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IDENTITIES IN EFL CREATIVE WRITING IN INDONESIA

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Abstract
Creative writing is created for aesthetic rather than informative purposes and its creation is greatly influenced by the writers' background. Thus, how the writers' perception of themselves or their identities are expressed in the creative writing products. As such, creative writing in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context may offer a space for foreign language learners to express their perceived identities. In this study, an analysis of two short stories written by students of the English Letters Department, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, revealed that the students' perceived identities were used as the resources for their creative writing outputs. In the first short story entitled "Calling Him Back", through the internal conflicts of the main character, the student writer expressed her doubt as to which identities to claim. In the second short story entitled "Happy Birthday", the student writer exploits her identities as a literature student when she did a research on novels with Indian background. The data were gathered through document analysis on the two short stories and correspondences with the student writers. These two short stories were evidence that foreign language learners utilized different aspects of their multifaceted identities as the resources for their creative writing outputs.

Keywords: identities, perceived identity, creative writing, EFL

Introduction
Identities are defined based on how a person sees himself/ herself, which is also influenced by how others see him/ her. Identities are responses of individuals towards how society perceive them (Lawler, 2011, pp. 7-8; MacKinnon and Heise, 2010, p. 22). The identities that one claims are related to the interpretation of the individual within certain contexts in society. As a result, every individual has multiple identities instead of a single one (MacKinnon and Heise, 2010, p. 35) depending on his/ her relation to society. Identities can be identified from various markers, such as origins and gender.

In language learning, creative writing is one of classroom practices that enables learners to express their identities through their writing product. However, even though studies show the success of creative writing practices for expressing learners' identities, many are conducted in the first or second language contexts. As stated by Lim (2015, pp. 336-337) that not much attention has been given to creative writing in the second or even third language contexts. In contexts where English is used as a foreign language, creative

writing is often applied as a method to improve language proficiency. For instance, studies by Mansoor (2013) in Pakistan and Shahri (2018) in Iran proved the effectiveness of creative writing for developing language proficiency.

In a foreign language context, creative writing is reduced to language exercises for the learners' mastery of the target language. Foreign language learners' abilities are considered insufficient for producing literary work that fulfills the standard for creative writing practices. For instance, insufficient vocabulary means limiting learners to use subjective expressions.

This study intends to investigate how two foreign language learners in Indonesia utilize their identities in creating short stories in their creative writing class. This study also intends to reveal the multifaceted identities of the learners that are expressed in the two short stories written by these two learners, namely "Calling Him Back", published in 2014 and "Happy Birthday", published in 2015. For the framework of analysis, this study utilizes Norton's theory (2016) on perceived identities, Chin's theory (2014) and that of Mansoor (2013) on how learners utilize their identities in their creative writing outputs.

Identity, Creative Writing and EFL context

Identity and Creative Writing

Identities are related perceptions of individuals of themselves. However, the perceptions of the individuals towards themselves are not the sole factor that develops identities. As individuals are always in contact with society, how society perceive them influence the construction of identities (Norton, 2016, p. 47). Identities, therefore, are determined not only by the individual but also by others (Norton, 2016, p. 47) through interactions. Because individuals continue to interact with society, identities are always fluid and changes of identities are contextually driven. Identities are not fixed but they continue to change as individuals continue to interact in society (Block, 2007, p. 1).

The autoethnographic study of Harendita (2017) is one of the examples to show that the perceived identities are also ascribed by others (Norton, 2016) and that identities are subject to change (Block 2007). Harendita (2017, p. 60) described that even though she would identify herself as a Javanese as her perceived identity, she may not fully fit with the expectations from society. Her adaptation to the contemporary world influenced the ways she perceived herself, showing that identities are subject to change. Yet, she did not completely ignore the Javanese code of manner, either. She still conformed with the Javanese tradition, for example, by communicating in the high level of Javanese to her parents to show politeness, as required by the society. Her way of communication in High Level of Javanese to older people was one of the markers Javanese identities although in the contemporary world, the characteristics of Javanese tend to be more diverse and may no longer fit with the stereotypes. That personal identification itself is "not without conflicts" as the Javanese stereotypes may no longer describe her personalities, while she asserts her Javanese identity (Harendita, 2017, p. 60).

Harendita elaborated that individuals may have conflicting identities. Her experiences described the conflicting identities that she wished to claim. As a Javanese woman, she described her struggle to negotiate her conflicting identities. She explained that when she mentioned her origin was from Solo, a city in Central Java, the society's stereotyped perceptions of a person from Solo are directly attached to her (Harendita, 2017, p. 58). The stereotyped labels of women from Solo thus determined that women who did not fit with the characteristics "will be considered as breaching the norms or as not belonging to the culture" (Harendita, 2017, p. 58). This implied that her being Javanese was decided by both her own perception of herself and ascribed by others. Thus, she had to negotiate which identities to perform in different contexts.

One of the markers of identities is language which may express cultural values

(Majchrzak, 2018, p. 75; p. 79). The writer's choice of language shows the cultural identities that individuals claim (Kramsch in Mansoor, 2013, p. 55). That is, the speakers'/ writer' identities are reflected through the linguistic features, such as vocabulary and pronunciation. For instance, people's origin is sometimes easy to guess due to the strong accent or particular dictions. It is also through language that a speaker shows how he/ she wants others to perceive him/ her (MacKinnon and Heise, 2010, p. 5; Shahri, 2018, p. 89). For instance, in a foreign language context, the ability to speak English fluently gives a certain impression towards the speaker and therefore the use in this context confirms how the speaker wants others to perceive him/ her.

One of the classroom practices where identities can be expressed through the use of language is in creative writing. Being different from academic writing, creative writing serves as an aesthetic purpose rather than informative (Maley, 2009) as one of the purposes is to express emotion. This is because creative writing is often associated with the need of writers to express their feelings subjectively. Expressing something subjectively in creative writing enables learners to express their identities.

Significantly, the creative writing output is often influenced by the writer's background This influence is often manifested in the blend of the native culture and the target language where the native culture of the learners is used as the resources for writing in EFL. For instance, learners might use their native language as a form of language play in their creative writing output to create a certain nuance (Mansoor, 2010, p. 211). Even though the use of the native language inserted into the target language is often considered as an interference, when it is used intentionally, it is, in fact, the evidence of the identities that the learners wish to claim. This also shows that the learners develop their target language competence, and that they can manipulate the language.

Other than inserting the local language in the creative writing in English to enhance language identities, learners might also use their cultural background as the resources for writing. For instance, even though they write in English, they might use settings from their geographical origin, local names or cultural values in their writing output. Mansoor's study (2015, p. 85) revealed that foreign language even draws learners closer to the native roots seen from the learners' creative writing outputs where they used local culture and history as the resources for their creative writing outputs, such as a local demon and a story about a "*maharani"*. This implies that language and environment as learners' identity markers are utilized as the resources for their creative writing.

Creative Writing in the EFL Context

Despite the success of creative writing in the first and second language contexts for expressing identities, creative writing in the EFL context is often utilized as a means to improve language proficiency. Despite the effectiveness of creative writing for language improvement, little attention has been given to the application of creative writing to facilitate EFL learners' identity expressions. As stated by Lim (2015, p. 337), the practices of creative writing in EFL context is reduced to language exercises with the teachers' focus on introducing standard and proper grammar. When applying creative writing pedagogy for improving language proficiency, teachers create exercises, for example, where students only need to complete a poem with provided words or phrases. After that, the learners will be asked to write their own poem similar to the samples. As a result, learners will only exercise by imitating examples (Lim, 2009, p.85) instead of expressing their identities in their own works freely. Thus, identity expression or subjective expressions for aesthetic purposes of the learners as mentioned by Maley (2009) do not get enough attention.

As a method for improving the target language proficiency, indeed creative writing is effective. In a study by Tin (2010) in the university level in Indonesia, for instance, learners' linguistic ability is improved through the practices of making acrostic poems.

Through the acrostic poems, learners not only learn to express their feelings but also to improve their grammar and vocabulary.

The emphasis on applying creative writing for improving language proficiency rather than on the subjective expressions is due to the doubt of the ability of EFL learners to produce works of literature. When learners still struggle to get a grip of their mastery of the target language, they do not have confidence in producing even literary works appropriate for the standard of creative writing class. Insufficient vocabulary, for instance, might hinder learners for aesthetic expressions let alone identity expressions in the creative writing outputs.

Studies on the application of creative writing in the EFL contexts have proved that learners may utilize their cultural background as the resources for writing. According to Maley (in Babaee 2015, p. 77), these exercises may also develop students' awareness of their surroundings that they might not be aware of before. The awareness of their surroundings brings benefits that learners will observe within themselves for resources for writing from their "memories, observations, feelings, thoughts and even dreams" (Maley in Babaee, 2015, p. 78).

When learners are encouraged to use their native culture to express in the creative writing, they will be able to use the resources they are familiar with in their writing (Hanauer, 2014; Hanauer, 2015; Disney, 2014; Kelen, 2014; and Tay, 2014). The following two studies are examples of creative writing that successfully encouraged EFL learners to utilize their native culture in the production of their creative writing. These also provide evidence that learners may utilize their multifaceted identities as their creative writing outputs.

The first study was conducted by Mansoor (2013) in Pakistan. In the classroom practice, learners were encouraged to look into their native culture as the resources for creative writing to create novelty. Learners utilized their native language in their narration to enhance the cultural expressions. Words which do not have direct translation in English, such as "'Roll paratha', 'Masha Allah', 'Tauba hay', 'Haii!, Teri qasam,' etc." (Mansoor, 2013, p. 57) were chosen to create certain nuance in the learners' creative writing outputs. By doing this exercise, learners were encouraged to be aware of their cultural background while improving their target language proficiency. When these expressions of identities are used, they also indicate how the speakers want others to perceive them.

The second research in Brunei Darussalam also prove the effectiveness of utilizing the learners' backgrounds in their creative writing output. Chin (2014) encouraged the leaners to use their identities in their play script writing. Learners were encouraged to explore issues that the students considered important in their society. The result was fostering local themes, such as arranged marriage, gender relations, and cultural values (Chin, 2014, p. 133) being utilized as the resources in creative writing.

The research previously mentioned prove that despite the doubt on EFL learners' ability to produce creative writing, their creative writing outputs reflect the identities that the learners wish to claim. Through creative writing, learners also develop the sense of accomplishment that enhances self-confidence which becomes the drive for positive motivation as stated by Maley (2009).

Method

In order to investigate how two Indonesian students, who learn English as a foreign language utilize their multifaceted identities in their creative writing products, this research was conducted in the English Letters Department, Univesitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta. Being a student city, the city itself became the destination of High School graduates from many places in Indonesia and this offers interesting contexts in which multi-ethnic groups of people with diverse identities interact with each other both in formal and informal

situations.

In the English Letters Department, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, the compulsory creative writing subject is offered to the third-year students. In order to pass this subject, each student is required to submit three final creative writing products, namely a short story, a play script, and a poem.

The participants of this research were two female students taking the compulsory creative writing class in 2014 and in 2015. Both participants wrote their short stories were in their third year of their study in the English Letters Department, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta. The story "Calling Him Back", written by Ni Putu Vitria Arizona, was taken from a collection of short stories entitled *Aide Memoire: Love, death, sorrow* published in 2014 while "Happy Birthday", written by Dian Windriani, was from *Monochrome,* published in 2015.

The two short stories were chosen because they represented two different examples of identity expressions. The first short story, "Calling Him Back", expressed the cultural identities through the internal conflicts of the main character. The student writer took her experiences and her cultural identities as the resources for the creative writing output. The student writer of the second short story, "Happy Birthday" did not use her life experiences as the resources. Instead, she used her identities as an English Letters Department student who studied Indian culture either from literary works she had read or from her own study on Indian culture before she wrote the story.

The data for this study were collected through two methods, namely document analysis and correspondence. During the creative writing process in the class, the students were asked whether they would allow the researcher to observe and use their creative writing outputs, particularly the short stories, as the data for research. The students were willing to participate in a research and gave their consent. After the short stories were submitted at the end of the semester, the researcher analysed the short stories to find the expressions of multifaceted identities and took some notes on the two short stories. Then, the researcher asked further questions concerning the details of the short stories and process of creation through email correspondence because there were no more creative writing classes with the student writers. The questions included, for example, the sources of inspiration for their creative writing, the intention of writing, and the steps of creation. Based on the short stories and the answer to the questions, the student writers' perceived identities were identified.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of each of the two short stories produced by the two students will be discussed separately. The background of the student writers will also be described to provide the contexts to better understand the identities expressed in the short stories.

"Calling Him Back"

"Calling Him Back" was set in Bali. The story begins with a description of a mother and daughter's visit to the house of a *Balean*, "a person who leads a ritual in Balinese culture to call the family member who has passed away through supernatural way" (Arizona, 2014, p. 47). From the beginning, the main character, Rana, shows some conflicting identities derived from her cultural background and her modern way of life. She does not believe in spirits and the power of a Balean but she cannot deny that hearing her late grandfather's voice as described at the end of the story is calming.

The Balinese setting and the rituals to call the spirit of Rana's late grandfather are based on the student writer's experience. She explained that "Instead of making story based on imaginary events, I choose to use the event (that) happened in my life. Therefore, I choose my grandfather's death because it's the saddest moment of my life."

There are several examples from the short story that show Rana's conflicting identities. First, Rana is described as a girl with multifaceted identities. Even though the setting is in Bali and she seems to inherit Balinese ancestry because she visits the Balean's house with the whole family members, she does not understand Balinese language. This is clearly seen through her narration, "She greets my family and me with a very delicate traditional language that I can interpret as 'Welcome'" (Arizona, 2014, p. 45). The fact that she does not speak the ethnic language shows that she does not consider herself to belong to the Balinese ethnic group. This also implies that being a Balinese is not the identity she wishes to claim. The student writer explained she intentionally created Rana with such characterizations to show that Rana is different from the other Balinese.

Second, Rana does not believe she will ever need a Balean. Indeed, some people will need a Balean but she is not one of them that she said, "So, she is the woman who will help us. Us? No, it is not for me. It is just for those who believe it." (Arizona, 2014, p. 45). Her statements "It is not for me" and "…just for those who believe it" also confirm that she does not believe in the Balean. However, the student writer also explained that her attitude towards rituals is different from that of Rana. She stated that Rana is similar to her, yet the way she reacts to rituals is different.

Third, Rana's reluctance to participate in the rituals for calling her late grandfather's spirit is revealed through her wish to wait outside the room while the rituals continue. Even when her mother forces her to sit inside, she refuses and answers her mother back. The way she raises her tone indicates that she is upset to be forced to join the rituals.

Fourth, the conflicting identities is clearly depicted through her inner conflict. Her thought "Grandfather, yes my grandfather, I miss him so much, but to do such a thing is not logical for me" (Arizona, 2014, p. 46) pictures how she considers herself as being logical although she respects the elders and even misses her grandfather. She finally gives in and joins the rituals because the Balean uses 'the grandfather' to make her feel guilty of being unwilling to participate. Yet, her identity as a person who lives with logics forces her to consider this participation as being illogical. She says,

> Almost 15 minutes she has been doing it and I cannot wait for it anymore, I feel so stupid. I am an educated person, sitting on this place and watching all this foolishness is like I am insulting myself. On the other hand, I have to respect my family and their belief, so I try to be patient (Arizona, 2014, p. 46).

The quotation clearly shows Rana has a conflict with her multiple identities. On one side, she wants to show respect to those who believe in the rituals. On the other side, she wants to appear as an educated person who believes in logic and thus considers such rituals illogical. She shows the two sides of her identities that she wants to confirm: a girl who respects cultural values and a girl who is highly educated.

Then, at the end of the story she makes a decision on which identity she wants to construct. She decides that she will not continue participating in the rituals and let her grandfather rest peacefully. As she is about to leave the ritual room, she suddenly hears her grandfather's voice and when she turns around, she also sees his smile on the Balean's face. This last part of the story confirms her identities. Therefore, instead of leaving the room as she was about to do, she decides to return to the room where the ritual happens. Her final statement saying, "… but I know exactly that my sight exactly turns black and black, and peaceful" (Arizona, 2014, p. 47). With this statement, she concludes the short story. This statement confirms her identity that even though she wants to appear to be educated and logical, deep in her heart she wants to embrace her cultural heritage. What is in conflict is her two identities: her identity as an educated person which is derived from the modern

way of life which she is deeply assimilated in and one as a Balinese which is deeply rooted in her heart through her willingness to embrace her cultural heritage.

"Happy Birthday"

Being different from "Calling Him Back" in terms of setting, "Happy Birthday" does not take Indonesia as the setting in the story. The story is set in an Indian family where a daughter lives with her father and step-mother. Her birth mother, who was abused from the father, already passed away.

The story which describes the female character who ends her life represents the student writer's perspective on women's life. She stated that she got the inspiration from Indian movies, such as *Mahabharatha*, *Joda Akbar*, and *Uttaran* that stereotype female characters as being weak and subordinated. To ensure her conclusion, before writing the story, she did some studies on Indian women and how they were situated. She found that women in India are considered as second-class citizens under the strong patriarchal system. She said that "I got frustrated with the female lead character that was really helpless and did nothing even for defending herself, I suddenly got the idea for my creative writing." For that reason, she depicted "the hardship of Indian women who lived in patriarchal world and how they dealt with it."

Through her short research, the student writer developed sympathy towards Indian women and she justified suicide in the story. She strengthened the subjugation of women in India through the comparison and contrast between the mother and step-mother characters who were under the domination of the father while the narrator, the girl, chose to end her life as the way of reaching her happiness. Interestingly, as stated by the student writer, the idea of death to end the subjugation on the part of the narrator was inspired by the student writer's reading on Edgar Allan Poe's works that often romanticize death to end the story while the strong female narrator who has the desire of her own was influenced by the feminist spirit as pictured by Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen. This implied that the student writer's identity as a literature student influenced the creation of the plot of the story. She utilized her knowledge on works of literature she had read as the resources for her creative writing.

The story begins with a flashback of an incident that happened three years before the main character's mother assured her, saying that "life is a valuable journey of tackling sadness and achieving absolute happiness" (Windriani, 2015, p. 99). From her mother's statement, the main character patiently searches for happiness in her family.

In this short story, the student writer used her identity as a literature student who was introduced to works of literature from different countries and learned to analyse them. Through these works, she reads the depiction of abuse by men towards women and she also learned from the works that domestic abuse that commonly happened in India. She admitted that her ideas for the strong and rebellious female narrator was influenced by the works that she read, such as works by Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen.

That women were considered unimportant and powerless was also commonly shed light on in works with India as a background. The situation in which Indian women had been in had been described as being unchanged until now. For the stagnant situation faced by Indian women, the student writer explained that "Modern era is chosen to bring an irony in the story. Although the world has changed, the patriarchal ideology remains intact in people's mind because those values have been well internalized since a long time ago; same goes to India." For this reason, this student writer also pictured the female character as being powerless when she witnessed her father abuse her step-mother. This character was also described as living in fear and hopelessness despite her desire to fight in anger. She wrote,

> My body was quivering and my mind was full of fear and anger. Without

> thinking twice, I slammed the door and run into my bedroom. I feel my feet weren't strong enough to stand. So, I lied down on the bed and began to think. Sometimes I wanted to fight against my dad, but I was powerless. Sometimes I tried to give love to him but it was useless to give love to a man who didn't have love in his life. Sometimes I argued God, but God didn't hear me. I protested why I was trapped in a woman's body: once I was born a woman, I was like a ghost, I could scream as loud as possible but no one would hear me. Therefore, in the hopeless and gloomy night, I unconsciously slept with the fear, tears and anger inside me (Windriani, 2015, p. 100).

As can be seen here, the female character was vividly described as being in frustration against the subordination of women in India. Here, the student writer manipulated her multifaceted identities as a literature student who used her knowledge as the resource for writing. Other than reading works with Indian background, critics, such as Gayatri Spivak who confirmed the subordination of Indian women also influenced the writing of the student writer.

To strengthen the knowledge on the subordination of women in India, the student writer used the culture of Malvai that "never let a woman to fight against a man" (Windriani, 2015, p. 100). The student writer perfectly included the setting that will make the story of subordination towards women only is logical. This showed the identity that the student writer wanted to claim as a literature student who had the knowledge of India and may wish to fight against the subordination towards women. To make sure that her conclusion on challenges faced by Indian women, the student writer did a library research. This implied that when she wrote the story, she already had an intention to picture real situations in India as the background of her short story.

The quotation depicting the female character's feelings of hopelessness also described the identities of the student writer in the use of capitalized God. The capitalized God was mentioned several times in the story consistently. When asked about the use the capitalized God, she explained "I missed to research on that while in fact I am also aware that Arundhaty Roy did not use capitalized God." Then, the student writer also confirmed that she could not avoid to include her own identity as a Moslem woman. Her demographic identity as a Moslem who acknowledged only one God instead of gods in Hinduism as the belief of most people in India confirmed how the student writer utilized her perceived identities.

Other than studying about the situation of women in India, she also did some study for some simple expressions in Hindi that she used in the story to produce Indian flavor: *Malvai* - one of a rural area in Bumbai India (Windriani, 2015, p. 102), *Janmadina Mubar ka, Ananda* – happy birthday (Windriani, 2015, p. 102), and *Ladoo* – India's traditional cake (Windriani, 2015, p. 102). These three expressions were intentionally inserted in the story with the meaning provided in the footnote. This also denoted that the student writer wanted to show her identity as a literature student who not only understood Indian culture but also Indian expressions.

Through this short story, the student writer wanted to show her sympathy towards the miserable life of women in India. She emphasized the fact that women who survived to adulthood must be grateful. For this reason, she ended the story by justifying suicide to emphasize the happiness of the female character to reach 18 years of age with an abusive father in a culture that structurally is not on the side of the women victims. "I chose this path because I had achieved the most valuable thing in my life. Honestly, I had been alive for 18 years but I was never happy." (Windriani, 2015, p. 102). Through this ending, the student writer confirmed that with the situation for women in India, death was the only

source of happiness. There was no possible solution to subordination of women except death.

Even though the story ends with a suicide, the student writer intentionally used the self-death as a protest against the subjugation of women in India. Suicide may raise a controversial issue but the student writer argued that

> Sometimes I can justify suicide as the narrator's decision to achieve her ultimate happiness; not merely based on "no life is better than life" and opt out from her responsibility to her life. In contrary, I sometimes think that her controversial decision can be a form of her responsibility to her life by considering harms and benefits. If people said her suicide is the result of her impulsiveness, I don't think so because the narrator repeatedly perceives life as something valuable, only happens once in the whole life and cannot be replaced.

This argument showed the student writer's perceived identity that in general she did not tolerate suicide when she said "sometimes I can justify suicide". However, when the suicide was for ending the life tragedies of the narrator, it was justifiable. In addition, the suicide was not considered as an escape from life problems. It was more of a form of protest against subordination. The student writer argued that "The narrator gives a justice for both herself and her life, even further, this is how she resists and not to subjugate to the patriarchal arrogance."

Conclusion

The two selected short stories were analysed to see the identity expressions of two students of the English Letters Department. The creative writing outputs represented how EFL learners utilized their multifaceted identities as the resources for their short stories. This is also in line with the theory that the learners will use the resources they are familiar with in their creative writing, such as their cultural and educational background and those they put in effort to make themselves familiar with as in the case of the writer of the second short story.

The short stories indicate that foreign language learners can produce works of literature that fulfill the standard of a creative writing class by using different aspects of their multifaceted identities even though their language ability is still in progress. In this study, identities are derived from the modern community in which they live or the student community they are in. These identities may also come from their cultural and traditional origin or from borrowed background as the resources for writing.

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