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# ESL Students' Writing Experiences and Perceived Poetry Writing Ability

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ESL STUDENTS' WRITING EXPERIENCES AND  
PERCEIVED POETRY WRITING ABILITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Fang Yu Liao

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This thesis aims to explore different types of writing experiences described by ESL students and how these contributed to students' perceived abilities of writing poetry. The study was conducted in a qualitative interview based design, in which participants are formed into five groups based on their writing experiences.

The main findings of this study indicate the significance and applicability of applying creative writing to ESL students. Also, according to the interviews with the participants, this study presents their perceptions toward general writing and creative writing. By exploring the perspectives from the participants, the study further investigates the values of applying creative writing associating with the types of writing experiences that the participants described.

This study establishes the values of implementing creative writing in the ESL setting from different viewpoints. It also suggests the educators to regard creative writing as an applicable and useful approach to teach ESL writing.

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Sleepless nights, endless works, helpless feelings  
In the journey of writing thesis  
Stressful, fearful, tearful  
In the world of loneliness

Mom and Dad  
My safest and warmest harbor  
Always welcoming me with open arms  
Thank you and love you for the trust and support

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Guides me to the path as a researcher  
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No matter where you are  
For all the concerns and back-ups I thank you all  
My dearest participants  
For your generous help I thank you all

Relieved, experienced, satisfied  
The end of the journey of writing thesis  
Confidence, motivation, passion  
The new journey assumes

Thank you all!  
Yeah...I made it!

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### *White Paper*

She stares at the paper  
It stares blankly at her back  
Without any traces of ink  
All clean, white and smooth.

She picks up her pen  
Gripping it tightly  
Time is passing swiftly  
She could not think of any

Whispers were heard from a distance  
Chairs dragged from the floor above  
Doors were slammed by the neighbors  
She needs some peace and silence.

20 years of memories?  
All to be reflected in a poem  
Could that even be possible?  
She begins to shed tears.

Hold on.  
Her pen started to move.  
It was a piece of paper  
But with words and scribbles of all kind

To her delight,  
Now she got it  
Her first poem!

(A poem by a Malaysian student quoted in Hanauer, 2010, p. 7)

Looking at the paper full of red marks, I walked toward my teacher and uttered:  
“teacher, I am not good at writing in English.” “Then you shouldn’t have applied for English major” she replied. Writing in English used to be a frustrated process for me. Whenever I was asked to write, no matter it is for tests or for class assignments, I tended to have my concern on the grammatical rules, structures, or vocabulary. However, when I was introduced to

poetry writing, I was liberated to write in any form with any idea I would like to express in my poems, because those poems belong to me. Being encouraged to see myself as a writer for my writing pieces, I am motivated to explore the topic of poetry writing and to investigate the impact of past writing experiences on the perceptions toward creative writing.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

English is one of the most common learnt languages in the world, and it attracts the students to learn English as ESL students by studying abroad in the English-speaking countries or as EFL students by staying in the outer circle countries. There is no doubt that every ESL/EFL student encounters various difficulties and struggles. First, some researchers stated that ESL students tend to see their motivation for learning English as becoming native-like (Fernesten, 2008; Kramsch, 2003; McKay, 2009). Also, most of the EFL students fail to have the ownership over writing in English (Pennycook, 1996) and see themselves as outsiders compared to native speakers (Fernsten, 2008). Besides, researchers showed that the mainstream approaches of teaching writing to ESL students are product and process approach, in which the focus is on students' grammar and structure in their writing pieces (Badger & White, 2000; Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009). Moreover, Schultz (2001) addressed the issues of goal-driven approach in ESL classrooms where students are seldom provided with the chance to write from their "imagination, practicing their language skills in formats that they define for themselves" (p. 94). In addition, Iida (2008) mentioned that the focus of the writing classes in EFL contexts are mainly on the practical writing skills and the grammatical accuracy, and he further stated that the students' voice in their writing should be taken into considerations. In other words, the writing classes for ESL/EFL students emphasize the grammatical and structural aspects. Therefore, it implies that in these ESL writing classes,

students lose their chances to express themselves with their original thoughts and fail to gain the authorship in writing.

## **1.2 Why Creative Writing?**

### **1.2.1 A Personal Perspective**

Coming from Taiwan, I have been learning English since I was ten. However, I did not experience any English writing courses until my undergraduate education as an English student. English writing courses were required from my freshman year to junior year, in which I found that I was exposed to the five-paragraph pattern and the concept of the thesis statement, topic sentence, and so on. Besides, I was asked to memorize lists of vocabulary, proverbs, and transitional words, which I found boring and failed to see them as components of writing classes. Moreover, most of the time, the topics that I was assigned were something that I could not find interest in, for instance, global warming. In my past writing experiences, I not only have a lot of anxiety to meet the rules of grammar and the structure of the composition, but also hated to write in English.

However, there is a turning point for me to fall in love with writing. In Fall 2007, I came to Indiana University of Pennsylvania as an English major exchange student, and I was exposed to creative writing for the very first time. I met one professor, Dr. Hanauer, who is one of the pioneers in the creative writing field for ESL students. He inspired me and led me to the field of creative writing. During the two semesters, I had been exposed to creative writing and experienced four different projects: poetry, autoethnography, science fiction, and research paper. Moreover, while writing those projects, I felt joy and freedom to express my own ideas and feelings, although in the beginning I felt I could not accomplish those tasks, yet I always felt confident and am proud of myself as a multilingual writer. Furthermore, the

importance of these four projects is that they introduced me to the field that I feel passionate for my life and my career as a prospective teacher, which is creative writing for ESL/EFL learners.

### **1.2.2 A Theoretical Perspective**

Creative writing for ESL/EFL students is a developing research topic, and the current studies are: poetry writing (Chamcharatsri, 2009; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011), and story writing (Dai, 2010; Tin, 2010). According to Chamcharatsri (2009), creative writing shares the connections with expressive pedagogy, which Iida (2008) stated that expressive pedagogy allows the students to embrace their ownership of writing. Also, there are four different types of writing that share the similar concepts and values with creative writing: expressive writing, free writing, imaginative response, and multi-genre writing. I will discuss each of these further in the next chapter.

Despite the fact that some researchers held a negative point of view toward creative writing, there are three positive values shown from the current research. First, creative writing can improve students' language competence (Hanauer, 2003; Iida, 2011; Schultz, 2001; Spiro, 2004). Second, creative writing can bring engagement, enjoyment, and motivation (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Grierson, 1999; Hanauer, 2004; Knoeller, 2003; Painter, 2009; Schultz, 2001). Last but not the least, creative writing enable the students to gain their writers' voice, identity, and self-discovery (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Chamcharatsri, 2009; Crème & Hunt, 2002; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011; Light, 2002; Schultz, 2001). In general, creative writing is able to strengthen students' English competence, but most important of all, it can create an atmosphere for the students to enjoy, to be engaged, and to find their voices and identity. Therefore, creative

writing can be an approach to teach writing for ESL/EFL students to motivate them in writing and encourage them to have the ownership over English.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this study is to enlighten both teachers and educational institutions to consider creative writing as one of the possible approaches to apply in ESL/EFL contexts. The purpose of the study is to explore the types of writing experiences that the ESL students described in relation with the students' perceived poetry writing ability. There is a concern that whether applying creative writing in ESL/EFL contexts is valuable to ESL/EFL students or not. If so, in what ways the writing experiences students have had contributed to their perceptions toward creative writing. In order to achieve the purposes, the study was conducted using a qualitative interview design with the 18 MA TESOL ESL students from EFL contexts.

### **1.4 Research Question**

This study aims to investigate the connection between the types of the writing experiences that ESL students reported having and their perceived poetry writing ability. In order to investigate the topic raised above, the research questions in this study are presented as follows:

1. What are the different types of writing experiences described by ESL students?
2. How do these different writing experiences contribute to students' perceived abilities of writing poetry?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Creative writing for ESL/EFL students is a recently discussed topic in the TESOL field. By investigating at the types of writing experiences that ESL students described in relation with their perceived poetry writing ability, there are three potential significant aspects of this study. The first benefit is for the participants. By taking part in in this study, these 18 participants can have a greater understanding to share not only their perceptions and writing experiences about general writing and creative writing in ESL/EFL classrooms, but also to express how they understand this notion of general writing and creative writing. Second, all of the participants are currently enrolled in the M.A. TESOL program, in which they have been trained to be future teachers, and since they are prospective teachers, they are provided the chance to think about not only the advantages or disadvantages of both general writing and creative writing, but also how to apply it in their future teaching contexts and classrooms. Last but not the least, the benefit of conducting this study is to add more knowledge to the TESOL field. This study is going to shed some light for the educators and teachers with the ESL/EFL learners as their target students. Same to the participants, this study aims at raising the educators' and teachers' awareness of noticing and regarding creative writing as a pedagogical approach for ESL/EFL students in their writing classes.

In addition, by conducting a study that looks at students' reported types of writing experiences in relation to their poetry writing ability, this study will explore the different types of writing experiences that the participants held, which can provide an overview picture of students' writing experiences. Moreover, this study will provide the participants' perspectives on their reported writing experiences, general writing, and creative writing, which should provide rich information on how ESL students perceive general writing and

creative writing. This study aims to shed further some light on the field of creative writing for ESL students.

### **1.6 Overview of the Chapters**

There are five chapters in this study: introduction, literature review, methodology, result, and the discussion and conclusion. In literature review chapter, the studies conducted on the topic of learning writing, teaching writing, and creative writing are discussed. Also explored in this chapter, are the concerns of the ESL/EFL writing classes, the concept of creative writing, and the issues raised in the previous studies. In the methodology chapter, I discuss the design of the study and the rationale for choosing the method of qualitative interview approach. The result chapter provides the data that was collected from the participants which consists of interviews and written self-rating poetry ability. As for the last chapter, the discussion and the conclusion, it discusses the value of applying creative writing in ESL classroom and the value associate with the different types of writing. Moreover, the last chapter also presents the conclusions, implications, limitation, and the recommendations for the future studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative writing for ESL and EFL students is an emerging topic in current studies: poetry writing (Chamcharatsri, 2009; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011), and story writing (Dai, 2010; Tin, 2010). However, there are more aspects left unknown that need to be researched. In order to explore the connection between students' reported writing experiences and perceived poetry writing abilities, this study is going to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different types of writing experiences described by ESL students?
2. How do these different writing experiences contribute to students' perceived abilities of writing poetry?

There are six sections will be discussed in this review chapter: 1) learning writing in English, 2) Literature reading in second language classroom, 3) the concepts of creative writing, 4) poetry writing, 5) creative writing in EFL context, and 6) different point of views toward creative writing.

#### **2.1 Learning Writing in English**

English writing courses are required for every ESL student, no matter what schools they participate in. However, ESL students face serious tasks and difficulties while learning writing. ESL learners are inclined to regard the "native-like competence" as their goal (McKay, 2009, p. 39) and to become one of the native speakers as their motivation (Kramsch, 2003). Thus, according to Fernsten's research in 2008, leads ESL learners to feel inferior to native writers and see themselves as outsiders. Fernesten (2008) further stated that ESL learners fail to see themselves as writers; instead, they "reflect the conflict, struggle, and

tension of writing differences” (p. 45). The word ‘differences’ implies that ESL learners tend to compare themselves to native writers, and this desire to achieve the ‘native-like competence’ has limited “better understanding of their [ESL learners] various language needs” (p. 41). In other words, by falling into the ‘native-like competence’, ESL learners may lose their chances to see that point made by Widdowson (1994) and McKay (2009) that English is the international language, which “no nation can have custody over it (English)..... [o]ther people (non-native writers) actually own it” (Widdowson, p. 385), and “belongs to all those who speak it and not to the few who acquire and use it from childhood” (McKay, p. 43). Besides, Cook created a new term, “multicompetence”, which is defined as “the compound state of a mind with two grammars” (as cited in Cook, 1992, p. 558). It brings out the importance of students’ awareness as a multilingual writer achieving the multicompetent skills. That is to say, ESL learners should embrace the ownership of English language and see themselves as multilingual writers. Nevertheless, in what way the ESL/EFL learners can get access to the idea of ownership in English and their role as multilingual writers which brings the issue of the English writing classes for ESL/EFL students.

Quoted from Schultz (2001), “(w)ithin the goal-driven context of foreign language programs, students are rarely afforded the opportunity simply to write from their imaginations, practicing their language skills in formats that they define for themselves” (p. 94). Also, Iida (2008) mentioned that writing courses not only are designed to focus on practical writing skills and grammatical “accuracy,” but also tend to be regarded as “places for students to study English rhetoric rather than to develop their voices in writing” (p. 172). Moreover, the use of product approach and process approach concentrates teaching writing on structures and practical skills (Badger & White, 2000; Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009).

For these reasons, creative writing tends not to be considered in the writing classes (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Iida, 2008, 2011; Schultz, 2001). Furthermore, both Leki (2001) and Raimes (1991) stated the challenges and issues in teaching writing with the mainstream approaches, and they concluded with an awareness of taking students' or local contexts' needs into consideration. In other words, with these mainstream approaches, the practical skills, grammar, and structures are the main concern for students, in so, they may lose their chance to develop other skills in writing, such as imagination, emotion, or creativity.

Besides, according to Linda and Whitley, “[w]e require our ESL students to share and reproduce in their writing our world view, one to which they are, of course, alien. Such instruction is composition as colonization” (as cited in McKay, 2009, p. 78). The term, ‘alien’ reflects the feeling of ESL students as outsiders in Fernsten’s (2008) article. Also, Pennycook’s (1996) article presented the situation that ESL/EFL students fail to have ownership over English, like it stated in the article, “it remains an alien language--- and this to write ‘in their (students’) own words’ is not something that can be done in English” (p. 225).

There is an example of ‘composition colonization’ as a case study from Fernsten’s (2008) research. The student, Mandy, is capable of writing for academic expectations, but in order to do so, it will “change her writing in ways that would make it less her own” (p. 47). Moreover, a student from Dai’s study (2010), Tian, reflected that “I seldom have the chance to put what I really think in them (compositions), just apply the useful sentence patterns and paragraph structure I’ve memorized. And always, the topic given was not something I wanted to write about” (p. 549). Furthermore, Matsuda (2001) discussed the difficulties Japanese L2 writers have when constructing their voice might be “being deprived of familiar discursive

options...combined with the writers' lack of familiarity with the discourse features that are available in constructing voice in written English" (p. 51). So, it is clear that most of the ESL/EFL students face difficulties in writing.

People may ask: can creative writing encourage ESL/EFL students to gain ownership of English and develop their voices in writing classes within ESL/EFL contexts? Some scholars believed that in creative writing task, like a poetry book, enables ESL students to develop their voices and identity as a second language writer in their writing (Chamcharatsri, 2009; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010). In other words, creative writing is one of the possible approaches that can be used in ESL/EFL contexts. By exploring the relationship between the writing experiences that the students have experienced and their perceived ability in creative writing, this research aims to contribute some knowledge to the field of teaching writing to ESL/EFL students.

## **2.2 Literature Reading in the Second Language Classroom**

As I stated in the previous section, this research is going to examine the connections between students' perceived creative writing ability and the writing experiences they described. Also, poetry writing as a creative writing task is highlighted in this study. The current studies on literature used in second language classrooms were discussed in the relation to literature and foreign language learning/ teaching (Paran, 2008), literature and language teaching (Carter, 2007; Vandrick, 2003), poetry reading and second language learning (Hanauer, 2001a; 2001b), and literature and language education (Hall, 2005).

Paran's article (2008) provided an overview of historical background on literature. He concluded from some experts' points of view that "composition and literature tended to be taught by the same people at the same time when the two areas emerged as subjects worthy of

academic study, and the two subjects have diverged and converged over the years” (p. 468). From this viewpoint, it is noteworthy to see how literature is used in education, especially in second language contexts.

Some points of view against using literature in second language writing classrooms were presented in Vandrick’s (2003) study. First, students may not be interested or motivated in reading literature works. Second, the language used in literature works might not be regarded as everyday English that students can use in daily life. Third, some instructors might have the idea that using literature in second language classroom would become literature classes, which focuses on analyzing literary works. Last but not the least, some instructors would argue that the goal of enabling students to write academically might be misled.

However, Vandrick (2003) further argued for reading literature works that facilitate students’ ability to write creatively. He pointed out that some scholars believe that reading and writing are inseparable skills. Reading a good model of literature can provide good examples for learners to learn vocabulary and sentence structures unconsciously. Therefore, using literature in second language writing courses, no matter whether it is short stories, poetry, or novels, as long as it is a good choice, students will be exposed to good writing examples and enjoy reading the materials at the same time. Also, this article encourages the readers to combine reading and writing in writing classes instead of separating them into two different skills.

Hanauer’s (2001a) article presented three arguments for using literature in language classrooms from many scholars’ points of views. First, some researchers believed that “the incorporation of literary reading tasks is that they provide a source of motivation, enjoyment, and personal involvement” (p. 297). The second argument is that “ literary texts provide

language learners access to cultural knowledge of the target language community” (p. 297). Last but not the least, applying poetry reading to language classrooms benefit students’ learning progresses.

What is more, Carter (2007), Chan (1999), and Hanauer (2001a) believed that using literature in second language classrooms brings both students’ cultural and linguistic awareness during the processes of reading the literature works. Literature was defined by Chan (1999) as “a potential receptive to and illustrative of different genres, text-types, registers, narrative structures, points of view, and patterning of words and sounds” (p. 40). Also, Hanauer (2001b) argued that “(l)iterature is a valuable source of cultural knowledge precisely because it does present a personal interpretation of the life and values as the author of the literary work experiences them” (p. 396). So, he further stated that by reading poetry, students can acquire the cultural understanding of that culture.

Looking at the poetry used in second language classroom, it is obvious that the studies related to the poetry and ESL learners are mainly on reading instead of writing. Therefore, it implies that poetry writing as a creative writing task for ESL/EFL students remains an innovative and emerging topic. By investigating the types of writing experiences that the students revealed and exploring these writing experiences and students’ perceived poetry writing ability, this study may provide some insights or ideas to the ESL/EFL teachers or institutions.

### **2.3 Concepts of Creative Writing**

Chamcharatsri (2009) pointed out that creative writing shares close relation with expressive pedagogy. From Tate, Rupiper, and Schick, “expressive pedagogy can allow students to gain a greater awareness of process in writing while providing opportunities to

develop the ability to take responsibility for and take control over their writing” (as cited in Iida, 2008, p. 172). Plus, Fernsten (2008) described that “it [expressivism] suggests that the ability to write comes not from the memorization but from the true expression of our innermost thoughts” (p. 46). In other words, expressive pedagogy is used in teaching creative writing, and it enables the ESL students to gain the ownership in writing their inner thoughts. Therefore, we can say that there is a strong relationship between writers’ voices and their writing.

Cox, Jordan, Ortmeier-Hooper, and Schwartz (2010) stated that “individuals’ identities are not expressed through writing and other acts of composition but are actually formed through them: language is a means through which students are consistently ‘controlling their becoming’” (p. xviii). Also, Ochs (1992) mentions both Bakhtin and V. N. Volosinov stated that “utterances may have several ‘voices’- the speaker’s or writer’s voice, the voice of a someone referred to within the utterance the voice of another for whom the message is conveyed, etc” (p. 338). Moreover, Ivanic (2001) illustrated that “the lexical, syntactic, semantic, and even the visual and material aspects of writing construct identity...and thus writing always conveys a representation of the self of the writer” (p. 5). Furthermore, according to Norton (1997), she stated that “identity constructs and is constructed by language” (p. 419), which reflected the idea that “(l)anguage learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a linguistic system of signs and symbols, but also a complex social practice through which relationship are defined, negotiated, and resisted” (Norton and McKinney, p. 77). Therefore, we can say that the process of writing or learning writing in English shaped the writers’ or learners’ identities, and both identities and voices are constructed through language forms, such as speeches and writings.

Bilton and Sivasubramaniam' research (2009) described that an increasing belief turning to focus on "creativity and self-discovery", in which the students can write "without any fear of intimidation, grammar correction, teacher-dictated topics, critical comments or grades" (p. 303). Similarly, from Bishop, Moxley, and Tarnopolsky, "creative writing as a type of writing that opens up opportunities for student writers to take risks as they reflect, discover, create, and explore themselves and their experiences" (as cited in Chamcharatsri, 2009). Besides, Light (2002) described creative writing is "private," "personal," and "emotional," in which the students can find "self" (p. 265). Moreover, Chamcharatsri (2009) believed that creative writing promotes intercultural communication. That is to say, ESL students can regain their own voices, express themselves freely, and self-discover themselves in creative writing.

Creative writing enables writers to gain their voice, identity and self-discovery (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Chamcharatsri, 2009; Crème & Hunt, 2002; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010; Light, 2002). Therefore, the concepts of identity are worthy of mentioning. Mendoza-Denton (2008) defines that identity is an "active negotiation of an individual's relationship with larger social constructs, in so far as this negotiation is signaled through language and other semiotic means" (p. 475). Also, according to Norton (1997), she identity is defined as "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). Further, she included four theorists who influence her in developing her ideas toward identity, Cornel West, Pierre Bourdieu, Chris Weedon, and Jim Cummins. She concluded that all these four authors see identity as "complicated," "multifaceted," and "dynamic across time and place" (p. 419).

The concepts of creative writing are shared in four different names. First, Knoeller (2003) defined it as “imaginative response” as a piece of work written creatively in various genres interacting with literature works (p. 42). Next, Bilton and Sivasubramaniam (2009) pointed out that the expressivists see writing as “expressive”, creative, meaning-based, and “responsive” (p. 304). Third, the idea of Elbow’s “free writing” is to write freely without any distraction or concern about the rules (as cited in Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009, p. 303; Crème & Hunt, 2002, p. 148). Last, according to Romano, “multigenre” writing enables the writers to express themselves and combine the “facts” with their “imagination” in various genres, such as “poetry” (as cited in Grierson, 1999, p. 51; Painter, 2009, p. 288).

Six advantages of ‘multigenre imaginative responses’ are pointed out in Knoeller’s research in 2003: “engaging and motivating,” “appealing,” “yielding original insights,” “making direct connections to textual interpretation,” “enriching classroom discussions,” and “ownership” (p. 47). Plus, enjoyment is found in participants for multigenre projects (Grierson, 1999; Painter, 2009). In other words, ‘multigenre writing’ inclines to appeal and involve students to enjoy writing, encourage students to change the original ideas for literature works and create the new interpretations, and create diversities in classroom. Therefore, the students may have the chance to gain the ownership of English writing.

Similar with Grierson (1999), Knoeller (2003), and Painter (2009), there are six main benefits for participating in ‘expressive writing,’ including “a sense of engagement,” “enjoyment and involvement,” “expressive potential,” “motivation and fluency,” “critical reading,” and “love of writing” (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009, p. 315-316). That is to say that ‘expressive writing’ can engage and motivate students to enjoy and love writing, and enable students to read critically and express in their own voices.

As for 'free writing,' three advantages from Crème and Hunt's research in 2002 were presented. First, they pointed out the student writers will be more confident in writing, be involved in more flexible and freer writing experiences, and enable students to understand the creativity. Second, the student writers are able to find their own "writing voices," which are the writers' "sense of self" (as cited in Crème & Hunt, 2002, p. 152). Last, 'free writing' provide chances for students to interact with others' life and experiences within the text and relate to their own experiences, and it enhances students' "self-awareness/consciousness" (p. 154).

Furthermore, general benefits of creative writing were discussed in Schultz's 2001 article. First, he presented that "creative writing urges students to form and shape the raw material of experience into an artistic and compellingly executed format" (p. 95). By doing so, students can improve both their speaking and reading skills (Schultz, 2001). Second, creative writing is a process of liberation and it provides students with "a distance from themselves that allows them to dare and to try new things, something they often will not do in the concretized identity associated with their native language" (Schultz, 2001, p. 96). Third, Schultz (2001) stated that "in creative writing the intensity of the commitment to the specifics of the foreign language goes well beyond that elicited by writing assignments where students are instructed to use the vocabulary from a textbook list or the grammar from a given lesson" (p. 96).

To sum up, creative writing is considered as one of the approaches used for raising awareness of writers' ownership, voices, and enjoyment, which are the possible outcomes of teaching creative writing to learners. Therefore, by conducting this study, the relationship between the learners' writing experiences and their perceived creative writing ability will be

discussed, which can be significant for the teachers and instructors to understand the possible outcomes of teaching creative writing.

## 2.4 Poetry Writing

This study is going to explore the types of writing experiences contributing to ESL students' perceived ability in writing poetry, so the previous studies focused on poetry writing are discussed in this section. According to Hanauer (2004), in *Poetry and Meaning of Life*, there are three reasons why poetry is a good genre to teach ESL students. First, poetry is everywhere and accessible to everyone in everyday life, such as “popular songs,” “television,” and “political speeches” (p.8). Second, reading poetry enables the ESL students to “construct and comprehend various language structures” (p.9). Most important of all, reading poetry can “broaden their (students) understanding of others' thoughts, experiences, and feelings” (p.9) and connect or react their own experiences to the others' experiences.

According to Bolton (1999), “Poetry is an exploration of the deepest and the most intimate experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas: distilled, pared to succinctness, and made music to the ear by lyricism” (p. 118). Similarly, poetry is defined by Hanauer (2004) as “a literary text that presents the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the writer through a self-referential use of language that creates for the reader and writer a new understanding of the experience, thought, or feeling expressed in the text” (p. 10). Furthermore, Hanauer (2003) stated the values and importance of poetry in his study that poetry is a genre that not only “bring(s) personalized human experience with all its ambiguities and multileveled meanings to the forefront of the language learning process”, but also “facilitate(s) the expression of individualized human experience in a new linguistic and cultural system and allow(s) the entrance into the language classroom of diverse human experience and points of personal,

cross-cultural contact” (p. 85). Therefore, poetry is a text full of meanings, feelings, and different lives that brings the interaction and negotiation among humans.

From the former idea, it reflected the concept of ‘co-construction’ defined by Jacoby and Ochs (1995) as “the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality” (p. 171). It covered a wide range of human interactions, and also it reinforces the concept that identities are socially, culturally, and historically constructed. Also, Kramsch (2000) discussed in her study that a self could not exist by itself without the interaction with others. Therefore, from these points of view, everyone is connected to other human beings, social groups, social settings, and so on. Similarly, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) viewed the process of learning a second language as participation in different communities, in which they re-construct and construct their identities. From these ideas, no one can construct their own identity without influencing or mentioning others.

Four reasons of studying poetry writing were discussed in Hanauer’s (2011) article. First, it can “contribute to our understanding of the genre specific aspects of literary knowledge and broaden what we know about literacy practices in general” (p. 83). Second, it will “help to develop writing programs which deal with a much wider range of literacy practices and facilitate the development of ability in one genre and the transfer of skills to another genre” (p. 83). Third, by studying the process of poetry writing, it can “facilitate greater societal tolerance” within the processes of “self discovery, multicultural communication, and critical interaction with the world” (p. 84).

Both the articles of Iida (2010) and Bilton and Sivasubramaniam (2009) talked about the situation and problems in ESL/EFL contexts that students are required and urged to meet the

examination needs without acquiring the ability to use English in real-world situation. Also, both of them point out the expressive approach can be used in ESL/EFL context, especially in writing courses. Even though the writing they refer to is in different genre, poetry writing in Iida's study, expressive writing in Bilton and Sivasubramaniam's study, yet they all believed that through this expressive writing task, students are able to discover their voice in their writing. What is more, they also believed that this expressive approach could engage and involve students in writing.

Similar to the ideas of Bilton and Sivasubramaniam, (2009), Grierson (1999), Knoeller (2003), and Painter (2009), Hanauer (2004) believed that poetry writing can provide ESL students the "motivation," "engagement," and "personal involvement" (p. 56), and also enable student writers to maintain or find their own voices and express their experiences and feelings (Chamcharatsri, 2009; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010). Besides, poetry writing enables the writers to re-experience their life and also the readers to experience others' experiences (Hanauer, 2010, 2011). Furthermore, poetry writing is described by Bolton (1999) that it "alters the writer because the process faces one with oneself" (p. 118). Therefore, poetry writing is an expressive, self-discovery, and enjoyable process for writers.

Ivanic's "discoursal self" and "autobiography self" were pointed out when discussing the identities in poetry (as cited in Crème & Hunt, 2002, p. 152). The "discoursal self is the impression--often multiple, sometimes contradictory--which they consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text" and the "autobiography self is the identity people bring with them to any act of writing," which "consist of the life-history, memories, events, ways of representing and being in the world" (as cited in Hanauer, 2010, p. 58). Moreover, according to Hanauer (2010), both 'discoursal self' and 'autobiography self'

can be found in poetic identity, but we cannot define the poetic identity in one of them only. Therefore, from Christopher Bollas, a different idea of self was presented, “aesthetic of being”, “an inner presence that has more to do with feeling than thinking and which develops throughout life” (as cited in Crème & Hunt, 2002, p. 152).

In Tin’s article (2010), it shared the similar concept with Womelsduff’s article (2005). They both stated that giving students some regulations and structures for writing poems could enhance their creativity. Besides, Tin (2010) provided further discussion on writing a high formal constraints poetry task like acrostics, students are inclined to think in English and use English (L1) directly, instead of using their L2 and translate it into L1, which will decrease the connection of L2 with students.

Generally, poetry writing is not a new topic to investigate, but poetry writing for ESL or EFL students has just been recently researched, so by looking at the types of writing experiences that ESL students reported in relation with their perceived poetry writing ability can shed a light on the field for ESL poetry writing.

### **2.5 Creative Writing in EFL Context**

In Dai’s (2010) article, she presented a study done for two semesters in mainland China, in which a creative writing approach is applied to the English-major sophomore students. 39 students were divided into two groups for workshops. Firstly, the course started with providing students the narrative skills about how to write stories. Secondly, students were asked to read and discuss two stories assigned by the instructor. Thirdly, students wrote their stories and handed in the next week. Next, students’ writings were assessed by one Chinese teacher and one English teacher. Worthy of notice, peer correction was demonstrated in the second semester.

Dai (2010) stated in her study that the experiences of story writing enables the students to become “aware of themselves as writers, as well as of the subtlety and power of words” (p. 555). Also, some scholars stated that creative writing could motivate and influence students’ attitudes toward writing in English (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Grierson, 1999; Hanauer, 2004; Knoeller, 2003; Painter, 2009; Schultz, 2001). Moreover, according to Dai (2010), creative writing courses can provide the students with a chance to know both themselves and others better, which reflected the idea with Hanauer (2010) in poetry writing.

Dai’s research (2010) provided a study done in EFL context, China, which is the few studies we have in the filed now, but still, in this research, instead of poetry, story writing was used. Therefore, it will be worthy of being researched on poetry writing in EFL contexts. In order to know students’ perceived poetry writing ability in relation to the writing experiences they described, a study done in this topic may provide different insights or results from the story one, which may add some thoughts to the field of creative writing in ESL/EFL contexts.

## **2.6 Different Points of Views toward Creative Writing**

Research shows what students can benefit from the creative writing projects, but still, some different arguments exist. From Light (2002), he mentioned the reason for creative writing regarded as not proper to be taught in university is that “creative writing is not ‘serious’ and encourages self-indulgence” (p. 260). Also, Chamcharatsri (2009) pointed out that some scholars may argue creative writing for its “nonserious and nonacademic” (para. 3). As I present above for the concepts about creative writing, these claims prove to be irrational and fallacious. Besides, LeNoir (2002) argued that multigenre writing provides writers the

freedom not to worry about the rules, but because of this freedom, it unconsciously makes the “unity” more important when evaluating the multigenre writing (p. 100). That is to say, multigenre, on the one hand, can easily lead to a chaos, in which no rules will be concerned anymore, and on the other hand, the readers will tend to find the ‘unity’ in multigenre works. Plus, Womelsduff (2005) provided a dilemma between structure and freedom in poetry writing. She believes that both freedom and structure are important for student writers. Furthermore, she concluded that “maybe structure promotes freedom” (p. 27).

There are some researchers held a different point of view toward the use of creative writing, but it provides the different perceptions toward the value of creative writing, and it is worthy of being investigated. Therefore, that is the reason a study designed for exploring the relations between students’ ability in creative writing in relation of their writing experiences might be an approach to decode the different aspects toward using creative writing.

## **2.7 Final Remark**

Creative writing as I have presented in the previous sections, shows that creative writing can improve students’ language competence (Hanauer, 2003; Iida, 2011; Schultz, 2001; Spiro, 2004), bring engagement, enjoyment, and motivation (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Grierson, 1999; Hanauer, 2004; Knoeller, 2003; Painter, 2009; Schultz, 2001), and gain the writers’ identity, voice, and self-discovery (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Chamcharatsri, 2009; Crème & Hunt, 2002; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011; Light, 2002; Schultz, 2001). This study was conducted in order to explore the connection between ESL students’ writing experiences and their perceived poetry writing abilities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1 Overview**

The goal of this study is to encourage both teachers and educational institutions to notice and regard creative writing as one of the approaches in ESL/EFL contexts. The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between students' reported writing experiences and perceived poetry writing abilities. One issue is whether applying creative writing in ESL/EFL contexts is beneficial to ESL/EFL students or not; and if so, what are the writing experiences students have had that contributed to their perceptions toward creative writing. In order to achieve these goals, the study was conducted using a qualitative interview design with the MA TESOL multilingual students. The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What are the different types of writing experiences described by ESL students?
2. How do these different writing experiences contribute to students' perceived abilities of writing poetry?

There are two sections included in this chapter. First, research design, in which detailed information of participants and data collection are provided; and second, data analysis, in which the procedures of analyzing the data are presented.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study was conducted as an interview based qualitative design. Black (1994) has stated that "qualitative methods take a holistic perspective which preserves the complexities of human behavior" (p. 425). Moreover, Barbour (1999) believed that "(q)ualitative methods can illuminate the variety of meanings attached by different individuals to particular events or issues- whether these arise from their professional backgrounds and training or from personal

experience- and can provide an understanding of how these different perspectives give rise to particular conflicts, misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication” (p. 157).

Furthermore, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), interviews can enable both interviewers and interviewees to “discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (p. 409). In other words, by using the qualitative method and interview approach can collect perceptions from the “information-rich samples” (Perry, 2008, p. 75). In order to explore the questions of this research, 1) the type of writing experiences and 2) the connection between these writing experiences and students’ perceived poetry writing ability, the study aims to discover these research questions by looking at prospective teachers’ perspectives. Each individual has their own point of views and ideas; therefore, a qualitative interview based approach was conducted in the study.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), the rating scale is useful for “tapping attitudes, perceptions and opinions” (p. 390). In this study, majority of the collected data are qualitative based. Also, one of the interview questions was dealing with the capacity of writing poetry, therefore, in order to compare among the participants and to understand their in-depth reasoning, a rating scale was utilizing along with the interview questions.

### **3.2.1 Participants**

All of the participants are EFL students who are currently enrolled in a MA TESOL program in the U.S. (Table 3.1). The rationale of choosing MA TESOL ESL students is that they are teachers or perspective teachers, so it is worth knowing their perspectives and understandings about both general writing and creative writing, and what kind of writing experiences they have had while learning writing in English.

Table 3.1  
*Participants' Background Information (N:18)*

Participants	Gender	Country	First Languages	Poetry Writing Experiences	Years of Experiencing Writing Instructions
Amanda	Female	China	Mandarin	None	10 years
Amir	Male	Niger	French & Local Dialect	Personal interests and one in-class activity	8 years
Bob	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One course	15 years
Charles	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One course	17 years
Ember	Female	China	Mandarin & Local Dialect	One course and personal interests	11 years
Enzo	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One course	12 years
Grace	Female	Indonesia	Indonesian & Local Dialect	One course	13 years
Iris	Female	Indonesia	Indonesian & Local Dialect	One in-class activity	9 years
Joseph	Male	Iraq	Arabic & Local Dialect	None	8 years
Joy	Female	Ivory Coast	French & Local Dialect	One course	13 years
Kelly	Female	China	Mandarin	One course	15 years
Liz	Female	China	Mandarin & Local Dialect	Personal interests and one in-class activity	8 years
Mike	Male	Togo	French & Local Dialect	None	12 years
Rania	Female	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	None	2 years
Roger	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One course	12 years
Sarah	Female	Algeria	Arabic & French	One course and personal interests	11 years
Thapelo	Male	South Africa	Xitsonga & Local Dialects	One course and personal interests	8 years
Zak	Male	Japan	Japanese	None	8 years

There were two parts to my recruitment strategy. First, the recruitment was done through emails. The informed consent form was provided as an attachment in the email. Plus, the places and time of the meeting were discussed with the participants through emails, and when meeting with them, they were asked whether they wished to participate in this study or not.

As for the second recruitment of the study, the participants were recruited in one of the MA TESOL classes, which the permission from the class instructor was conducted via email. To enable the students to understand the overview of my study, a 20-minute presentation was presented to the class regarding the research and protocols. After the presentation, the researcher contacted the students via the contact information they provided in that class. Those students were asked if they would like to participate in the research study with the informed consent form (see Appendix A). Also, participants were informed of the nature of the research and were invited to request further information or the final research product.

### **3.2.2 Data Collection**

1) Interview: The aims of interviews are to know each participant's historical background about their English writing experiences and to understand their perspectives about creative writing. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, and it lasted approximately 40 minutes. Materials from the digitally recorded interviews and interview transcription were kept in a password-protected computer file.

For the first question, it was designed as an open-ended question so that it could warm up the conversation in a casual way, in which the participants are free to share their experiences of learning writing in English in general. Moreover, in order to acquire an overview of each participant's historical background of learning English writing and the contexts where they are from, the following question was asked:

- Tell me about how you learnt writing in English.

For the previous question, the participants gave different answers which may not be related to their thoughts about their writing experiences, so the following questions were asked aiming to know participants' feelings and ideas about the writing classes from their past experiences:

- In general, as a student, how do you feel about the writing classes you had experienced in your own country?
- What was positive or negative about the experiences?

In order to know more about their past writing experiences and build up the researcher's understanding about the participants' background in learning writing, two questions were asked. By sharing three of their best and worst writing experiences, rich information and understanding of each participant's perspectives about their writing experiences were provided within these two questions:

- Can you share three of your best and worst writing experiences?
- What did you learn from these experiences?

The following question is a turning point in the interviews, it not only moves the topic from general writing to creative writing but also helps the researcher to notice whether this particular participant has experiences of creative writing and decide what set of questions should be asked further. The question was asked as follows:

- Did you experience creative writing during the years of learning English?

After the previous question, there are two sets of questions were presented depending on their creative writing experiences. These questions were asked to know the interviewee's poetry writing experiences, and their feelings, thoughts, and understanding of this experience.

Individual participant may present different or similar insights of this experience, which can provide the interviewer a rich data to the research question in this study.

For the participants who do not have the poetry writing experiences in the class, then they were asked the following questions:

- If it was in a writing class, did your professor tell you to write your own poem? What did you think of this assignment?
- What kinds of difficulties that you think you may face when writing poetry?

For the participants who had the class, in which they experienced poetry writing, they were asked in the following questions:

- Please try to recall your memory when you heard that you were going to have a poetry writing assignment, what did you think of this assignment?
- What kinds of difficulties did you face when writing your poetry?
- What did you learn from the poetry writing experience?

Focusing on the poetry writing in this study, the following questions were asked to all of the participants no matter they have the poetry writing experiences or not. These questions aim to understand participants' thoughts and perceptions toward poetry writing, and most important of all, they will provide a valuable data by giving their rationale on their ability of writing poetry in a rating scale, which I will present in the next section. Here are the questions:

- What elements do you like about poetry writing?
- What elements do you dislike about poetry writing?
- Do you think that you are capable of writing poetry? Why?

Next, these following questions are designed to know their conceptions about the differences of creative writing and general writing from the past experiences and most important of all, to see their point of views toward creative writing. The questions were asked as follows:

- What are the differences between the writing classes from the past experiences and this poetry writing experience?
- Which one do you like better, creative writing or general writing classes? Why?

Two questions were presented to end the interviews. Participants were asked to think about taking a creative writing as a student and apply for creative writing in their future teaching as a teacher. By knowing their reasons related to these two questions, the researcher can understand their attitudes or perspectives of using creative writing in EFL contexts and conclude the interviews in a nice ending. The last two questions were:

- If there were a selective Creative Writing class, would you like to register for it? Why?
- Will you apply creative writing to your teaching in the future?

2) A rating scale: A semantic differential scale (See Figure 3.1) was used with one of the interview questions, (Do you think that you are capable of writing poetry? Why?), in which the participants who rated themselves (1) on the scale indicates that they are incapable of writing poetry, whereas the participants who rated themselves (7) indicates that they are very capable of writing poetry. Besides, the participants were not asked to rate it in specific numbers; instead, they marked a point between 1 and 7 on the scale. As for the reason why conducting this rating scale in this study is that it can provide a data which will be easier to compare and contrast among participants' perspectives and arguments.

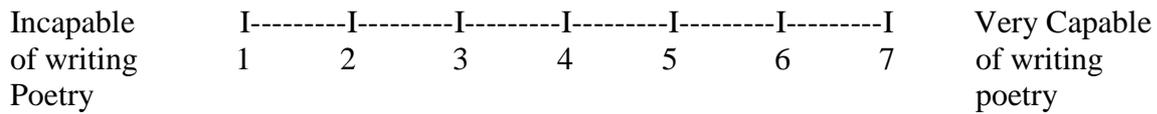


Figure 3.1 *Rating Scale*

In Cohen et al’s book (2011), they pointed out the issue that people tend to avoid being in the two extreme poles of a rating scale. In other words, a choice of three points was presented in a five-point scale. In order to create a rating scale that can minimize the problem, a seven-point scale was used in this study.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Even though two types of data were collected in this study: interview and rating scale, the main data are from the interviews, so here in this data analysis section, the process of analyzing interviews is focused. Both content analysis and cluster analysis were used in the process of data analysis. First, the content analysis, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), they stated that the qualitative content analysis is the most common method to analyze the written data. They further defined the content analysis as “ a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text coding through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1238). Moreover, content analysis was used to explore the “human behavior” (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 29).

In order to know my participants’ perspectives and understanding of general writing and creative writing and find the themes to analyze the interviews with them, content analysis was used in this study. Second, the cluster analysis was used to divide the participants into different groups, in which the cluster analysis “group(s) data objects based only on the information found in the data that describes the objects and their relationships” (Tan,

Steinbach & Kumar, 2005, p. 490). Further Tan et al (2005) stated the goal is to find that “the objects within a group be similar (or related) to one another and different from (or unrelated to) the objects in other group” (p. 490). There are 4 stages of data analysis:

### **3.3.1 Stage 1: Data Preparation**

In this stage, 18 interviews were transcribed into written texts through a transcribing software with student names replaced by a pseudonym. The process of transcribing the verbal interview data into the written documents takes a long time and needs a highly concentration on carefully translating the participants’ speeches with minimal inaccuracy. Also, in all research analysis, student names will not be included nor will excerpts be accompanied by any identifying personal information.

### **3.3.2 Stage 2: Developing Coding Categories**

Three types of coding systems were created: general writing, creative writing, and narrative of writing experiences types. The data was coded by themes, and it could be revealed in a word, a sentence or even a paragraph. While transcribing in the stage 1, the researcher gained some ideas of overall themes within the data. Nevertheless, all the written documents were read carefully and some notes were taken about the initial ideas of the coding categories. Then the researcher moved on to create numbers of categories for her coding systems.

### **3.3.3 Stage 3: Coding All the Data**

After developing the coding systems, the researcher worked to code the first written data and test the coding categories to see if they were all properly coded or categorized. It might take several times to revise the coding categories till it finalizes. Next, 18 written documents were coded into their category. This process of coding needs the researcher’s carefulness on

the consistency of the coding systems, so the researcher needs to check the coding repeatedly to prevent from making mistakes. Furthermore, using the cluster analysis, the participants were divided into different groups by the types of writing experiences they described in the interviews. They were positioned into one group that shared the similar writing experiences they presented in the interviews.

#### **3.3.4 Stage 4: Draw Conclusion from the Coded Data**

The aim of the stage was to find the themes and patterns among all the written documents from 18 participants about their emotions, perspectives or understandings toward creative writing. The researcher went through all the coded data and created tables of the patterns found in the data. After these steps, the researcher will present the results from these coded data based on the participants' perceptions about general writing and creative writing as ESL students and teachers.

### **3.4 Final Remarks**

In this chapter, I have discussed the research design, which was conducted in an interview based qualitative approach. I specify the decisions regarding to the choices of interviews, participants, and rating scale of this study. Also, the rationales of the interview questions were presented and discussed. Additionally, two kinds of data analyses were shown. This chapter ended in the description about the procedures of the data analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

There are three sets of coding systems used in this study: general writing, creative writing, and narratives of writing experiences types. All the information collected from the participants is divided into these three coding systems. In this chapter, there are four sections. First, the coding system of general writing will be presented, followed by its four categories and subcategories with the definitions and the examples. After that, a category summary table of general writing will be offered with the descriptions of the general writing from the participants' perceptions. Second, the coding system of creative writing will be introduced. Each category and its subcategories will be provided with the definitions and the excerpts. Also, a category summary table will be presented with the descriptions of the creative writing from the participants' perspectives. Third, a table with the comparison between general writing and creative writing will be provided following by its descriptions of the summary table. Next, the coding system of narrative style will be introduced with its eleven categories, followed by the definitions and the examples. After that, the narrative categories and the rating scale will be provided in a summary table and a dendrogram with its descriptions. Last, the correlation between the rating scale and the narrative categories will be presented and discussed.

#### **4.1 The Coding System: General Writing**

There are four main categories in the coding system, and each category has certain numbers of subcategories:

1. Difficulty
  - 1.1 Topics

- 1.2 Self-expectation and feedback,
- 1.3 Organization of the composition,
- 1.4 Teacher's instructions,
- 1.5 L1/L2 differences
- 1.6 Knowledge of academic writing.
- 2. Value
  - 2.1 Composition skills
  - 2.2 Language
  - 2.3 Self-awareness
  - 2.4 Acquiring knowledge
  - 2.5 Awareness of readers.
- 3. Emotion
  - 3.1 Interesting
  - 3.2 Challenging
  - 3.3 Controlled and burdensome
  - 3.4 Helpful,
  - 3.5 Frustrated and sad
  - 3.6 Boring and uninteresting
  - 3.7 Anxious and nervous.
- 4. Attitude
  - 4.1 Resistance
  - 4.2 Acceptance.

All of the categories and subcategories will be provided the definitions with examples from the written transcribed interview data. Additionally, the names shown in the examples are presented with pseudonyms.

#### **4.1.1 Difficulty**

The first category of the coding system is difficulty. There are six subcategories, which dealt with the issues that the participants have encountered during the processes of learning/teaching general writing, including the problems, troubles, and struggles shown by the participants.

**Topics.** The difficulty of topics is defined as the topics for the writing pieces, in which the participants found the difficulty of coming up with the ideas to write within the topic. Besides, those excerpts addressing the uninteresting topics and no freedom in choosing the topics are categorized within this category. The following examples are presented to explain more clearly about the difficulty of topic:

To write a topic that you are not comfortable in writing, it can be challenging.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

It's not that writing itself that is hard, it's like the topic and you don't know that much you don't know what you're what topic you're gonna talk about.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Self-expectation/Feedback.** The second subcategory addressed participants' difficulties of achieving the high expectation they hold for themselves while completing the writing tasks, such as the time limitation or the quality of the writing pieces. Also, it included the expectation that they wanted to have good comments or feedbacks from the teachers/professors. The following excerpts are the examples presenting this category:

It's hard to write something when you have a certain expectation, like when I have to write my journal, and then I expect that people read my journal and say good thing about that, it's hard to to have the like high expectation in writing.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

If you do not know the teacher and what he or she expect from you, that's gonna be like more challenging.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

**Organization of the composition.** The third subcategory is the organization of the composition, which was related to the composition skills that the participants felt challenging when composing the writing pieces, for example, how to paraphrase, how to be concise, how to avoid repeating ideas, how to integrate sources with their own arguments, or how to connect ideas. Here are the examples addressing these issues:

I have a problem with transferring my style to a more advanced level.....so I found papers full of red lines red circles.

(Bob, 11-18-2011, Interview)

The difficult I had with writing is ..... how can I uhmm put the idea that I had in my mind into onto sentences in in, I know the grammar rules, I know some vocabularies, but how do I organize this thing.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Teacher's instructions.** The difficulty of teacher's instruction indicted that the unclear instructions or less-organized lesson plans from the teachers made the writing tasks more difficult and challenging. Some of the participants presented these ideas in their interviews as shown below:

We (classmates) don't know what what kind of thing (content), the I mean he (teacher) said write one page about yourself, and you are writing this page for a professor or a linguist, he (teacher) is teaching us syntax, so what what did you (teacher) want me to write about.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

In my contexts, you know, you are no given the opportunity to go through step by step.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**L1/L2 differences.** The fifth category dealt with the differences between the participants' first languages and English. Because of the differences in terms of linguistics or styles, it increased the difficulty of writing in English for these participants. Two excerpts are presented in the following:

There is a problem from transferring from the first language to the second language.

(Enzo, 11-16-2011, Interview)

I didn't uhh you know get the hold of the western argument, you know, the western academic arguments, like here in the United States.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

**Knowledge of academic writing.** The last subcategory of difficulty is the knowledge of academic writing. In this category, two participants mentioned in their interviews that the lack of knowledge about the academic rules could make the writing experiences challenging. Here are the two examples:

Before I came here (U.S.A.), I never heard about it (APA).

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

In my country, plagiarism because oh it almost ignored at all, so I'm sure that most of the students who has a final paper they like to copy and paste.

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

#### 4.1.2 Value

The second category of the coding system is value, which is defined as the statement of showing the benefits and usefulness of learning/teaching general writing from the participants' personal experiences. Within its five subcategories, it includes the aspects from linguistic to personal developments.

**Composition skills.** The first subcategory of value is composition skills, in which the participants revealed that they have had gained certain writing repertoire by practicing writing, such as summarizing, organizing, integrating sources with personal arguments, thinking critically, and the like. Excerpts are presented in the following:

It (test-based writing) really teach me to think about things logically.

(Amanda, 11-14-2011, Interview)

That (general writing) helps us to achieve uh the higher standard of writing.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

**Language.** The second subcategory of value is language. The language here ranges from the grammar, types of writing style, vocabulary and so on. In this category, participants were addressing the benefits of learning/teaching general writing in terms of language acquiring. Here are some examples from the interviews with the participants:

I was exposed to many types of writing.

(Amir, 11-15-2011, Interview)

I got the vocabulary, I got the structure.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

**Self-awareness.** The value of self-awareness is the third subcategory, which was addressing participants' self-developments, which includes the ideas of being more confident, being more autonomous, being encouraged, or knowing themselves more. Examples of this subcategory are shown in the following:

They (good writing experiences) always help me to read more, to look for ideas, to discuss with people and when I discuss, it gives me some kind of self-confidence.

(Mike, 11-17-2011, Interview)

When I start writing about my own thought, I came up something which I did not notice, so it's like learning from my output.

(Zak, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Acquiring knowledge.** The fourth subcategory of value is acquiring knowledge. The knowledge is indicating the general knowledge, which the participants required from the process of working on different topics with information embedded. Two excerpts are presented as followed:

I feel like I've learned something not how to write but at least some knowledge about the topic

(Zak, 11-17-2011, Interview)

Those kind of topic (chosen by others) is just it's kind of training my idea, it's it's not about just practice my English skill, because first I I think like in writing something, there are two things uhmm uhmm beyond that, first is develop ideas that's about the knowledge you have, it doesn't have any relationship with the language the the linguistic skills.

(Ember, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**Awareness of readers.** The last subcategory is the awareness of readers, which one participant was addressing the value of making the writing pieces clear and organized for the readers. Here is the example from this participant:

That kind of experiences (writing thesis), you know, gives me a general understanding how to make my writing more understandable to the reader.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

### 4.1.3 Emotion

The third category of this coding system is emotion, which presents participants' negative or positive feelings toward general writing. During the process of working on the writing tasks, the reactions and emotions they had experienced. Seven different kinds of feelings were categorized into these subcategories.

**Interesting.** The first subcategory of emotion is interesting, in which participants addressed their interests for certain topics from the writing tasks or the elements they found interesting during the writing experiences. Examples of this subcategory are provided in the following:

You understand that the purpose behind is a good purpose and that's what makes the topic interesting.

(Mike, 11-17-2011, Interview)

I feel uhmm uhmm I can say or I can I can do better more than any other topic, and even if they (readers) don't know (my writing), I can give them (information), it's really interesting for me and for the uhmm people, and I'm very happy to tell them what it is.

(Rania, 12-01-2011, Interview)

**Challenging.** The second subcategory of emotion is challenging, in which the participants revealed the writing tasks as a difficult challenge, in terms of topics, the techniques, the differences between the L1 and L2, limited time, self-expectation, and the like. Here are the excerpts that present the idea of this subcategory:

You don't have time, you know, you gonna write and have focus on the writing uhh 3 hours is not enough, you know, so that add, you know, to the dilemma.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

It was about autobiographies, we had to read three books and wrote about that, and it was we found it too much, and write about them and the final result, at the beginning, I found it too difficult.

(Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview)

**Controlled/Burdensome.** The third subcategory is controlled and burdensome. Half of the participants were addressing the issue of having no freedom to choose the topics and being forced to write the way that teachers expect them to write, instead of putting their own ideas and voices. Two examples are given as following:

I felt like being controlled and some kind of imposition.

(Amir, 11-17-2011, Interview)

We (students) are going to write that in their (teachers) position of we were pressed to do something, so we are going to do that, I mean I did that automatically.

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

**Helpful.** The fourth subcategory of value is helpful, in which the participants were revealing their feelings of seeing the writing tasks as a helpful process to develop their skills and motivations. Here are the examples presented in the following:

Even if the assignment is very very hard, very very difficulty, I always learn something.

(Mike, 11-17-2011, Interview)

It (feedback) just gives you all these bad feelings, but at the same time it used to really motivate me to do better and like especially that I think I can do better.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Frustrated/Sad.** The fifth subcategory is frustrated and sad, which is shown from the participants that they felt frustrated or sad because of the results in the tests, the feedback from the teachers, being unable to express their ideas, not knowing how to start, and what to write. The following excerpts are the examples of frustrated and sad:

You are ready, but when you go to the room, like you have like different sets of question that are like out of what you have learned already, so it's like like, did you see the irony.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

Sometimes when the teacher gives you back the paper, you just feel disappointed.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Boring/Uninteresting.** The sixth subcategory of emotion is boring and uninteresting. Some participants were addressing their feelings toward the topics or the writing classes in their home country, in which they found no interests. Two excerpts are provided as followed:

Sometimes I do think maybe it's (certain topics) boring, because it's maybe it it doesn't like related to our own experiences that much.

(Ember, 11-11-2011. Interview)

Whether is interesting or not, uhmm we never we never you know write about something interesting.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Anxious/Nervous.** The last subcategory of value is anxious and nervous. In this subcategory, participants presented their anxiety and nervousness while in tests and in the writing process, in which they were suffering from producing a good writing piece. Here are the examples of addressing this concept:

I'm always nervous when people have to read my writing and I don't think I I know how to write well.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

It's kind of during you you you wonder what you can write about, and it's a makes you anxious.

(Joy, 11-15, 2011, Interview)

#### **4.1.4 Attitude**

The last category of the coding system is attitude, which the participants showed their perspectives and stances toward learning and teaching general writing. There are two subcategories stating both participants' negative and positive perceptions about their general writing experiences.

**Resistance.** The first subcategory of attitude is resistance, which is a statement addressing the issues or problems in the writing classes from the participants' own point of

views, such as those classes failed to meet their needs or to help them express their voice.

The examples carry the idea of resistance are presented as the following:

I've been writing writing writing, but there was no possibility for me to to come up with a highly acceptable and academic writing which I was expecting to have.

(Amir, 11-17-2011, Interview)

I think I've had enough with the regular you know academic writing.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

**Acceptance.** The second subcategory is acceptance, which presents participants' positive viewpoints toward learning or teaching general writing. The participants were addressing the needs for their jobs and majors to have the general writing skills, and also, some of them mentioned that it is practical to learn such knowledge in the academic world.

Following are the excerpts:

Like in schools and scholarly work, so ahh like also like my my major needs like general writing.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

I will take research, because that's what I'm doing, and that's what I'm gonna do in my PhD, and that's what I wanna do after in my articles and everything, so I kind of really really wanna learn more about that field.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

#### **4.2 Category Summary Table: General Writing**

Using the above coding system, a summary table is presented. Table 4.1 shows four main categories concerning about general writing and the subcategories with the frequency counts and percentages.

Table 4.1

*Frequency of Participants' Responses about General Writing in the Aspects of Difficulty, Value, Emotion, and Attitude (N=18)*

Category	Subcategory	Number	Percentage
Difficulty	Topic	12	67%
	Self-Expectation/ Feedback	10	56%
	Organization of the Composition	8	44%
	Teacher's Instructions	4	22%
	L1/L2 Differences	4	22%
	Knowledge of Academic Rules	2	11%
Value	Composition Skills	14	78%
	Language	8	44%
	Self-Awareness	7	39%
	Acquiring Knowledge	4	22%
	Awareness of Readers	1	6%
Emotion	Interesting	10	56%
	Challenging	10	56%
	Controlled/Burdensome	9	50%
	Helpful	8	44%
	Frustrated/Sad	7	39%
	Boring/Uninteresting	5	28%
	Anxious/Nervous	5	28%
Attitude	Resistance	16	89%
	Acceptance	15	83%

As we can see from Table 4.1, the difficulty of general writing is presented in various aspects. Twelve participants (67%) encountered difficulty in working on certain topics, which they are not familiar with. Besides, ten participants (56%) felt difficulty in writing when they have high expectation about themselves in order to get good feedbacks. Additionally, eight participants (44%) mentioned the difficulties of organizing their writing pieces in terms of the techniques or strategies. On the other hand, teacher's instructions is regarded as an issue, four participants (22%) stated that while experiencing the writing lessons, the unclear instructions might create the difficulty in writing. Also, the differences between their first language and

second language are one of the difficulties in writing that four participants (22%) pointed out. The lowest percentage is the knowledge of academic rules, which two participants (11%) showed that the lack of knowledge on academic rules increased the difficulty for them to produce the writing pieces, especially for academic purposes. In general, the difficulty of general writing for the participants mainly focuses on the topic issue, self-expectation, and the organization of the composition, and there are some elements are mentioned as well. Therefore, it implies that the difficulty of experiencing general writing is not just about the writing tasks itself, but with more complicated factors, such as personal expectation, language issue, instructions from the teachers, and so on.

Table 4.1 also offers the aspects of values in general writing from the participants' viewpoints. Five concepts are presented. First, fourteen participants (78%) stated that the value of learning/teaching general writing is the improvement of composition skills. In addition, eight participants (44%) mentioned the language development, which they were beneficial from their past general writing experiences. Furthermore, self-awareness was regarded as one of the values for experiencing general writing. Seven participants (39%) pointed out that they had become more autonomous and confident in learning writing. Also, acquiring knowledge from the writing tasks was another benefit that four participants (22%) carried out, which they gained some information about the topics they were working on. Last, the lowest frequency is the awareness of readers, which one participant (6%) revealed the possible value of learning general writing to notice the roles of the readers or the audiences. Overall, from the participants' perspectives, the most frequent value of learning/teaching general writing is the enhancement of the composition skills.

Emotion is the other category we can see from Table 4.1. Both of the subcategories, interesting and challenging, are the most frequent shown in this category. Ten participants (56%) stated that the feelings in their past writing experiences were challenging and interesting. Moreover, nine participants (50%) pointed out their feelings of being controlled and burdensome. On the other hand, eight participants (44%) saw their general writing experiences as helpful events. Furthermore, seven participants (39%) felt frustrated/sad while they experienced the general writing. Also, five participants (28%) found their general writing experiences boring or uninteresting. As for the last subcategory, five participants mentioned their feelings of being anxious and nervous while experiencing general writing. To sum up, some participants had pointed out the positive emotions toward general writing, but most of the subcategories of emotion are the negative feelings, such as challenging, frustrated, anxious, controlled and the like, which implies the experiences of general writing for the participants are mainly negative-feeling driven.

As for the attitude in this coding system, sixteen participants (89%) revealed their negative viewpoints toward learning general writing, in relation of the difficulties of learning general writing and the negative emotions they had. On the other hand, fifteen participants (83%) showed the importance of learning/teaching general writing, in terms of the need for their jobs or the practical skills they required by academia. From this distribution, it shows that most of the participants agree with the importance of learning general writing, but at the same time, most of them had comparatively negative experiences in learning general writing.

### **4.3 The Coding System: Creative Writing**

There are four main categories in the coding system, and each category has certain numbers of subcategories:

1. Difficulty
  - 1.1 Features of poems
  - 1.2 Vocabulary
  - 1.3 Organization of the writing pieces
  - 1.4 Topic
  - 1.5 Knowledge of poetry
2. Value
  - 2.1 Self-expression
  - 2.2 Self-discovery
  - 2.3 Releasing certain feelings
  - 2.4 Language skills
  - 2.5 Ownership of writing
  - 2.6 Recall experiences and re-experience
3. Emotion
  - 3.1 Enjoyable and free
  - 3.2 Sense of achievement and confidence
  - 3.3 Self-doubting
  - 3.4 Frustration and sad
  - 3.5 Scared and shocked
  - 3.6 Helpful
  - 3.7 Nervous and anxious
4. Attitude
  - 4.1 Acceptance

## 4.2 Uncertainty

## 4.3 Resistance

All of the categories and subcategories will be provided the definitions with examples from the written transcribed interview data. Additionally, the names shown in the examples are presented with pseudonyms.

### 4.3.1 Difficulty

The first category of this coding system is difficulty. There are five subcategories, which dealt with the issues that the participants have encountered during the processes of learning creative writing, including the problems, troubles, and struggles shown by the participants. For some participants who do not have the creative writing experiences, still, they shared their perceptions of what the difficulties of creative writing they may have.

**Features of poems.** The first difficulty of creative writing is the features of poems, which is described as a statement that participants found difficulties in following certain rules for writing poems, such as the metaphors, figurative languages, rhymes, and the like.

Examples stating this issue were presented:

That was one of the difficulties that I faced kind of make it rhyme.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

That was the challenge for me to come up with those figurative using idiom you know metaphor.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**Vocabulary.** The second subcategory in the category of difficulty is vocabulary, in which the participants were addressing the difficulty of expressing their feelings with the right vocabularies. So, the vocabulary here presents the difficulties of word choices and

having the word bank to express the feelings in the poems. Here are the excerpts dealing with this issue:

Like my word is not, it cannot express the feeling I really want to express.

(Ember, 11-11-2011, Interview)

Touch, sometimes you you're your emotion is you you don't have the real words to express that the feeling you you wanna uhhh express.

(Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview)

**Organization of the writing pieces.** The difficulty of organization of the writing pieces is addressing the problems that the participants encountered while experiencing creative writing or what the difficulties they expect, for instance, how to condense, how to make it straight to the point, how to put feelings in the poems, how to express feelings, or how to make it comprehensible to readers. Two examples are presented as following:

The way of structuring the the the poetry itself like in English, so uhh I don't know like do you have to write too much, so I have to write short, I don't know like I don't know there is like you know in like 3 or 4 words you can form a poem.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

Another challenge was how how I'm going to make this poem short straight to the point.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**Topic.** The difficulty of topic is the fourth subcategory, which the participants were addressing the difficulties of coming up the themes for the poetry topics, creating the title of the poem, or picking the events to write about. Here are the examples as followed:

It's very difficult for me to develop the idea...because of the topic is I mean uhmm I just hardly think about the question (poetry theme assigned by the instructor).

(Ember, 11-11-2011, Interview)

I feel like it was kind of so many memory (that I can choose for my poems), so (I) tryna kind of create like remember, because so many memories, so it's kind of really hard.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Knowledge of poetry.** The last difficulty in experiencing creative writing is the knowledge of poetry, in which the participants showed their lack of knowledge about poetry can be the reason increase the difficulty of experiencing poetry writing. Two excerpts are presented as following:

Before coming to that course (poetry writing), uhh we didn't have the proper you know uhh education and and that was uhh major fact in our you know difficulty having to write poetry.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

In my learning, it (writing poetry) was not easy for me, because I didn't experience a teaching based on poetry.

(Mike, 11-17-2011, Interview)

#### **4.3.2 Value**

The second category of this coding system is value, which is defined as the statement of showing the benefits and effectiveness of learning creative writing from the participants' perceptions. There are six subcategories concerning the value of creative writing in different aspects.

**Self-expression.** The first value of learning creative writing is self-expression, which is defined as a status that participants were able to express themselves freely without any worry. Three examples addressing this value of self-expression are provided as the following:

I think poetry is (a) good thing that uh, because (it gives a) chance to express yourself.

(Enzo, 11-16-2011, Interview)

I'm able to express freely, yeah to express myself that's uhh because you express uhh how you feel in a few lines and people can pick that up.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

I start writing (poetry) and sometimes like I don't wanna stop, I really don't wanna stop.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

**Self-discovery.** The second subcategory of value is self-discovery, in which the participants addressed the benefits of learning creative writing, being confident, knowing themselves more, uncovering their hidden ability, enriching the learners' intellectual abilities. Here are the excerpts that describe the idea of self-discovery:

Poetry writing experience help(s) me to uncover something which was uh hidden inside me.

(Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview)

I discover that I just when you experience it (poetry writing), uhh you you you might go further than you expect.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

There is much that I don't know about myself, but after writing poems, I discover so much about myself.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**Releasing certain feelings.** The third value of creative writing is releasing certain feelings, which is described as a statement of liberating any emotion that the participants had while writing poems. Some of the participants did not have the experiences of writing poetries, but still, they showed their belief in the value of releasing feelings when experiencing poetry writing. Examples addressing this concept are offered as followed:

When you write a poem, it frees you from some kind of inner pain you are having.

(Amir, 11-17-2011, Interview)

Sometimes when I was sad, something bad happened, sometimes like all these like whenever I have an emotion, I try to share it through poems.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Language skills.** The fourth subcategory is the language skills, which is stating the statement that the improvements of writing skills or the enhancement of the vocabularies from the participants' point of views. Some excerpts stating the value of language skills in learning creative writing are provided in the following:

It (poetry writing) can be a strong uh tool, really for students to learn to improve their literacy.

(Amir, 11-17-2011, Interview)

(Writing poetry can) push you to look for the the new words the fancy words that you can use.

(Ember, 11-11-2011, Interview)

I used to use it (writing rhyming poems) as a strategy to learn more vocabulary.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Ownership of writing.** The fifth value in this category is the ownership of writing, which is defined as a statement that participants saw themselves as an owner of their writing pieces, and as a writer that others could not judge or criticize their works. Excepts stating this benefit are shown as followed:

When I write for myself, I I don't care about grammars telling me you know, or structure you know, I just you know type and leave it there post it, so no one can you know criticize the way I write.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

In writing poetry, I mean you are the center...you are the author, you own the you feel like you have ownership in that one, I don't care people say right or not, but this is how I feel it is, this is how I write my poems ...they (readers) cannot have any objections.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

I can be a writer I mean I can be a yeah an author of of a poetry.

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

**Recall experiences/Re-experience.** The last subcategory of value is recall experience and re-experience, which describes the situation that the participants were able to recall their past experiences while writing poetry, re-experience their own experiences while reading their own works, or remind others of their similar experiences while peer reading. Here are the examples:

When you really write something in English, and then you when you share (with) someone, they said okay we experience the same thing before.

(Kelly, 11-15-2011, Interview)

I actually recall from very very long time you know like that things like I really actually never thought about.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

(When writing my poems), some I feel happy some I feel sad, because it depends on the type of poems, for example, one of the poems that I'm revealing emotional, you know, sad experience, it was when I recall how I first when into in an English class.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

### 4.3.3 Emotion

The third category of this coding system is emotion. There are seven subcategories dealing with the participants' feelings during the process of experiencing creative writing or their perceptions about what kinds of emotions they may have if they have the chance to learn creative writing.

**Enjoyable/Free.** The first emotion in this category is enjoyable and free, which is defined as a statement that the participants felt free and enjoyable when experiencing creative writing, or they found the experiences of creative writing interesting. Two excerpts are chosen from this subcategory to be presented as the following:

They (poetry writing) permitted me to to open to a to say it, and to it's kind of liberation, I free myself when I wrote.

(Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview)

I used to turn off all the lights and lightening all of the candles that I have, turn some music that I like and you know with my tea or something else, then I start writing (my poems).

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

**Sense of achievement/Confidence.** The second subcategory is the sense of achievement and the confidence, which is addressing the participants' feelings of being proud of themselves for accomplishing the creative writing tasks. Here are the examples that reflect the idea of being confident after the creative writing experiences:

You can say it's revolutionist, because I didn't imagine that I can I can I can do this (poetry writing).

(Enzo, 11-16-2011, Interview)

When I experience it (poetry writing), like my perception like was wrong, like I can do it, I can write (poetry) and I can not compete with them (poets), but I can have, I still can uhh do something, that (is why) I like about writing (poetry).

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

After times, I went back to them (my poems) when I got, and I like started reading them and I'm like did I really write all that you know you just like you are so surprised, look it's not as bad as I thought.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

**Self-doubting.** The third subcategory of value is the self-doubting. It is defined as a statement that the participants questioned their ability of writing poems, which they thought only intelligent poets who can write it. Here are the examples for describing the situation of self-doubting:

It's (writing poetry) impossible, because I'm not even a poet in my first language.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

I was asking myself that I don't think I will have the ability to do that, and not being able to do that.... It means I'm not going to do well in the class.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**Frustrated/Sad.** The fourth emotion is frustrated and sad, in which the participants showed their frustration and sadness during the process of experiencing creative writing. The excerpts addressing these feelings are presented in the following:

When you get to that point (fail to find the words to express), sometimes it's frustration.

(Joy, 11-18-2011, Interview)

I found I use I use that (the same vocabulary) in my poem, even sometimes or 6 times, I'm terrible at and really terrible poetry writer, I I feel kind of disappointed.

(Kelly, 11-15-2011, Interview)

**Scared/Shocked.** The fifth emotion is scared and shocked, which presents the moment that the participants were asked to write poems, they felt surprised by the creative writing tasks. Here are the excerpts where two participants revealed their feelings as shocked or scared:

I was you know really scared that I don't know what I'm going to do.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

I think god he (the instructor) must be kidding me, that's really that's really really suffer until now I don't really think it's easy task for me.

(Kelly, 11-15-2011, Interview)

**Helpful.** The sixth subcategory of emotion is helpful, which is stating the participants' perceptions of seeing their creative writing experiences as valuable and beneficial. Two participants mentioned about the feeling of helpful, and here are the two examples:

I really think the creative writing helps a lot, cuz it really helps me as a person.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

I think what I like about poetry writing uhmmm it is more of kind of for me, it was some kind of a therapy or kind of a medication.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

**Nervous/Anxious.** The last subcategory for emotion is nervous and anxious. In this subcategory, two participants were addressing their feelings of being nervous or anxious when they experienced creative writing. Two examples are provided as followed:

It (the topic of the poetry) was like really really new and like kind of got me really anxious.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

I was overwhelmed and nervous...when we are told that this (writing poetry) is what we should do.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

#### **4.3.4 Attitude**

The last category of this coding system is attitude, in which the participants showed their perceptions toward learning and teaching creative writing. There are three subcategories stating participants' stances about creative writing, in terms of the usefulness, importance, and applicability in their future teaching.

**Acceptance.** The first attitude shown from the participants is acceptance, which is addressing the participants' agreement on the significance of learning creative writing or their tendency of applying creative writing to their future teaching. Excerpts stating the idea of acceptance are shown as followed:

I think I would 100 percent uhh embrace uhh creative writing to bring it to my classroom, I think it's it's a very good way.

(Amir, 11-17-2011, Interview)

It (poetry writing) was a good experience, believe me, if I if I have the time to do it again I will do it.

(Enzo, 11-16-2011, Interview)

I'm gonna teach part of the class, like creative writing, I wanna like encourage my students to uhhh you know, be like proud of themselves.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

**Uncertainty.** The second attitude is uncertainty, which is defined as a statement that the participants showed their uncertainty about the usage, the importance, and the applicability of creative writing. Here are the examples addressing the concept of uncertainty as shown in the following:

I think if it's (creative writing) interesting, or someone really advise(s) me to choose this kind of class, maybe strongly recommended, I may consider (to register for it).

(Amanda, 11-14-2011, Interview)

Until I know the teaching language through creative writing is logic, is is sounding logical to me, or it's kind of uhh I believe in it, or see how it work, at that time, yes (I will apply it).

(Bob, 11-18-2011, Interview)

**Resistance.** The third attitude in this category is resistance, in which the participants disagree with teaching or learning creative writing as an important, useful, and implementable approach. Following are the examples showing the attitude of resistance:

You have so little little to say about poetry writing, it's it's not as important to uh to create a new course for.

(Amanda, 11-14-2011, Interview)

It (poetry writing) has nothing to do with learning.

(Bob, 11-18-2011, Interview)

#### 4.4 Category Summary Table: Creative Writing

Using the above coding system, a summary table is presented. Table 4.2 shows four main categories concerning about creative writing and the subcategories with the frequency counts and percentages.

Table 4.2  
*Frequency of Participants' Responses about Creative Writing in the Aspects of Difficulty, Value, Emotion, and Attitude (N=18)*

Category	Subcategory	Number	Percentage
Difficulty	Features of Poems	13	72%
	Vocabulary	12	67%
	Organization of the writing pieces	10	56%
	Topic	9	50%
	Knowledge of Poetry	4	22%
Value	Self-Expression	13	72%
	Self-Discovery	12	67%
	Releasing certain feelings	8	44%
	Language Skills	7	39%
	Ownership of Writing	6	33%
	Recall experiences/ Re-experience	5	28%
Emotion	Enjoyable/Free	14	78%
	Sense of Achievement/ Confidence	11	61%

	Self-Doubting	10	56%
	Frustrated/Sad	5	28%
	Scared/Shocked	4	22%
	Helpful	2	11%
	Nervous/Anxious	2	11%
Attitude	Acceptance	18	100%
	Uncertainty	6	33%
	Resistance	4	22%

As shown from Table 4.2, the difficulty of creative writing is presented in various features. Thirteen participants (72%) encountered difficulties in meeting the features of poems, such as using rhymes or figurative languages. Moreover, twelfth participants (67%) felt challenging in choosing vocabularies to express because of the lack of vocabulary. Additionally, ten participants (56%) mentioned the difficulties of organizing their writing pieces in terms of the techniques or strategies. On the other hand, topic is regarded as an issue, by nine participants (50%), who stated that they faced certain struggles on coming up the themes for the topic. Also, the lack of knowledge about poetry is one of the difficulties in experiencing creative writing that four participants (22%) pointed out. In general, there are four main difficulties of creative writing mentioned from the participants: features of poems, vocabulary, organization of the writing pieces, and the topic. It implies that the difficulties of creative writing are more focused on the writing tasks itself, instead of personal or emotional factors.

Table 4.2 also gives the features of values in general writing from the participants' stances. Five conceptions are presented. First, thirteen participants (72%) stated that the value of learning/teaching creative writing is the improvement of self-expression. In addition, twelfth participants (67%) mentioned self-discovery, in which they benefited from their creative writing experiences or they expected to gain. Furthermore, releasing certain feelings

is regarded as one of the values for experiencing creative writing. Eight participants (44%) addressed that they had liberated themselves from some emotions or pressures during the process of creative writing. Also, the improvement of language skills is another benefit that seven participants (39%) pointed out. They gained some knowledge in relation of linguistic or composition skills. Besides, six participants (33%) stated the ownership of writing as a benefit of learning creative writing, which they see themselves as writers or authors. Last, the value of recalling experiences and re-experiencing was addressed by five participant (28%), who revealed the possible value of learning creative writing to notice the relation among writers-texts, writers-readers, readers-texts. Overall, from the participants' perspectives, the two most frequent values of learning/teaching creative writing are the advantages of self-expression and self-discovery, in which they can express themselves freely and understand themselves better.

Emotion is the third category shown from Table 4.2. Enjoyable/Free is the most frequent one in this category. Fourteen participants (78%) addressed that they felt enjoyable and free while experiencing creative writing. Likewise, sense of achievement was pointed by eleven participants (61%), in which they were confident and proud of themselves. Moreover, ten participants (56%) questioned their ability of accomplishing the creative writing tasks. In addition, seven participants (39%) felt frustrated/sad while they experienced the general writing. Also, five participants (28%) found their creative writing experiences frustrated and sad. Plus, four participants (22%) felt scared or shocked when they were asked to write poetry. Additionally, two participants (11%) regarded the creative writing as a helpful experience. As for the last subcategory, two participants (11%) experienced the creative writing with nervousness and anxiety. To sum up, both negative and positive feelings are

addressed among all the participants, but from the excerpts, it shows that the negative feelings existed mostly in the beginning of the writing tasks while positive emotions are presented both during and after the experiences. It entails the process of learning creative writing starting from negative toward positive feelings.

As for the attitude in this coding system, eighteen participants (100%) revealed their optimistic viewpoints toward learning and teaching creative writing, concerning the importance and applicability of creative writing. On the other hand, six participants (33%) showed the indeterminate stance toward learning and teaching creative writing, in relation of the needs of knowing more information about creative writing. Furthermore, four participants (22%) confessed their disagreement or negative attitude toward creative writing. In general, all of the participants agree with the importance of learning or teaching creative writing. For the uncertain group, they showed the tendency of learning or teaching creative writing if they acknowledge more about creative writing or need to make some modifications to adjust certain teaching settings. As for the resisting group, it is either from their initial perceptions, which they changed afterward, or from their personal preferences, which they do not against the idea of applying creative writing.

#### **4.5 Comparison between General Writing and Creative Writing**

Table 4.3 combines the previous two tables, aiming to present the differences between general writing and creative writing from the participants' perceptions.

Table 4.3  
*Comparison between General Writing and Creative Writing Concerning with Difficulty, Value, Emotion, and Attitude from Participants' Responses (N=18)*

Category	General Writing	(Number) Percentage	Creative Writing	(Number) Percentage
Difficulty	Topic	(12) 67%	Features of Poems	(13) 72%
	Self-Expectation/ Feedback	(10) 56%	Vocabulary	(12) 67%
	Organization of the Composition	(8) 44%	Organization of the Writing Pieces	(10) 56%
	Teacher's Instructions	(4) 22%	Topic	(9) 50%
	L1/L2 Differences	(4) 22%	Knowledge of Poetry	(4) 22%
	Knowledge of Academic Rules	(2) 11%		
Value	Composition Skills	(14) 78%	Self-Expression	(13) 72%
	Language	(8) 44%	Self-Discovery	(12) 67%
	Self-Awareness	(7) 39%	Releasing Certain Feelings	(8) 44%
	Acquiring Knowledge	(4) 22%	Language Skills	(7) 39%
			Ownership of Writing	(6) 33%
	Awareness of Readers	(1) 6%	Recall experiences/ Re-experience	(5) 28%
Emotion	Interesting	(12) 67%	Enjoyable/Free	(14) 78%
	Helpful	(10) 56%	Sense of Achievement/ Confidence	(11) 61%
	Challenging	(9) 50%	Self-Doubting	(10) 56%
	Controlled/ Burdensome	(9) 50%	Frustrated/Sad	(5) 28%
	Frustrated/Sad	(6) 33%	Scared/Shocked	(4) 22%
	Boring/ Uninteresting	(5) 28%	Helpful	(2) 11%
	Anxious/Nervous	(3) 17%	Nervous/Anxious	(2) 11%
Attitude	Resistance	(16) 89%	Acceptance	(18) 100%
	Acceptance	(15) 83%	Unsureness	(6) 33%
			Resistance	(4) 22%

As presented in Table 4.3, the majority of the participants pointed out the difficulties of experiencing general writing in topic (67%), self-expectation/feedback (56%), and the organization of the composition (44%). While for creative writing, the participants stated four main challenges, features of poems (72%), vocabulary (67%), organization of the writing pieces (56%), and the topic (50%). It implies that in the general writing classes, what kind of

content the writers should include and how should they organize are mainly concerned by the participants. Moreover, they took the grading and feedback into consideration, so it raised the level of challenge for the participants in the general writing classes. On the other hand, for the creative writing, poetry writing in this case, participants were concerned about the themes for the poems, the vocabulary used in the poems, how to organize the poems, and how to meet the rules of the poems. From the main issues they raised, the difficulties of the topic and the organization are shared in both general writing and creative writing, which shows that these two challenges are commonly available for the participants in any writing experience. In other words, what they should write and how they should write are the two main problems that the participants considered in writing. Besides, some participants addressed that the lack of certain knowledge may intensify the challenge they had already, the knowledge of academic rules (11%) for general writing and the knowledge of poetry (22%) for creative writing. Other than these, two difficulties are mentioned only for experiencing general writing, teacher's instructions (22%) and L1/L2 differences (22%), which gives the idea that it depends on each participant's personal experiences with the instructors and the negotiations between the two languages.

Table 4.3 also shows the differences between general writing and creative writing from the concept of value. The first two frequent benefits presented for general writing are composition skills (78%) and language (44%), which reflects the value of language skills (39%) for creative writing. That is to say, both general writing and creative writing are useful to improve the participants' writing skills and language abilities but with different levels of agreement. Also, both of the general writing and creative writing support the participants for their personal developments, self-awareness (39%) in general writing and self-discovery

(67%) in creative writing. This implies that creative writing has a higher tendency to facilitate the participants' personal improvements, in terms of being confident or uncovering their hidden self. Moreover, since in general writings, the participants are given a topic to work on, so acquiring knowledge (39%) from the general writing topics is seen as another value for experiencing general writing. Unlike general writing, creative writing deals with the participants' personal experiences within the given topic, and it provides the participants other values, for instance, self-expression (72%), releasing certain feelings (44%), ownership of writing (33%), and recall experience/re-experience (28%). In other words, creative writing have the potentials to create an atmosphere for the learners to express their feelings in their writing pieces freely, release their feelings while writing the poems, gain the ownership as a writer, and re-experience the events they included in the poems while writing or reading them.

As for the emotion category, in general writing, it stated the two opposite feelings, interesting (67%) and boring/uninteresting (28%). While in creative writing, only enjoyable/free (78%) is mentioned, which has the highest frequency. From the participants' interviews, they addressed that some of the topics in general writing were interesting. However, some of the participants found the general writing experiences were boring and uninteresting. On the other hand, the majority of the participants enjoyed or thought they will enjoy their experiences of creative writing. Besides, both the general writing (56%) and creative writing (11%) are helpful for the participants but with different levels and aspects. Nevertheless, the sense of achievement and confidence were presented by over half of the participants (61%), which we can see it as part of helpful feeling and add more credits to the helpful category in creative writing. Negative emotions were shown at both general writing and creative writing. In general writing, the participants felt challenging (50%),

controlled/burdensome (50%), frustrated/sad (33%), and anxious/nervous (17%). As for creative writing, the participants felt self-doubting (56%), frustrated/sad (28%), scared/shocked (22%), and nervous/anxious (11%). It gives us the idea of that in both writing tasks are difficult, and they both make the participants frustrated/sad and anxious/nervous. Furthermore, the half of the participants felt that they were controlled and burdensome. However, the participants didn't have this kind of feelings toward the creative writing, which shows that creative writing have the tendency to give learners comparatively more enjoyable and freer settings.

Last, Table 4.3 presented the participants' attitudes toward general writing and creative writing. Both of the general writing (83%) and creative writing (100%) have high percentage in acceptance, but all of the participants had a positive attitude toward creative writing. Moreover, creative writing has an additional attitude, unsureness (33%), in which the participants were not sure or do not know about the importance and applicability of creative writing. It implies that they have the tendency to change their stances if they know more about creative writing. For the resistance attitude, in general writing, the resistance attitude (89%) is higher than the acceptance one (83%). On the contrary, for creative writing, the resistance attitude declined from 100% (acceptance) to 22%. From this comparison, it shows that the participants revealed their dilemmas when experiencing general writing. However, for creative writing, all of the participants agreed with the applicability or the significance of creative writing, and only few of them had the opposite attitude toward it at the same time. In other words, it implies that the creative writing is more acceptable for learners with less negative attitudes or conflicts.

#### **4.6 The Coding System: Narratives of Writing Experiences Types**

There are eleven categories for the narratives of writing experiences types the participants had shared in the interviews. The categories were created by the themes and the ideas mentioned from the participants' narrative stories. Here are the eleven themes:

1. Grammar and structure
2. Components in the composition
3. Tests
4. Topics are interesting and free writing
5. Academic paper and research writing
6. Creative writing
7. Topics are chosen by teachers or not interesting
8. Essays and journals
9. Writing style
10. Self-need and self-expectation mismatch
11. Feedback from the instructor

The first category is grammar/structure, in which the participants were sharing their past writing experiences concerning the grammar and the structures. Here are the examples of addressing the concept:

First, I learn writing when I was in my junior high, mmmm actually there is no special special uh event that that the the teacher only taught me how to write about the grammar, mmmm there is no special background topic which are can make can make me to develop all of the ideas, something like that, so the point when I was in my uhmm junior high, taught me about the structure and grammar in writing.

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

Basically in in school in in the secondary school, there is no uhhh there is no uhhh many tasks we did in in writing, so we basically learn grammar in in my context, so we learn grammar basically and there is no much about writing.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

The second category is components in the composition, which is defined as the patterns in the compositions, such as the introduction, the thesis statement, the body, and the conclusion. The excerpts are provided as followed:

When I enter the college, uhhh the English uh specialization in English department, uh thesis statement, uhhh you will write one idea for each paragraph and the body, then you come to the conclusion and summarize the main idea thesis statement, and then every paragraph with one sentence.

(Bob, 11-18-2011, Interview)

Basically, teacher uh gave us some topics and explained how to organize paragraph and essays, and then we were assigned to write essay. So, following the instruction, for example, first section was organizing the introductory paragraph, and then body paragraph, and concluding paragraph.

(Zak, 11-17-2011, Interview)

The third category in this coding system is tests, in which the participants were addressing their writing experiences for tests, such as in-class quizzes, entrance examinations, TOEFL, or GRE. Examples are presented as the following:

We experience writing in in tests only, we study literature and the the professor came come in the lecture and give something summary, or umm the reflection about the

poetry, or a novel, or something, and then the test umm multi-tests, or mid-term tests, or final tests, we are supposed to answer the questions, and our answers are all writing one or two pages for each question.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

The last year of high school, all my English learning is based on examinations, like just I wanna learn, because I wanna you know I have to pass, so all my even writing and everything was just examinations.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

The fourth category is topics are interesting/free writing, which is defined as an experience that the participants were stating that the topics were interesting or their free writing experiences, such as personal blogs or diaries. Two examples are offered in the following:

The coordinator cannot come up with just one single topic, so he gave us the opportunity to choose anything we want to write about. So, I have chosen up to four topics, because we were supposed to write four papers. I chose my topics, which are related to TESOL and, believe me, it was great. He guided us. He told us all that we need to know about writing. He gave us samples and all these stuff.

(Amir, 11-15-2011, Interview)

I had a notebook that I write down everything umm I like in English, and you know some time it's not just the vocabulary or sentences it's kind of journal or diary, so you go back you see what you have experienced, and at that point you enjoy this sentence and now you go back and see umm seems like this kind of emotions are so in, it's a

(emotion) you are now out of it, but at that time you were in, so you can see how different you are.

(Liz, 11-18-2011, Interview)

The fifth category is academic paper and research writing, in which the participants were describing the research tasks or academic projects they had before. Here are the two examples:

It's about social orientation in second language acquisition. It's about sort of like identity or like culture like acculturation, so I pick about like 3 books....I hate the the 15 pages and because that's like well you read and then uhmm you you should select like 3 themes.

(Ember, 11-11-2011, Interview)

When I was in XYZ State University, so I had to do a research about under drink under age drinking, so I have to pick few States, Pennsylvania happens to be one of the States that I choose, looking at uh how is it affect under age drinking, what are the circumstances of under drinking.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

The sixth category in this coding system is creative writing, which is addressing the participants' experiences in creative writing. Part of the excerpts are presented in the following:

It's about science fiction you have to write your own story ..... you have to create a scenario, you know, you have the protagonist facing you know a problem and then you know how they overcome the problem, so when I was thinking and had a lot of thinking in mind...which was you know interesting because the professor likes it.

(Charles, 12-02-2011, Interview)

I experienced writing poems...when I used to describe my feelings that are necessary you you know like format of poems...like just to describe the feelings I had and like trying to do a lot of rhyming and so many things that you know that makes you feel like like to describe the moment, like the intensity of the emotions.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

The seventh category is topics are chosen by teachers or not interesting. The participants stated the writing experiences that the instructors chose the topics for them and they found it uninteresting. Here are the examples addressing the concept:

The teacher would like to talk about global warming, which is oh my god all of the students like that, they only know global warming when they hear the word global warming what comes to them what they are going to share, oh my god we are going to talk about pollution, again, again, again, isn't that sad?

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

We had a class uh called British Civilization, so we had to to write about some part of British, uh the reading the book was not easy to read and teacher wanted us to choose a topic out of that book and write about it...it was a book written so long time ago and the English was difficult to understand, so we were all complaining about it, yeah cuz we didn't know rarely what to write about, the topic is not familiar to us.

(Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview)

The eighth category of narrative types is essays/journals, in which the participants were describing their writing tasks in essays and journals. Two examples are shown in the following:

The teacher brings texts related to polygamy, we discuss in class, and then, afterwards, the teacher tries to formulate some kind of topic from the broad issue of polygamy and have people write on it.

(Amir, 11-15-2011, Interview)

I have to write a final paper for my observation class ... I observe a professor when she teaches, and I pick up some some ummm some topic that is interesting for me, and I write it into paper ..... now I'm very proud of it when I look at it ..... I just feel that I put a lot of work in that I can say.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

The ninth category is writing style, which is addressing the writing styles, in relation of the differences or connections between the first language and second language, or different types of writing they had exposed. Here are the excerpts presenting this narrative category:

I have to umm an email to my professor in XYZ (her context), the way I write it is I I start with the way.... I was taught in ..... so sometimes I don't even know how to translate looking forward to hearing from you ..... because my language doesn't have that expressions.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

If it is in United States, plagiarism is so because it's the top number one, but in my country plagiarism because oh it almost ignored at all, so I'm sure that most of the students who has a final paper they like to copy and paste copy and paste.

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

The tenth category in the narrative style is self-need/self-expectation mismatch, in which the participants were stating their perceptions about the gap between their self-need or

self-expectation and the real learning outcomes. Examples addressing for this category are shown as followed:

I spent about 9 to 10 years just learning some basic, and 1 or 2 year I I I I transfer myself to this uh level where I am in the master, so uhmm my feeling about writing in XYZ (his context) needs uhmm more improvement, because I did not give that uhmm expected outcome from the writing class that I need.

(Bob, 11-18-2011, Interview)

Last summer, I wrote many days with Dr. XYZ, and I just send it by mail and I didn't I don't want to see Dr. XYZ 's feedback, because I know that I didn't do good, because it's one month.

(Enzo, 11-16-2011, Interview)

The last category in this coding system is the feedbacks from the instructors, which is addressing the participants' narratives focusing on the feedbacks given by the teachers.

Excerpts presenting the idea of the category are shown in the following:

The best experience I have my writing have always been my teacher is always said that my writing are good ..... because the grade are very interesting, and some of my feedback here during my MA TESOL study, some of the feedback when I get them I'm like uh in heaven.

(Mike, 11-17-2011, Interview)

I got like.... good feedback from...XYZ professor I'm not going to mention the name ...it was like a 15 page paper, and he (the instructor) wrote something thoughtful paper, although that guy is really like well known for his tough

grading ..... and I know like some of my classmates ..... they got B in the assignment, so you know I was full of myself at that time and I was proud of that.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

#### 4.7 Category Summary Table and Dendrogram: Narrative Types and Rating Scale

In order to further explore the writing experiences of these participants, a statistical method known as a hierarchical cluster analysis was used. This approach utilizes multiple correlations to find participants patterns that are similar. This statistics approach creates groups of similar participants. Since the data used in this analysis related to coded statements about writing experiences, the groups found by the cluster analysis represents shared sets of patterns of writing experiences. As is usual with this approach, the groups are defined through a visual analysis of a visual representation in the form of a dendrogram. Table 4.4 presents each participant's narrative types in number counts and the rating scale indicating their ability of writing poetry. According to the pattern of coded items, the participants are divided into five groups, as seen in the dendrogram in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 *Narrative-Type Frequency and Rating Scale Points (N=18)*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	Rating Scale
Amanda	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3.5
Amir	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	5
Bob	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Charles	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	4
Ember	1	0	2	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
Enzo	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	5
Grace	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	1	1	1	5
Iris	1	0	0	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	4.5
Joseph	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2.5
Joy	1	0	1	2	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	6
Kelly	2	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	4
Liz	0	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	7
Mike	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4
Rania	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Roger	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	3
Sarah	1	0	4	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	6
Thapelo	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Zak	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6

- 1: Grammar/Structure; 2: Components in the composition; 3: Tests
- 4: Topics are interesting/Free Writing; 5: Academic paper/Research Writing
- 6: Creative Writing; 7: Topics are chosen by teachers or not interesting
- 8: Essays/Journals; 9: Writing Style; 10: Self-need/Self-expectation Mismatch
- 11: Feedback from the instructor

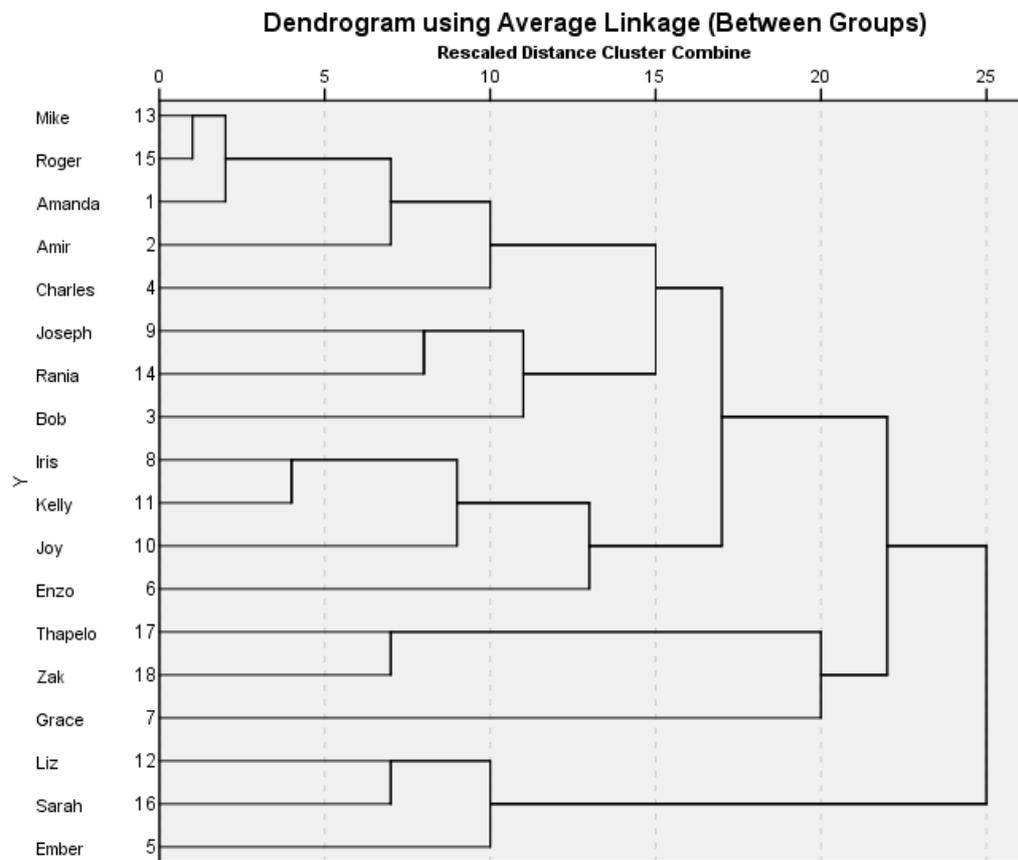


Figure 2. *Dendrogram*

Based on Table 4.4 and Figure 2, five models of the writing experiences will be presented with the descriptions of what are the writing experiences for five different groups: 1) assessment-based writing, 2) preferred topics with instruction-based writing, 3) prescribed and free-selected topics based writing, 4) curriculum-based writing, and 5) specific purposes based writing.

#### **4.7.1 Group One: Assessment-Based Writing**

The first group is assessment-based writing, which is described as a status that the writing experiences are based on the assessments, grading, or comments. Mike, Roger, Amanda and Amir are in the same group while Charles partially joined the group, in which they presented the writing experiences mainly based on grammar/structure, tests, topics are interesting, and feedback from the instructors. In grammar and structure experiences, they reported learning writing through the models, patterns, or the formulas provided by the teachers. Also, from their reported writing experiences, tests took a major part, in which they mentioned about TOEFL, GRE, or final exams. Besides, the interesting writing task is an important theme in their writing experiences they described. They stated that they were offered certain topics that happened to meet their interests, they were given the freedom to choose the topics they are interested, or they chose to free write their personal blogs or diaries. Moreover, the group one participants presented their writing experiences dominantly related to the feedback they got. Most of them focused on the good feedback from the instructors, which encouraged them greatly, while three of them recalled the negative feedbacks or poor grades, which discouraged, frustrated, and embarrassed them.

Other than these similarities, they are slightly different in two categories, creative writing and essays/journals. Three out of five from this group had shown their writing experiences both in creative writing and essays/journals writing. Take Roger, one of the participants from this group for example, his descriptions of his two assessment-based writing experiences through test and feedback:

I took the TOEFL and ...there was like you know a required score to to have this scholarship you know, I did good in the speaking and listening also in the reading part.

But ...I didn't perform well like very well like in the writing, so that was ...like shocking to me ...it was actually the the worst score I took it. At the second time and it was ... way better than the first one, like convincing at least to me and also to ...who ...accepted me here in the States.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

I got ...good feedback from ...professor ... it was like a 15 page paper, and he wrote something thoughtful paper, although that guy is really like well known for his tough grading ...and I know like some of my classmates ... got B in the assignment, so you know I was full of myself at that time and I was proud of that.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

The participant's narratives give the idea that the test-givers or professors assessed his writings with comments or grades. In other words, this type of writing experience provides certain evaluation to the student writers, no matter in the forms of grades, written comments, or oral assessments. What is more, this participant stated both negative and positive assessments he experienced, which implies that assessment-based writing is a type of writing experience that the participants were aware of the connections among the writers, the texts, and the readers.

Additionally, their rating scales range from 3 to 5, which is considered as the average scores for a 1 to 7 scale. Most of their rationales addressing the point are around in the middle of the scale, Amanda (3.5), Charles (4), Mike (4), and Roger (3). Also, they believe they can write poetry, but there are some language barriers or more knowledge to overcome and learn. Take one of the participants for example:

The reason is ...I believe because I can write... just not that advanced ...I won't say ...I'm incapable of writing poetry, because ...last year I proved that I could ...but I I wouldn't say that I'm very capable of writing poetry, because that I gonna take ...extra resources and ...extra work, for me, you have to be poetic ...it's ...sometimes genetic ...it floats in your blood, so I wouldn't go that far, I will say, okay I'm in the middle, I can write.

(Charles, 11-11-17, Interview)

From the example, it shows that the participant stated that he can write poetry, but he refused to say he reached to the professional level. This implies that the participants from this group were aware of being assessed in the end. Therefore, it caused them to have a middle point score for their perceived poetry ability.

In general, the writing experiences for group one present a picture of imitating some structures in the beginning followed with practices and tests, and then reflecting on certain topics with the instructors' feedback, which lead to their average point, 3.6, in the rating scale.

#### **4.7.2 Group Two: Preferred Topics with Instruction-Based Writing**

The second group is preferred topics with instruction-based writing, which presents the writing experiences on both interesting topics and grammar based. This group is created by Joseph, Rania, and Bob, in which there are two kinds of writing experiences covered by all three of them: grammar/structure and topics are interesting. First, from their grammar/structures narratives, they stated that they learned how to write from alphabets, grammar, sentences and paragraphs in the beginning. Next, the interesting topics they had mentioned are the themes related to personal experiences or culture-oriented issues. For

instance, one participant, Joseph, mentioned his writing experiences through grammar learning and preferred topics as presented in the following:

In the secondary school, there is no ...many tasks we did in in writing, so we basically learn grammar in in my context, so we learn grammar basically and there is no much about writing.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

I wrote something ...about ...educational journey. That was interesting, I put everything in ...two or three pages. The educational journey (is about) ...how did you learn English ...what did you like about English ...why did you become a teacher of English... this is something ...that I know ...I mean ...everyone likes to talk about himself ...so I guess ...because I was writing myself about my experiences ...that's how I I like it.

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

This participant stated the type of writing experiences with the combination of learning instructions, like grammar, and producing writing in the topic related to his interests. That is to say, preferred topics with instruction-based writing is a type of writing that not only takes grammar or sentences structures into account, but also gives the ESL writers a chance to work on the topics that meet their interests. It implies that this type of writing experience may lead this group of participants consciously to check the grammar uses even producing the topics they enjoyed writing with.

Plus, their described writing experiences also focus on components in the composition, topics are chosen by teachers or not interesting, and feedback from the instructors. They reported that they were exposed to the compositional patterns, for instance, how to write

introduction, thesis statement, body, and conclusion. Moreover, two participants out of three from this group addressed the experiences, in which the topics were chosen by the teachers, take one of the participants for example, Rania mentioned that she had asked to write about global warming, which she did not know what to reflect. Likewise, the feedback from the instructors, the narratives they provided were mainly negative that the papers were full of red marks and circles, which influenced them deeply. For example, Joseph shared his past experience that he was not allowed to include the phrase, “I think”, in his writing, so whenever he wrote “I think”, his teachers would make a red circle on it.

As for the rating scale, this group presents the scores from 1 to 3, which is the lowest range in the scale. Within this group, the participants are divided into two mini groups based on whether they had the poetry writing or not. Both Joseph (2.5) and Rania (3) have not had experienced poetry writing, the main reason for choosing such a low score is the lack of knowledge and experiences about poetry writing. Also, they stated that because they are capable of making sentences and knowing vocabularies, they cannot claim that they are incapable of writing poetry. However, Bob had experienced poetry writing for a class, but he did not agree what he had done for the class is poetry writing and he thought that his productions fail to reflect his English level. Therefore, among all the participants, he marked the lowest point (1), which is the lowest score in the rating scale. Here is one of the examples:

I can write something ...after all this long journey in in learning English ...I can write grammatical sentences ...some vocabulary ...I make myself clear ...and my professor says your writing okay ...but ...it depends on ...how do you define this this poetry writing task ...what do the professor ...will you expect me to to write in this ...poem

that that I need to present to you, do I need to follow the the strict poetic devices ...do I have to follow ...all these ...strict rules for writing poetry?

(Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview)

As shown by the excerpt, this participant revealed his concern about whether he had to follow the rules when writing poetry, which contributed to his lower rating in poetry writing ability. In other words, thinking about meeting the rules while making poetry, the participants from this group tended to rate their perceived poetry writing ability in a lower score.

To sum up, the writing experiences that group two show are based on three themes: language improvement on grammar/structure, interesting/uninteresting topics, and negative feedbacks from the teachers, which influence on the low average rating point at 2.2.

#### **4.7.3 Group Three: Prescribed and Free-Selected Topics Based Writing**

The third group is labeled as prescribed and free-selected topics based writing, which is defined as statements that the writing experiences described by the participants are mainly based on whether the topics were assigned by the instructors or not. Iris, Kelly, and Joy form the third group, in which Enzo is the outlier of this group. In addition, other than Enzo, three of them recalled their experiences of learning English writing from junior high or middle school based on grammar and sentence-making drills. Besides, from their narratives, they shared many of their good writing experiences in free writing or topics that interest them, including the personal diaries/online blogs, given topics that related to their own experiences, or topics that were selected based on their own interests. Moreover, though Iris did not actually experience creative writing, she reported that she had been exposed to the concepts of creative writing and the poetry written by those international students, so she addressed the

experience and shared her agreements toward creative writing. As for the other three participants, they had a course experiencing in writing poetry, and they all saw it as one of the best experiences they have had. What is more, the three core participants had addressed their experiences for writing some topics provided by the teachers and they were not interested. As shown from table 4.4, their writing experiences dominantly focus on topics are interesting/free writing and topics are chosen by teachers or not interesting. For example, one of the participants from this group, Iris, showed her descriptions of writing experiences as followed:

The teacher would like to talk about global warming, which is oh my god all of the students like that, they only know global warming when they hear the word global warming what comes to them what they are going to share, oh my god we are going to talk about pollution, again, again, again, isn't that sad?

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

First you are asked to read and after ...about 5 to 10 minutes, the professor asked you to write a summary whatever you remember, whatever you want to write, there is no pressure, there is no obligation or there is no scores something like that, we are free to write anything although we don't remember anything ...you kind of find that there is no fear ...in heart when you write it.

(Iris, 11-29-2011, Interview)

As Iris described her writing experiences, writing with the topics provided by the teachers made her feel bored, and she also revealed the issue of the mismatches on topic choices between teachers and students writers. Meanwhile, with the topics that she was allowed to choose by her own, she felt pressure-free and fear-free. Therefore, prescribed and

free-selected topics based writing is a type of writing experience that focuses on practicing with different topics from the ESL writers' or the instructors' choices. In other words, it states that this writing type enables the ESL students to take their own writing interests into considerations.

As for their rating scales, they marked from 4 to 6, which is the medium high scores in the scale. Both Joy (6) and Kelly (4) presented that they are capable of writing poetry, but they have not reached the professional level as poets, while Enzo (5) regarded his works as poetry and satisfied with it. Similarly, from the articles she read about poetry writing for ESL students, although Iris (4.5) showed her concerns for rhyming, yet she still believed that she could write good poems. For instance, one excerpt is presented as followed:

When I do this rating scale, I never think myself as a second writer, I think I was the one who can write, who can write in English, so ...basically I think ...I'm not very good like put something ...in a poetry ...so that's the reason I didn't very close to the very capable of writing poetry, but ...since ...I think I am one of the English writer, so ...it shows like I can write poetry, but not as good as I think.

(Kelly, 11-15-11, Interview)

As shown in the excerpt, the participant presented her rationale for rating her own ability that though she did not have a good command on it, yet she saw herself as a multilingual writer who can write poetry. Therefore, with the type of writing focusing on various topics, even if it was a topic that failed to meet their interests, the participants were able to manage to complete the tasks. It implies that the participants tended to have faith in their writing no matter what types of writing tasks they encountered, which can contribute for the above average ability in their poetry writing scale.

Generally, group three presents the writing experiences starting from learning grammar and sentence structures, writing compositions with guided or free topics, and the poetry writing as a new experience, which contributed to the result of the average 4.9 score out of 7.

#### **4.7.4 Group Four: Curriculum-Based Writing**

The fourth group is curriculum-based writing, in which the main emphasis of the writing is based on curriculum. Thapelo and Zak are the members of the group, in which their reported writing experiences focus on components in composition, free writing, and academic writing. First, they both addressed their writing experiences in learning how to organize the paragraphs, including making statements for introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. Next, free writing is the second theme in their reported writing experiences, in which Thapelo mentioned that he was given some topics to reflect whatever comes to his mind from his past learning writing experiences, while Zak shared his personal experiences in blog writing. Additionally, both of them had recalled their academic writing experiences, theses and research papers. They both see the academic tasks as an interesting and helpful experience to improve their writing skills. Unlike the previous three groups, group four focuses more on the organization for writing in classroom and the professional writing for academic uses. Take Thapelo for example, he revealed his writing experiences with learning the compositional patterns or components and research papers. Here are the descriptions as followed:

From high school, that is when we started to write ...paragraph ...we were taught to summarize ...excerpts from a book in a plain form ...that is our aim to write. But when I started to do my undergraduate, that is when we started to write a long paper maybe 15 pages ...the research paper way ...you should know this is ...supporting

ideas, how to write a conclusion, and how to write an introduction, and how to write a point.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

I had to do a research about ...under age drinking ...looking at ...how is it affect under age drinking, what are the circumstances of under drinking, and how to prevent that, so ...the challenge was sometimes I got this study and I feel like ...the way the researcher phrase the idea, there is no way that I can change it ... but ...to find what I suppose to read (and) to put it in my own ways, so the challenge ... (is) how can I put this in my own ways, even the fact that the statement is more precise.

(Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview)

From Thapelo's narratives, it presented a certain type of writing that the participant experienced, which is based on the teachers' curriculums. In the first description, he stated that he was exposed to the knowledge of the elements in composition, such as the supporting ideas, the introduction, or the conclusion. As for the second experience he shared, he focused on one of the research papers he wrote for a class, which he encountered some challenges when working on the paper. In other words, curriculum-based writing is a type of writing experience that emphasizes the goals or projects that the teachers expect their students to achieve. It implies that this type of writing experience embraces the significance of the curriculums designed by teachers or institutions, while the students are the recipients.

As for the rating scale of their ability of writing poetry, Thapelo (5) and Zak (6), which are the medium high scores in this scale. In spite the fact that Thapelo had the poetry writing experiences while Zak did not have any of them, they showed their belief that they are confident about their capability of writing poetry. Also, similar with other groups,

Thapelo revealed that he had finished the poetry-writing task, but he was not yet a professional poetry writer, so he still needed to write and learn more about writing poetry. Similarly, Zak addressed his concerns of being non-native speakers, so there would be certain challenges that he might face, such as word choices. An example is presented as followed:

Actually I mark this, because I feel like ...I'm not yet professional poetry writer, and I still need to learn more ...even the experience that I had in Dr. X's class ...and then after that class, I never wrote in a poetry, so I feel like I still need to write more, cuz I'm not yet there ...I'm still working on that, but even ...you know the business (work load) in the program, I don't have time to take my poetry writing to the next level.

(Thapelo. 11-11-11, Interview)

From the excerpt, it shows that the participant mentioned that he felt the need to write more poems to achieve a higher capability of writing poetry, because he did not have any chance to work on it after his poetry writing class. That is to say, the poetry writing experience is based on a curriculum, and by achieving the requirement in the class, the participant succeeded to fulfill the goal in the class, which is writing poetry. Therefore, curriculum-based writing may provide a positive influence to the participants' self-perceived poetry writing ability.

In general, the writing experiences presented by group four are based on technical, academic, and personal free writing, which affected the outcome of the average rating score for this group, 5.5 out of 7.

#### 4.7.5 Group Five: Specific Purposes Based Writing

The fifth group is specific purposes based writing, which is defined as a statement that the participants were writing for certain purposes, like the tests, personal interests and pleasure, or classes. Ember, Liz, and Sarah create the last group, in which the main focuses of their reported writing experiences are on tests, free writing, and creative writing. First, based on the narratives they shared, they have many reported writing experiences in tests. They showed the pressures and anxiety in the tests, but at the same time they described that they learned the writing skills from it. Second, all of them revealed their personal writing experiences in diaries, journals, or reflection on novels/literature works. Next, three of them reported that they had poetry writing experiences, including the class project, personal reasons, or one-time class demonstration. Although they confessed that the experiences were challenging for them, yet they all regarded the experiences of writing poetry as positive experiences. Also, both Ember and Sarah mentioned about their experiences of learning how to make sentences and paragraphs in the beginning. The narratives from one of the participants, Sarah, is presented in the following:

From my ...6 7 8 grade to ...12 grade, which is the last year of high school, all my English learning is based on examinations ...because ...I have to pass, so all my even writing and everything was just examinations ...not only writing, like everything basically with learning English ...is just for exams, so you just learn ...like sometimes I try to practice a lot, especially when I have like very important exam, I try to get some topics or something like that from online and ...then practice writing.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

After I start mastering the English language, I really start writing a lot of poems in English, so when I look at back at them now, I just feel like ...it's so good ...kind of positive experience ...because sometimes I I used to use writing poems to learn more English, so I used to ...try to ...find the words ...so I used to find a words that has the same ending, so it rhymes.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

From Sarah's descriptions, it showed a type of writing experience that the ESL students are writing for specific purposes. The first narrative presented the purpose of getting a good grade in writing tests, while the second excerpt described the participant's personal interest for writing in poetry. That is to say, specific purposes based writing is a type of writing experience that emphasizes on the students writers' own purposes in writing. It implies that this type of writing experience provides the ESL students the autonomy in writing.

As for the similarity of their rating scales, they had higher scores, Ember (6), Liz (7), and Sarah (6), which presents the highest points comparing to other groups. From the markings, it implies that they all agreed with their ability of writing poetry. However, they shared slightly different rationales. First, Ember stated that she did not have any trouble at writing poems, but she could not mark at 7 because of the vocabulary problems, for example, choosing fancy words to express her feelings. Second, Liz revealed her interests and willingness in writing poetry, and she also believed that once a person is interested in learning something, he/she could have good command on it. Last but not the least, Sarah, is presented as followed:

I don't wanna say 7, cuz I don't wanna seem arrogant, so I just ...rate 6...because I have a lot of experiences and I like my poems ...when ...some of my really close friends read some (of my poems), they are like very impressed, which is kind of add to my self confidence about my writing ...besides that, I think ...sometimes especially when I have like stronger emotions, I really know how to ...put them into words, because it makes me feel better, so I think I'm very capable.

(Sarah, 11-17-11, Interview)

As presented in the excerpt, Sarah tended not to be arrogant, so she marked 6 instead of 7. Other than this reason, she addressed that she had had many experiences in poetry writing, in which the participant revealed her high confidence in poetry writing ability. Also, the participants had the hobby to release her emotions through writing poem, which can be seen as one of the purposes that she wrote poems. From this example, it implies that writing for specific purposes has a positive effect on students' perceived ability in writing poetry, since they write based on their own decisions, which they reach their ownership in writing.

To sum up, group five presents their high acceptance for different learning writing approaches. They regarded writing in tests, writing for personal reasons, and writing poetry as a chance and access to learn writing, which contributed to their high average score on ability of writing poetry, 6.3 out of 7.

#### **4.8 Correlation Between the Rating Scale and the Narrative Categories**

As a final analysis, a correlation between the different categories of writing experience and the rating scale of ability to write poetry was conducted. The analysis was designed to see if any of the specific experience was found to correspond either positively or

negatively with the ability to write poetry. Table 4.5 presents the correlation between the rating scale of their ability in writing poetry and the eleven narrative categories.

Table 4.5 *Correlation Between the Rating Scale and the Narrative Categories*

	Narrative Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Rating Scale	Pearson Correlation	-.478*	-.092	.426	.037	.136	.411	-.045	.013	.077	-.345	-.345
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.716	.078	.884	.590	.090	.859	.959	.761	.595	.161

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

- 1: Grammar/Structure; 2: Components in the composition; 3: Tests
- 4: Topics are interesting/Free Writing; 5: Academic paper/Research Writing
- 6: Creative Writing; 7: Topics are chosen by teachers or not interesting
- 8: Essays/Journals; 9: Writing Style; 10: Self-need/Self-expectation Mismatch
- 11: Feedback from the instructor

As shown in Table 4.5, among all eleven narrative categories, the rating scale is only significantly correlated on a two-tail test with one writing experience – grammar/structure. This is a significant negative correlation meaning that high abilities with the ability to write poetry were correlated with low abilities in grammar/structure; or conversely high scores on grammar/structure correlated with low scores on poetry writing. Simply put it would seem that learning in a grammar heavy writing context is not conducive to the development of a sense of ability in writing poetry. It means that for those participants, the more frequent they recalled the writing experiences based on grammar or structures, the lower their self-ratings for writing poetry ability. In other words, the participants who had higher scores in the poetry writing ability scale, they had the tendency not mentioning their writing experiences about grammar and structure. From this data, it shows that without revealing grammar/structure learning, those participants believed their high capacity in writing poetry. It does not mean that these participants had not had experienced learning writing in grammar and structure approach, but it implies that they did not see grammar or structure as a priority element for

their writing. Therefore, for them, writing poetry is something that they are capable of. On the contrary, when being asked how they learned writing in English, some participants recalled a lot of experiences focusing on learning grammar or sentence structure. With these experiences embedded in minds, this group of participants tended to present lower self-rating scores in their ability of writing poetry, due to the concerns of grammar and structure. To sum up, the narrative about grammar and structure has an influence on the self-rating for poetry writing ability.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the researcher is going to bring the discussions and the conclusions in relation with the ramification from the data. There are six sections as followed: 1) the impact of the poetry writing experiences on these ESL students, 2) creative writing as pedagogy associated with the different types of writing, 3) conclusion, 4) ramification of the study, 5) limitation of the study and 6) future studies.

#### **5.1 The Impact of the Poetry Writing Experiences on these ESL Students**

This section aims at exploring the impact of experiencing poetry writing on the ESL participants by looking at their perceptions and self-experience in writing poems. Three subsections are presented from different aspects: the emotional aspect, the functional aspect, and the applicability aspect.

##### **5.1.1 From the Emotional Aspect**

Although the participants doubted their ability in writing poetry, it only happened in the beginning of their process in writing the poetry. One of the participants revealed that “(t)hose talented people know about this (poetry writing)...the way they they write ...it’s god given gift, it’s not something that we learn..., I never thought that any ordinary untalented students can write” (Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview), it shows the differences between talented people (poets) and untalented people (students), which reflects Fernesten’s (2008) statements that instead of seeing themselves as writers, ESL students tended to have difficulties and frustration in writing. In other words, ESL students have the tendency to doubt the values of experiencing creative writing when first introduced to it.

However, as presented in chapter 4, the data shows that despite the participants encountered some difficulties in writing poetry, they revealed the positive feelings toward creative writing that they felt free and enjoyed to express themselves, for instance, “they (poetry writing) permitted me to to open to a to say it, and to it’s kind of liberation, I free myself when I wrote” (Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview), and “I used to turn off all the lights and lightening all of the candles that I have, turn some music that I like and you know with my tea or something else, then I start writing (my poems)” (Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview). These two concepts of enjoying and being free while experiencing creative writing echoes with many studies (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Grierson, 1999; Hanauer, 2004; Knoeller, 2003; Painter, 2009; Schultz, 2001). Therefore, by experiencing poetry writing, ESL students tend to have positive emotions and to feel engaged, free, and enjoyable.

In addition, some participants felt confident after achieving the poetry writing task, for instance:

After times, I went back to them (my poems) when I got, and I like started reading them and I’m like did I really write all that you know you just like you are so surprised, look it’s not as bad as I thought.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

As shown in the excerpt, the participant revealed her sense of achievement and self-confidence. Therefore, it implies that experiencing poetry writing enables ESL students to gain their confidence.

### **5.1.2 From the Functional Aspect**

Six values of learning creative writing were presented from the data: self-expression, self-discovery, releasing certain feelings, language skills, ownership of writing, and recall

experiences/re-experience. First, some scholars believed that creative writing can enable students to express their original thoughts and own feelings (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Chamcharatsri, 2009; Crème & Hunt, 2002; Grierson, 1999; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010; Knoeller, 2003; Painter, 2009), which reinforces the result found in my data that most of the participants stated that poetry writing enables them to express themselves freely. For instance, “I think poetry is (a) good thing that uh, because (it gives a) chance to express yourself” (Enzo, 11-16-2011, Interview).

Second, similar to the studies that revealed that participants can find their voices and self-discover themselves (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Chamcharatsri, 2009; Crème & Hunt, 2002; Hanauer, 2004, 2010, 2011; Iida, 2008, 2010, 2011; Light, 2002; Schultz, 2001), the participants from this study presented that creative writing can develop their personal progress, for example, “there is much that I don’t know about myself, but after writing poems, I discover so much about myself” (Thapelo, 11-11-2011, Interview), and “poetry writing experience help(s) me to uncover something which was uh hidden inside me” (Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview).

Third, Bolton (1999) stated that it “alters the writer because the process faces one with oneself” (p. 118), which reflects with the participants from this study stating that they can release certain feelings when writing the poems. Take one of the participants for example, “when you write a poem, it frees you from some kind of inner pain you are having” (Amir, 11-17-2011, Interview). That is to say, writing poetry is a process of a therapy, in which the writers heal by releasing mainly negative feelings through poems.

Fourth, some researchers stated that creative writing is beneficial for students’ language competence (Hanauer, 2003; Iida, 2011; Schultz, 2001; Spiro, 2004). Similar with

the previous studies, some participants from the study showed that their experiences of poetry writing enable them to look for fancy vocabulary or memorize new words. For example, as one participant revealed that “(writing poetry can) push you to look for the new words the fancy words that you can use” (Ember, 11-11-2011, Interview).

Fifth, some of the participants revealed their roles as multilingual writers, for instance, “in writing poetry, I mean you are the center...you are the author, you own the you feel like you have ownership in that one, I don’t care people say right or not, but this is how I feel it is, this is how I write my poems ...they (readers) cannot have any objections” (Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview), which reflects to Cook’s (1992) concept of multicompetence. Moreover, by seeing themselves as writers, the participants reached the status of gaining ownership of English language, which reflects Widdowson’s (1994) concept of ownership and McKay’s (2009) notion of viewing English as an international language. In other words, applying creative writing to ESL students can encourage them to embrace the authorship and ownership of their writing and the English language, and see themselves as multilingual writers.

Last but not the least, according to Hanauer (2010, 2011), poetry writing can enable not only the writers to re-experience their experiences in poems, but also the readers to experience the writers’ life through poems. Similarly, some participants in this study presented the values of experiencing poetry writing in recalling their own past experiences and re-experiencing others’ experiences written in the poems. For example, one participant stated that “when you really write something in English, and then you when you share (with) someone, they said okay we experience the same thing before” (Kelly, 11-15-2011, Interview). In addition, another participant showed that “I actually recall from very very long

time you know like that things like I really actually never thought about” (Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview). Therefore, it implies that applying creative writing in ESL classrooms can help the ESL students to be aware of the roles as writers and as readers.

### **5.1.3 From the Applicable Aspect**

All of the participants accepted the idea of teaching creative writing to ESL/EFL students as applicable, and only few of them shared the different attitudes in uncertainty and resistance. Here are the examples addressing these three positions: “I kind of change my mind, I feel like at the end of the day ...writing poems is about your learning experiences and everything, is not really a bad idea ...I really ...learn a lot from it” (Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview), “until I know the teaching language through creative writing is logic ...sounding logical to me, or ...I believe in it, or see how it work, at that time, yes (I will apply it)” (Bob, 11-18-2011, Interview), and “you have so little ...to say about poetry writing ...it’s not as important ...to create a new course for” (Amanda, 11-14-2011, Interview). From the excerpts, it showed that the ESL students generally accept creative writing with lower rates in rejecting the concepts of creative writing.

### **5.2 Creative Writing as Pedagogy Associated with the Different Types of Writing**

The second section of this chapter presents creative writing as a possible pedagogy by looking at the drawbacks of these 5 types of writing experiences that the ESL students revealed. As discovered in the data, five types of writing experience are analyzed and presented: 1) assessment-based writing, 2) preferred topics with instruction-based writing, 3) prescribed and free-selected topics based writing, 4) curriculum-based writing, and 5) specific purposes based writing.

### **5.2.1 Assessment-Based Writing**

Assessment-based writing is described by the first group of participants, in which the writing experiences were mostly emphasized on tests and feedbacks from the instructors.

Take one participant for example:

I got like...good feedback from...XYZ professor I'm not going to mention the name ...it was like a 15 page paper, and he (the instructor) wrote something thoughtful paper, although that guy is really like well known for his tough grading ... and I know like some of my classmates...they got B in the assignment, so you know I was full of myself at that time and I was proud of that.

(Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview)

As shown in the excerpt, the participant revealed his awareness of the readers, the professors, who assess his papers, which reflects Leki and Carson's (1997) study that writers are aware of the audiences. However, this type of writing experience emphasizes the results of evaluation, not just being conscious of the existence of the readers. Also, Raimes (1991) stated that the reader-based writing enabled the students to have the idea of others, peers or teachers, who may assess their writing. With the consciousness of being evaluated can bring the stressfulness for students, for instance, "it's challenging, it's like important, you know, to tell the teacher, see I'm a good student" (Roger, 11-14-2011, Interview). Therefore, as discussed in the previous section, poetry writing is able to bring ESL students to feel free and enjoyable, which provides a more comfortable and pressure-free setting.

### **5.2.2 Preferred Topics with Instruction-Based Writing**

The second type of writing experience is preferred topics with instruction-based writing. A group of participants described they have learned writing with the grammar or

structure guidance, also, through working on the topics that they are interested in. For instance, “basically in school in the secondary school ...there is no ...many tasks we did in writing, so we basically learn grammar in my context, so we learn grammar basically and there is no much about writing” (Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview). As revealed by the participant, the participant stated that what he learned was about grammar only, instead of writing.

According to Raimes (1991), using a form-based writing approach, students may fail to see this type of writing as “authentic” (p. 408). Also, the use of a product approach concentrates teaching writing on structures and practical skills (Badger & White, 2000; Bilton & Sivasubramanian, 2009). Take the same participant for example, “it’s really annoying to give our answer in writing, yeah, because sometimes you have an idea, but you cannot write it down, so that’s ...why it’s difficult and annoying” (Joseph, 11-17-2011, Interview). It implies that students are unable to express themselves with the constraint of the forms or structures. From the previous section, it shows the impact of experiencing poetry writing on these ESL students. As a result, creative writing is a possible approach to apply in ESL classrooms to engage students with freedom and enjoyment, and enable students to write with their voices.

### **5.2.3 Prescribed and Free-Selected Topics Based Writing**

The third type of writing experience is prescribed and free-selected topics based writing, in which a group of participants presented their writing experiences on reflecting on different topics, no matter it is the topic given by the instructors or the topic they chose by themselves. Take one of the participants for example:

I wrote and narrative about how I get into school, because in my culture ...at that time ...people say that the girls ...are not ...supposed to go to school ...because they say that sending girls to school is a wasting of time, and boys are those who should represent the family ...and my father ...was against that, so he convinced ...his brothers to let me go to school ...in our tradition ...your kids don't belong to you ...your brother make decision for your kids, so my uncles ... (is) the one who should decide if I should go to school or not, and my father ...tried to convince them that they should let me try, I wrote about that experience, and the teacher like it and he even wanted me to ...read it in front of everybody.

(Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview)

The participant showed the importance of the content in a writing piece, which was her teacher's focus at that time. This type of writing experience reflects that the emphasis of the writing pieces is the content, in which the participants revealed its focus on personal-related topics. However, according to Raimes (1991), concept of the content-based writing is "in favor of the subject matter of the other field the ESL students are studying" (p. 411), which is different from this type of writing experience found in this study. Moreover, the same participant revealed her experiences of required topics that "sometimes I confess that I I did some writing just because the teacher wanted me to do it" (Joy, 11-15-2011, Interview). As the participant stated, with some prescribed writing tasks, students may feel forced or controlled to write. Therefore, as shown in the previous section, creative writing can be beneficial for ESL students to acquire their authorship and see themselves as writers.

#### 5.2.4 Curriculum-Based Writing

Curriculum-based writing is a type of writing experience described by the ESL students that their writings are followed by the design of the syllabi, in which they may be asked to produce the composition with certain instructions provided by the teachers, or learn to write academic papers. Take one participant for example:

I have to write ...my teaching philosophy ...I think it was a worst (experience), because I thought (it) ...should be about me, but instead, I have to put a lot of sources in my writing ...I though I'm just going to say ...my philosophy in teaching, but I have to back it up with like what literature review support that ...and the literature review was restricted to the one that we discussed in the classroom.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

Similar concept shown with the excerpt, Badger and White (2000) stated that genre approaches are like product approaches mainly focus on linguistic aspect, but they “emphasize that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced” (p. 155). From this viewpoint it reflects that the ESL classrooms are regarded as a social community, in which the students’ writings are influenced. Additionally, the participant continued her argument that:

So I feel like ...I share my teaching philosophy based on the literature review itself, so I only include something that is there ...when I want to include something is not there, I'm afraid that is going to be like out of topic, so it's kind of also hard for me.

(Grace, 11-10-2011, Interview)

From the participant, it shows that she could not express her original ideas, instead, she were asked to cite the sources with the worries to be out of topic. Again, as presented in

the data, poetry writing is capable to encourage the students to express themselves and write in their own voices. Therefore, applying creative writing to the ESL writing classrooms is beneficial for ESL students to find their own voices in writing.

### **5.2.5 Specific Purposes Based Writing**

The last type of writing experience is specific purpose based writing. It is clear that this type of writing experience is done for certain reasons, such as tests, personal enjoyment or requirements for classes. This type of writing experience shares some similar aspects with the writer-based writing discussed in Raimes' (1991) study, which was presented as a teaching writing approach "in place of 'accuracy' and 'patterns' came 'process,' making meaning,' 'invention,' and 'multiple drafts'" (p. 409). It implies that ESL students write for their own pleasure or interests in this type of writing experience, take one participant for example:

I experienced writing poems ...when I used to describe my feelings that are necessary ...like format of poems ...like just to describe the feelings I had, and like trying to do a lot of rhyming and so many things ...that makes you feel like ...to describe the moment, like the intensity of the emotions.

(Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview)

However, the participant revealed one of her writing experience: "the last year of high school, all my English learning is based on examinations, like just I wanna learn, because ...I have to pass, so all my even writing and everything was just examinations" (Sarah, 11-17-2011, Interview). In addition, another participant showed her experience in a test, here is the example, "you become nervous and nervous more more nervous then you see somebody put their period to their composition" (Liz, 11-18-2011, Interview). From these two participants,

it shows that their experiences of learning writing through tests, which Sarah had the purpose to pass in the exam and Liz felt nervous during her exam. As presented in the first section, by applying creative writing to ESL students, the students may have the chance to get rid of the negative feelings from the tests, instead, they can embrace the positive emotions that creative writing tend to provide for its learners.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The aim of the study is to explore the types of writing experience that ESL students described in relation with students' perceived writing poetry ability. As shown in the data, there are five types of writing experience that the ESL students described: 1) assessment-based writing, 2) preferred topics with instruction-based writing, 3) prescribed and free-selected topics based writing, 4) curriculum-based writing, and 5) specific purposes based writing.

First, a type of writing experience emphasizing the evaluation affects ESL students' awareness of being assessed, which leads them to choose a mid-point score. Second, a type of writing focusing on grammar instructions, ESL students have high tendency to have lower score in rating their poetry writing capacity. Third, prescribed and free-selected topics based writing enable ESL students to complete any writing task even it is a topic not from their choices and interests, so this type of writing can contribute to students' poetry writing ability in a neutral to a positive way. Fourth, the goal in the syllabus design is the main focus in the curriculum-based writing, and the ESL students see writing poetry as a task that once they complete the task, they do not practice it outside of the class, in which the ESL students tend to have above average scores in their self-rating. Last but not the least, the type of experience that ESL student are writing for specific purposes, which are from their own choices or

agreements, so they have the tendency to have higher score in believing their ability of writing poetry. In general, these types of writing experiences influence the ESL students' perceived ability of poetry writing in different levels.

In addition, this study has explored the impact of the poetry writing experiences on these ESL students. Firstly, from the emotional aspect, creative writing has the value of bringing dominantly positive feelings for the ESL students. Secondly, from the functional aspect, six values of learning creative writing were presented: self-expression, self-discovery, releasing certain feelings, language skills, ownership of writing, and recall experiences/re-experience. Thirdly, from the applicability aspect, there are three different stances shown from the participants: acceptance, uncertainty, and resistance. However, all of the participants revealed their attitude in accepting the applicability and significance of applying creative writing to ESL students.

Furthermore, five types of writing experiences discussed in the study share similar concepts with previous studies presenting the history of teaching ESL writing, which the researcher found out that there are some weaknesses in these five types of writing experience. Aiming at improving the situations in ESL writing classrooms, the study proposes to consider creative writing as pedagogy for ESL students. To sum up, by applying creative writing in ESL writing classrooms, ESL students not only are encouraged to write in an enjoyable, free, and engaging setting, but also are provided with the opportunity to have the ownership and authorship in writing.

#### **5.4 Ramification of the Study**

Creative writing for ESL students is a recently developed topic in the field, by conducting a study investigating at the ESL students' types of writing experiences in relation

with their perceived poetry writing ability, there are three potential benefits of this study. First, the ESL students in the study can gain a greater understanding to express notions of general writing and creative writing in ESL classrooms and how they understand this expression of general writing and creative writing. Second, since the participants are prospective teachers, they are provided the chance to think about not only the advantages or disadvantages of both general writing and creative writing, but also how to apply it in their future teaching. Last but not the least, the benefit to the TESOL field is that this study sheds some lights for the ESL writing teachers on ESL students' types of writing experiences in relation to their perceived ability of accomplishing the creative writing tasks, such as poetry writing or fiction writing.

### **5.5 Limitation of the Study**

The study was conducted as a qualitative interview based approach with 18 participants. According to Leki and Carson (1997), there are two possible drawbacks with interview data: "self-reports (e.g., remembering incorrectly, attempting to show oneself in the best possible light, adapting answers to what one assumes the investigator wants to hear) and face-to-face interactions (e.g., the researcher's inadvertently indicating preferred responses)" (p. 44). As the researcher of this study, I have had tried to minimize the problems by telling the participants to share their perceptions and experiences without trying to meet the expected responses. As for the numbers of the participants, we cannot generalize the knowledge from a small number of participants only, but the study aims to embrace the individual importance and add the credibility by providing information from 18 participants.

## **5.6 Future Studies**

A broader sense of ESL students used in this study, an empirical study focusing on a specific EFL context can be further researched. Also, I recommend other researchers to start an empirical study concerning on the relation between a particular and the particular types of writing experiences encountered by those EFL students in their context. With further research, it can bring more valuable knowledge about ESL/EFL's past writing experiences and their creative writing perceptions.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are being invited to participate in a research study on the value of teaching creative writing to ESL studying abroad students, so as MA TESOL multilingual students, your opinions are valuable and appreciated to this study. Please read the following information carefully and make sure to ask if you have any questions about it.

The purpose of this study is to find out more about your understandings of creative writing. Since all of you are prospective teachers, you will have the chance to think about the advantages or disadvantages of creative writing and how to apply it to your future teaching. In order to know your perspectives and thoughts, an interview will be conducted and audio recorded, and it will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, all information about you will be kept strictly confidential. You will be given a pseudonym, and your name will not appear in any of the work written or presented about this study. You are free to decide not to participate in this study, and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without it affecting your relationship to the people doing the study or to IUP. If you choose to withdraw at some point, you may do so by emailing me. When you withdraw, all information about you from the interview and any of your writing that has been collected will be destroyed.

The information gained from this study may be shared with other educators. It may be published in journals in our field or presented at conferences, but again, your individual information will be protected by a pseudonym and by grouping your ideas with the ideas of others.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement on the next page. Take the extra copy with you. If you choose not to participate, simply drop the unsigned form on the table and take the extra copy with you.

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM (CONTINUED)

VONLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name: (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature:

Date:

Phone number:

E-mail:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

---

Date

Investigator's Signature