The Students' Problem in Creative Writing Course

Tarisa Octavia
Universitas PGRI Wiranegara, Indonesia
tarisaoctavia01@gmail.com
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ABSTRACT
This study describes the students' problems in the creative writing course. Knowing these problems can help lecturers find out students' weaknesses in writing. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating the problems that exist when writing. The purpose of this research is to find out students' problems in writing in the Creative Writing Course. The researcher used quantitative descriptive methods. The population was taken from PGRI Wiranegara University English Language Education Study Program students' classes 2020, 2021, and 2022, with a total of 89 students. Data collection through a questionnaire was carried out over 5 days using Google Forms from May 17th, 2024, to May 21st, 2022. Interviews were conducted on May 29th, 2024. Documentation was conducted on May 29th, 2024. There were 9 students interviewed, and they were chosen randomly. The researcher gave 15 questions through a questionnaire and gave 6 questions during interviews about students' writing problems. The results of this research show that students experience problems related to linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and pedagogical aspects. In this research, the dominant aspects are linguistic and cognitive. It is hoped that these findings can help students to minimize the difficulties they face, and lecturers can determine a suitable teaching style for students.

Keywords: creative writing, students' problems, writing problems

INTRODUCTION

One of the four skills that is crucial for expressing ideas, thoughts, opinions, and attitudes is writing. Writing is a challenging skill since it requires learners to engage in cognitive processes where they must first conceptualise their ideas in their native language and then articulate them into English phrases. Learners are also required to think about vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and text structure precisely. According to Hotimah (2015), writing is the act of putting thoughts, feelings, and ideas into written form. Writing involves encoding different types of messages, such as translating or conveying ideas into language. Meanwhile, Jayanti (2019) states that writing can help students improve their thinking and their English skills, such as vocabulary and grammar.

In a university, especially in an English education study program, there are several writing courses, such as academic writing, essay writing, and creative writing. In this study, the researcher took one of the writing courses, namely creative writing. Creative writing is an academic discipline that centers around cultivating talents in imaginative writing, encompassing several forms such as prose fiction, poetry, plays, scripts, essays, etc. According to Nugraha and Listyani (2021), creative writing utilises imagination and creativity. Meanwhile, according to Imran et al. (2021), creative writing is the most effective method for cultivating and enhancing students' writing abilities. Students must understand several steps before writing, such as finding an interesting idea or concept and making observations to create a background for the story, character, or theme that will be created. This is known as the creative process.

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The creative process is the set of stages that result in a quality work being produced during the creative process (Kusmana et. al. 2020). For a work to be considered creative, it must undergo several stages over time. Sasmita (2022) states that the seven stages of the creative process are preparation, planning, incubation, the start, the flow, the breakthrough, and completion and titling. However, a writer who is just beginning to learn how to write might find some problems during the creative process. In this case, Ningsih et al. (2021) categorise writing challenges into two distinct categories: linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems.

Numerous research gaps in the analysis of writing problems have been explored. For example, Aldabbus & Almansouri (2022) identified the primary challenges encountered by certain students when writing for academic purposes. This research reveals that both postgraduate and undergraduate students have several problems with academic writing, such as choosing the right academic words, having difficulties formulating a thesis, organising ideas, and writing coherent paragraphs. These challenges are influenced by a lack of resources, low English language skills, and a lack of opportunities to practice writing. Meanwhile, the research conducted by Alfaqiri (2018), entitled "English Second Language Writing Difficulties and Challenges Among Saudi Arabian Language Learners," investigates the writing difficulties and challenges that Saudi Arabian English as a second language learners experience at different levels of proficiency. The research findings indicated that the students exhibited a deficiency in English writing skills, resulting in grammatical difficulties. Furthermore, Alisha et.al (2019) revealed that the most significant writing problem is a lack of mastery of the vocabulary and language. Learners think their knowledge of how to form sentences grammatically is limited, and their lack of mastery of vocabulary makes them confused in choosing words. They also have problems with spelling.

The gap in these studies is that they only examine linguistic issues, namely grammar and vocabulary. In this study, the researcher did not only examine linguistic issues but also cognitive problems, psychological problems, and pedagogical problems. Based on the explanation above, the researcher formulated the research problem: "What are the students' problems in the creative writing course at the English Education Study Programme of Universitas PGRI Wiranegara, Pasuruan?" This research aims to find students' problems in creative writing courses. The researcher chose the creative writing course because of her experience in the course, facing problems in writing, such as expressing ideas. This made the researcher want to investigate the problems experienced by other students because there is a possibility that they do not get the expected results. The researcher believes that it is important to understand problems in creative writing courses.

METHOD

In this research, the researcher employed a descriptive quantitative research design to identify students' problems in a creative writing course at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara Pasuruan. According to Jayusman (2020), descriptive research is defined as studies that seek information about current symptoms, clearly outline the goals to be accomplished, develop approaches, and collect various types of data to use as report material. In order to produce results, the quantitative research method entails analysing and quantifying variables (Apuke, 2017). In addition, Sugiyono (2016) identifies positive philosophy, targeted population or sample selection, and the use of research tools for data gathering as key features of quantitative research methodology.

According to Syafnidawaty (2020), the population is the total number of subjects that a researcher will be examining. The target population of this study was the students of the English Education Study Programme at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara in the classes of 2020 (39 students), 2021 (30 students), and 2022 (20 students). In total, there were 89 students, who consisted of 11 males and 78 females. A sample is a tiny, simpler subset of a larger group. According to Ayu (2018), a sample is a smaller group drawn from a bigger population. The

researcher used random sampling on 89 students in the 2020, 2021, and 2022 English Language Education Student Programme at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara as the sample of this research.

According to Sathiyaseelan (2015), research instruments (survey, test, questionnaire, etc.) are the tools used by the researcher to collect data. In this research, the researcher used a questionnaire to obtain information about the students' problems in the creative writing course. In addition, the researcher used interviews to support the answers to the questionnaire. Moreover, the researcher used documentation for evidence from the results of questionnaires and interviews. The researcher described the students' problems in the creative writing course at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara by optimizing the data source.

The researcher used a closed questionnaire as the method of collection, where the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents, and they answered the questions directly by giving a mark that was appropriate to their feelings and experience. In measuring the questionnaire instrument, the researcher used the Likert scale. Sugiyono (2016) states that to gauge a person's or group's attitudes, views, and perceptions regarding the variables under study, a measurement scale with a Likert scale is utilised. Therefore, the researcher made a list of questionnaires with five alternative answers, namely strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Then, the researcher used interviews which were utilised by the researcher to gather more in-depth information and collect information from the participants. Abawi (2017) says that interviews can be gathered by listening to people, recording or filming their answers, or a combination of methods.

The researcher also used documentation as a supporting instrument to record data or information obtained from research results. According to Musfiana et al. (2023), documentation is a way of obtaining knowledge and information in the form of books, archives, documents, written numbers, and images in the form of reports and research supporting information. This documentation is used to complete data, such as the results of researchers' interviews with students and several letters needed to conduct research.

The researcher gave a questionnaire on five days from 17th May 2024 until 21st May 2024 with a Google Form. There was a total of 15 statements, divided based on 4 aspects, all of which related to the students' problems in learning creative writing. After the researcher gave the questionnaire, the researcher conducted interviews with students about problems in the creative writing course on May 29^{th,} 2024. The researcher randomly selected 9 students to be interviewed, and the researcher asked several questions to support the results of the questionnaire. Documentation was taken when the researcher shared the questionnaire link to students via WhatsApp, and the results of interviews with students were documented using photos. After collecting the data, all the data were analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel. The researcher analysed the data by using frequency and percentage. The formula used to analyze the data is as follows:

$$P = F: N \times 100\%$$

FINDINGS

Based on the data gathered, the researcher found findings regarding the problem. The problem formulated in this research is divided into four aspects, namely linguistics, cognitive, psychological, and pedagogical problems. Here is the table that shows the results of the problems faced by students.

Table 1. Result of Questionnaire

No.	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
	LINGUISTICS PROBLEMS					
1.	Limited vocabulary makes it difficult to describe things.	2%	5%	8%	59%	26%
2.	Write by repeating words in each sentence due to limited vocabulary	0%	8%	26%	61%	5%
3.	Not understanding parts of speech makes grammar weak.	1%	16%	19%	48%	16%
4.	Grammar takes a long time to put the correct tenses.	0%	7%	29%	49%	15%
5.	Difficulty using the parts of speech in the right place.	0%	20%	35%	40%	5%
	COGNITIVE PROBLEMS					
6.	Has difficulty using spelling words in a sentence.	1%	22%	36%	35%	6%
7.	Always put wrong punctuation marks such as commas, periods, and so on.	4%	30%	30%	32%	4%
8.	Always make mistakes in using capital letters.	8%	38%	32%	17%	5%
9.	Lack of knowledge about the topic to be described makes it difficult to write	0%	12%	37%	56%	14%
	PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM					
10.	Having no experience related to the topic to be written	1%	20%	24%	35%	7%
11.	Not sure and afraid of getting a low grade after submitting the writing	0%	23%	27%	38%	15%
12.	Anxious because of cannot express the message in the story to the reader	1%	25%	51%	38%	10%
	PEDAGOGICAL PROBLEMS					
13.	The level of difficulty given by the lecturer or the assignment given is too difficult.	4%	16%	5%	27%	2%
14.	Lecturers sometimes do not provide detailed comments regarding learning errors in writing.	3%	23%	34%	39%	1%
15.	The lecture's explanations that are not detailed influence the search for the topics.	2%	17%	35%	39%	4%

Table 2. Result of the Interview

No.	Questions	Students' Answer
1.	Do you have any difficulty in using vocabulary when writing?	*"I rarely experience difficulties in vocabulary as long as when writing I master the topic about which I will write. On the other hand, if I don't understand the topic, there are quite a few difficulties."* - **respondent 2** *"Yes, of course, because there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't know, which makes it difficult for me to describe things when writing."***- respondent 21**

		"I sometimes have difficulty writing because I don't master much vocabulary. Usually, I will write it down in notes to make it easier for me to remember the meaning of the vocabulary." **-respondent 22** *"Yes, I have difficulty using vocabulary when writing because I don't practice writing enough and also rarely read. So, when writing, I often just use those words."* **-respondent 67**
2.	Do you understand parts of speech and their placement when writing?	*"Yes, I understand, but in placing parts of speech, I have difficulty when writing."* **-respondent 33** *"Yes, I understand, because I understand the difference, and sometimes, I feel confused in placing parts of speech when writing."* - **respondent 41** *"I understand but haven't mastered it all, and sometimes forget to identify the type. I also still have difficulty placing parts of speech."* **- respondent 73** *"I understand, but sometimes I have to remember and read again to really understand. I still have difficulty placing adverbs in a sentence."* **- respondent 76**
3.	Do you have any difficulty using punctuation and capitalization?	*"It's rare that I make a mistake with capital letters; sometimes I forget to give punctuation."* **- respondent 2** *"I sometimes don't know when I make mistakes in writing capital letters and punctuation because I rarely pay attention to punctuation."* **-respondent 22** *"Often, because I don't understand writing and I'm not careful."* **- respondent 33** *"As a student, I often make mistakes in writing capital letters and punctuation, because I usually write in a hurry, especially when I'm chasing an assignment deadline. Sometimes I also lack focus or forget standard rules because I'm used to writing chats or posting on social media without paying much attention to grammar and punctuation."* **- respondent 67**
4.	What do you do when you write a short story, but you	*"Even when I have experience, I find it difficult to write, especially if I don't have any real experience. Of course, I will compose even if I have to think hard."* **-respondent 21**

		"It's difficult if I don't have experience, because when I don't have experience, it's difficult to describe the topic, and I usually look for reference ideas on the internet or websites." **-respondent 22** *"Of course, I have difficulty because I don't really like writing, I also look for references on the internet and look around or go somewhere to find ideas."* **-respondent 33** *"Writing short stories without experience in the topic is difficult, because it is difficult to imagine realistic details and emotions. As a result, the story feels less alive and sometimes unconvincing. I need to research more so I can write more confidently."* **-respondent 67**
5.	What anxiety do you experience when writing short stories in creative writing courses?"	*"I often worry because I don't know a lot of vocabulary, I don't really understand parts of speech, my English skills are not very good, and most importantly, I worry that my story won't be conveyed well to the reader."* -**respondent 21** *"Maybe when I don't find ideas to write, I'm afraid I won't be able to convey a message to readers."* **-respondent 22** *"The anxiety I experience is that I am worried about grammatical errors and inappropriate vocabulary choices. I am also worried because I am afraid that the story from one paragraph to another will not connect and make the reader confused about the content of the story."* **-respondent 33** *"Anxiety when I writing short stories in creative writing courses is usually fear that the story won't be interesting or won't meet the lecturer's expectations. I also often worry that the characters and plot are underdeveloped or unconnected. Apart from that, feeling insecure about my classmates' work also made me more stressed."* **-respondent 67**
6.	"Do you experience difficulties when lecturers teach and give assignments	*"Sometimes I find it difficult when the lecturer explains quickly, I also find it difficult when the lecturer gives me the assignment to write a story of 5000 words, which I think doesn't have enough time."* **-respondent 21** *"Sometimes the lecturer's delivery is easy to understand, sometimes not, and I often find it difficult with the assignments given because the deadline is too tight and I don't understand the material."* **-respondent 33**

	"Yes, when the lecturer explains the material in the creative writing course, sometimes I am confused and ask my friends, and I find it difficult in the assignments given, such as the assignment to find 5 English songs and then write a story related to the songs, this makes it difficult for me because I don't know enough English songs- **respondent 41** *"I sometimes experience difficulties when the lecturer teaches, because the lecturer explains a lot with theory but gives little practical examples, so it is difficult to imagine in writing. There are also those who don't provide detailed feedback, so we are confused about which parts of our writing to improve. Sometimes, too many tasks are given in a short time."* **-respondent 67**

DISCUSSION

From the research findings above, the researcher focuses on discussing four categories of student problems in creative writing courses, namely linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and pedagogical problems. For further explanation, see the analysis below.

Linguistics problems

The research identified that students in the English Education Study Program face significant linguistic problems in the creative writing course, particularly with vocabulary and grammar. A lack of vocabulary limits students' ability to describe concepts and leads to repetitive word usage. This issue aligns with previous studies, such as Afrisma et al. (2019) and Yaumil et al. (2020), which also found that limited vocabulary hampers students' writing. Grammar problems, especially with tenses and parts of speech, were also prominent. Students struggle with correct tense usage and understanding parts of speech, resulting in unclear and error-prone writing. This finding is consistent with studies by Situmorang & Manurung (2020) and Fareed et al. (2016), which highlighted grammar as a major challenge in writing. Overall, the study concludes that mastery of vocabulary and grammar is crucial for effective writing. Students need to engage in activities that enhance their vocabulary and grammar skills to improve their writing abilities.

Cognitive problems

The researcher found cognitive problems faced by students, such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and students' knowledge. Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors related to cognitive problems are the second most common errors found in students' writing. In this research, the researcher found that students had difficulty using punctuation marks. Students sometimes do not realize the mistakes they make in using punctuation marks. They realized their mistakes in using punctuation when editing their writing. These findings are similar to those of Hasan & Marzuki (2017), who found that students had problems using punctuation marks such as commas because they used commas in places where they were not needed. Based on these results, punctuation is a writing rule that they do not understand well.

Then, punctuation and capitalization are not that different, but they both pose a writing problem for students because they do not know how to use them. Capitalization is the lowest level of difficulty that students face in their writing. Situmorang & Manurung (2020) had similar results to this finding, that the difficulty of using capitalization was at a low level. Hasan and Marzuki (2017) also found that students had difficulty using capital letters; they used lowercase letters after periods and capital letters in words that should not be.

Meanwhile, problems with spelling are problems that need attention because they show the highest results compared to punctuation and the use of capital letters. Spelling problems can occur due to students' lack of vocabulary, so they only guess the spelling of the vocabulary. Additionally, the spelling of words is often confusing. They cannot be spelled alphabetically like words in Indonesian. Alfaki (2015) found that the inconsistent English spelling system is complicated for students due to the influence of other languages, pronunciation variations, and other historical factors. Palupi & Septiana (2018) also found that the cause of spelling problems experienced by students when writing was a lack of vocabulary. Based on these difficulties, the lack of vocabulary makes students have difficulty spelling.

Psychological problems

The researcher found that students experienced psychological problems. From the results of interviews, the researcher found that some students found it difficult when writing short stories if they had no experience related to the topic they were going to write about. In addition, students feel anxious because they cannot express the message of the story to the reader. They also feel unsure and afraid of getting a low grade after submitting their writing. Toba et.al (2019) found that several factors that cause students to feel anxious when writing English are time pressure, fear of negative comments from teachers, lack of writing practice, and lack of topic knowledge. However, researchers found new findings in this study. One of the problems faced by students in this research was fear of low grades and the inability to convey written messages to readers.

Pedagogical problems

The research results show that some students face problems with the lecturer's learning style. There are differences in the results of questionnaires and interviews. From the results of the questionnaire, it can be stated that students do not find it difficult when the lecturer gives assignments. Meanwhile, the results of the interviews showed that some students found it difficult with the assignments given by the lecturers.

Furthermore, in this research students agreed that lecturers sometimes did not provide detailed comments regarding learning errors in writing. In previous research, Wirantaka (2019) found that teachers do not always provide effective feedback to students. As a result, students have difficulty responding to this feedback. This is because sometimes teachers do not provide detailed feedback on writing errors. However, the results of previous research are slightly different from this research. The results of this research show that students not only have difficulty with lecturer feedback regarding learning errors in writing but also have difficulty with lecturer explanations. Lecturer explanations that are not detailed can influence students in finding topics to write about.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show that students of the English Education Study Programme at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara in the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022 face problems in creative writing courses that consist of 4 aspects. There were linguistic problems (42%), cognitive problems (23%), psychological problems (18%), and pedagogical problems (17%). Based on the overall analysis conducted, the dominant aspect faced by students is linguistic problems (42%). The highest percentage of students have linguistic problems. Due to linguistic problems, students are less motivated to learn more about English. This results in a restricted vocabulary and a deficiency in knowledge and comprehension of grammar, including tenses and parts of speech, leading them to rely on their native tongue. The second percentage is cognitive problems. Lack of reading can lead to cognitive problems, causing students to lack topic knowledge and struggle with the correct use of punctuation and capital letters. The third percentage are psychological problems. The psychological problems faced by students stem from their inability to effectively convey the story's message to readers and their fear of

receiving low grades. Finally, the percentage of students experiencing pedagogical problems is the lowest. Explanations and comments that are not detailed, as well as difficult assignments, make it difficult for students to create a paragraph themselves.

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