfactory results.

6. Irony

- a. "Who said I'm not glad with this?"

This shows her heavy-hearted feeling of having to continue to be happy and continue living in a world controlled by beauty standards even though her savings money has run out.

7. Allusion

- a. "'Life is a lemon', he said"

This shows that the phrase "Life is a lemon" was taken from a song by Meat Loaf called "Life Is a Lemon and I Want My Money Back."

- b. "Day and night thank God for Oasis"

This shows that the word "Oasis" is a band from Manchester that managed to help me stay alive.

8. 8. Overstatement

- a. "Since birth, oh how I wait and wait for them"

This shows that she is exaggerating her suffering from the phrase "Since birth", which actually I have had this suffering since entering junior high school.

The Narrative Inquiry

I wrote this poetry based on my social life experience in junior high school where I was always treated unfairly by everyone, including my own family, just because puberty changed my physique drastically. It was sad, but I also tried to continue living my life because my big brother introduced me to a band named Oasis, which encouraged me through their songs.

This poetry gives us an understanding that life can be unjust and unfair, and the wound was real and hurt, but it also becomes an inspirational mind. In the midst of chaotic life, there is always a spring of hopes and light, to keep up with positive attitude and manner.

Based on those results, there are some new findings of this research.

Poetry Elevates Meaning Making

Poetry has always been effective to be used as a meaning making process. In poetry writing the learners try to make the meaning of words they choose in their poetry. The meaning making is effective because of the purity and clarity of their ideas and it gives deeper understanding of the language they invent themselves. Piscayanti et al. (2024)

found it also that poetry elevates the meaning of life, giving new perspectives and choices. It celebrates all possibility in learning, provided that there is no single way of learning, it is always giving and freeing. Martin (2019) believes that poetry, language and thought are together in the power of freeing human being and giving new interpretation of the worlds.

Poetry Respects the Deepest Voices of Identity

Poetry respects the deepest voices in the sense that it reveals the hidden story that has been kept for a long time. It opens and channels the energy that is kept within for years. It heals the voices that are unheard and hurt. Poetry accepts and poetry embraces all the voices, without judgment, without threat. Iida (2016) showed that poetry could show the truth of personal story and it resonates in the deep meanings. While Tobin (2018) showed that mindfulness are tools to lose the foreign language anxiety and it works in the deepest voices where every flaw is respected and embraced.

Poetry Empowers Literacy Learning

This research showed that poetry empowers literacy learning. As Nilandari et al. (2024) puts that poetry enhances literacy learning in the second language learning. It supported the findings by Piscayanti (2021) and Piscayanti et al. (2023) that showed poetry is not only a tool to express ideas but also create better understanding of life. Poetry is the meaning expression of every single identity that has never been heard. Therefore, the meaning becomes very personal and contextual.

Poetry Boosts Language Authenticity

Poetry boosts language authenticity when it comes to originality. Nobody can copy someone's poetry. Because poetry is the invention of the truth. Feriyanto and Anjariyah (2024) stated that poetry is the finding of the truth as the invention of human minds. Language is authentic and unique because it carries different culture and habits as well as different background, purposes, motivations, expectations. The authenticity is rooted on the personal meanings that are philosophical and original. Wittgenstein (1989) believed that every word as human language has a meaning. This meaning depends on the personal context of human being, that becomes the deepest meaning. This research proved that learners could create their own personal identity through poetry and narrative inquiry.

Conclusion

Poetry, mindfulness-based learning, poetic identity through figurative language and narrative inquiry could stimulate, enhance, deepen and broaden the perspectives of literacy learning in EFL context. It brings about the novelty of poetry as tool in teaching

poetry to build an identity of the language learners. This research is considered as a new way to approach EFL with poetry.

Declaration of AI and AI assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used GRAMMARLY in order to check the grammar mistakes and error during the manuscript writing. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Kadek Sonia Piscayanti: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Project administration, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, and Writing - review & editing. **Entika Fani Prastikawati:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Validation, and Writing - review & editing. **Lorie Mae Coloquit:** Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Project administration, Resources.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

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