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Students' Digital Identities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Creative Writing in Indonesia

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Abstract: This research highlights how the students in the English Letters Department of a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, express their digital identities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Creative Writing. Even though digital platforms have been widely discussed as a medium for identity expressions and construction, few studies have specifically examined digital identity construction through EFL creative writing on digital platforms. The participants of this qualitative study were eighteen sixth-semester students from two creative writing classes. The data were collected from participants' writing products, namely short stories and poems. The works were uploaded to participants' various digital platforms, then with a questionnaire to unveil their inspiration, intentions, and reasons for choosing the digital platform. There are four main findings that cover participants' creative writing topics, writing resources, writing intentions, and social media platforms that are mostly used. The first finding highlights how technological advancement is used to abuse the power and the culture that endangered the environment. Next, the resources of their digital writing products are taken from their personal experiences, their observation, and inspired by other creative works. The third finding unveils participants' writing intention, which are to raise awareness, express emotions, and affirm their cultural belonging. The last finding shows the choice of digital platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, X, Medium, and Wattpad, which also reflects how the participants curate their digital identities. Furthermore, this study concludes that EFL Creative Writing in digital platforms enables the participants to express their ideas and feelings without being judged by others while at the same time they can negotiate and express evolving digital identities.

Key words: EFL creative writing; identities; digital identities

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana mahasiswa Program Studi Sastra Inggris di sebuah universitas swasta di Yogyakarta, Indonesia, mengekspresikan identitas digital mereka dalam mata kuliah Penulisan Kreatif Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Meskipun sudah banyak peneliti yang membahas tentang anjungan digital sebagai bentuk media yang digunakan untuk berekspresi dan konstruksi identitas, namun baru ada beberapa penelitian yang secara spesifik mengangkat tentang konstruksi identitas dalam penulisan kreatif di era digital dalam konteks Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Peserta dari penelitian kualitatif ini adalah delapan belas mahasiswa semester enam yang diambil dari dua kelas matakuliah Penulisan Kreatif. Data pada penelitian ini dikumpulkan dari produk penulisan kreatif mahasiswa berupa cerita pendek, dan puisi. Tulisan-tulisan tersebut kemudian diunggah di berbagai anjungan digital masing-masing mahasiswa, kemudian

mereka mengisi kuesioner untuk mengungkap inspirasi, niat, dan alasan mereka memilih anjungan digital tersebut. Dari hasil pengolahan data, ada empat temuan utama yang mencakup topik penulisan kreatif, inspirasi penulis, intensi dalam membuat karya, dan platform media social yang paling banyak digunakan. Temuan pertama dalam penelitian ini menggarisbawahi bagaimana kemajuan teknologi digunakan untuk menyalahgunakan kekuasaan serta budaya yang dapat membahayakan lingkungan. Selanjutnya inspirasi dari karya tulis digital penulis diambil dari pengalaman pribadi mereka, pengamatan yang dilakukan, dan terinspirasi dari karya kreatif lainnya. Hasil penelitian yang ketiga mengungkap intensi penulis dalam berkarya, yaitu antara lain adalah untuk meningkatkan kesadaran pembaca, mengekspresikan perasaan penulis, dan menegaskan rasa kepemilikan budaya mereka. Selanjutnya, hasil yang terakhir menunjukkan pilihan anjungan digital seperti Instagram, TikTok, X, Medium, dan Wattpad yang mencerminkan bagaimana penulis mengkurasi identitas digital mereka. Lebih jauh lagi, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Penulisan Kreatif EFL dalam anjungan digital memungkinkan para penulis untuk mengekspresikan ide-ide dan perasaan mereka tanpa mendapat penilaian apapun dari orang lain. Sementara itu, pada saat yang bersamaan, mereka dapat bernegosiasi dan mengekspresikan identitas baru mereka.

Kata kunci: Penulisan kreatif EFL; identitas; identitas digital

INTRODUCTION

Identities are not fluid but socially constructed and continually negotiated through the interactions with others. Furthermore, identities are molded through the influence of others' perception and constructed through individuals' engagement with others. Within these interactions, individuals continuously select and negotiate which particular aspects of their identities to display in response to the impressions of others will receive and response to them. Consequently, identity is dynamic and fluid rather than stable (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Peirce, 1995; Phan, 2008; Norton, 2016). Norton's view is relevant to EFL class and emphasizes that learners' identities can change through the social interactions. This indicates that identities are fluid and consistently constructed through language practices.

The rapid increase of digital technology has influenced the context of identity negotiation and identity construction in the present era. As information and communication mostly transform through digital platforms or social media, how people interact and identity construction extend beyond face-to-face interaction into online environment in digital platforms (Suryadi & Suswanto, 2024). The awareness of the digital trace of their identities leads people to select which identities to display, claim, confirm, construct, and reconstruct. Digital platforms enable users not only present selected pictures or feed to post on their social media but also intentionally to negotiate identities through others' reactions and impressions towards them. Studies have proven that social media platforms significantly affected how individuals express themselves and build social relationship (Chauhan & Bharati, 2025; Tariq et al., 2025). Comparatively, little attention has been given to how identity is constructed through creative writing shared on digital.

In the EFL educational context, creative writing does not only offer opportunities to practice language skills but also provide a space to express individuals' identities and accommodate personal and subjective expressions as well as cultural values. Since creative writing is produced through "imagination, emotion, and narrative expressions" (Chauhan &

Bharati, 2025, p. 17), it allows students to reflect their identities that may not appear in the academic writing context. Moreover, the students' background also greatly influences creative writing pieces that they create. Similarly, previous studies claim that creative writing accommodates the needs to express aesthetic expressions (Maley, 2009), highlight emotions (Kumar, 2020; Maley, 2012), and "an imaginative, often unique, and poetic way" (Mansoor, 2015, p. 206). Therefore, the beauty of personal expressions may reflect the learners' identities.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) creative writing reflecting learners' identities can lead to positive learning attitudes because students can share what is meaningful in their culture in English. More importantly, when students were given the possibility to present meaningful experiences and learning, they become more empowered in the learning process (Canagarajah as cited in Shahri, 2018; Teng, 2019). Sui (2021) argues that the practice of writing about what is meaningful in their culture in English will lead to meaningful learning and empower learners. In this process, students can write about something they consider important in their society as their identity expressions and have exercises to improve language proficiency. By engaging in the practices of creative expressions, students can develop their English proficiency "outside of the relatively confining boundaries of traditional language instruction" (Siegel, 2022, p. 162). At the same time, as students become aware of their position as "global, digitalized citizens", they can develop and negotiate their digital identities through creative writing shared on digital platforms (Dooly, 2017). As a result, digital EFL creative writing can both develop students' language mastery and a space to represent themselves in the digital communities.

Despite these potentials to provide a space for students to express their identities and foster more positive learning attitudes, creative writing in many EFL contexts and classrooms is sometimes reduced to language exercises than personal meaning making. As a result, some students are reluctant to participate in creative writing classes, which grammatical aspects receives greater consideration in the evaluations (Sari, Hasibuan, & Putri, 2020). Moreover, students will have limited opportunities to learn creative writing as a medium to express their feelings and construct their identities. From the discussion above, the researchers found that few studies have explored how students negotiate with their identities publicly in the digital platforms and social media. Therefore, this research aims to fill a gap by observing students' digital identities through EFL creative writing and addressing the research question: "How are the students' digital identities expressed in EFL creative writing in Indonesia?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Indonesia, creative writing has flourished. However, studies in creative writing in the EFL context did not focus on learners' identities. Several studies on students' identities were found in discussions of creative writing resources. Studies by Herawati (2021) and Widyastuti (2023) agreed that others' experiences, observations, and others' creative works served as sources of inspirations. In addition, "intuition, observation, imagination, and personal memories" may also inspire students' works (Maley as cited in Herawati, 2021, p. 77). Individuals' experiences, including self-reflections, and observations that serve as writing inspirations are influenced by their identities because they reflect what they consider important in their society. This would be contrary to Maley's (as cited in Babae, 2015, p. 77) statement that "we do not really notice the things around us."

Another study by Widyastuti et al. (2021) specifically investigated two EFL students' short stories. One short story was based on the student's ethnic identities, while the other was inspired by the writer's identities as an English Letters student. The students' backgrounds were used to claim and confirm their identities through their creative writing. These studies show that identities as sources of inspirations can be encouraged through classroom instructions. However, these works were published in print rather than circulated digitally through social media. Therefore, the study does not reveal how students revealed their digital identities.

In the EFL contexts, studies by Sui (2015; 2021) in China and Siegel (2022) in Taiwan confirmed that students' cultural background affected their writing. Even though students were exposed to samples of writing from Western culture, they produced writing that was relevant to their culture. Using patterns as given in the samples in the classroom practices, students discovered their hybrid identities that they wrote in English while utilizing Chinese culture as a resource (Sui, 2021). Even though students' creative writing was not uploaded to digital platforms, the creative writing practice still encouraged identity construction.

While previous studies examined creative writing and identities without regard to social media, few other studies were linked to digital platforms. Andania et al. (2024) investigated the tone of poems written and uploaded on Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic. The tone could reveal the writers' identities because it reflected their perceptions of the pandemic in the digital platform. The tone of the poems revealed the emotions of the writers (Fitriana & Rokhuma, 2025). However, the research by Andania et al. (2024) analyzed the words used by the student writers to reveal the tone of the poem without further discussion on whether students would express differently when not writing on social media. Therefore, the study did not reveal students' digital identities.

Chauhan and Bharati (2025) observed new forms of creative writing arising from changes in media. The evolution of how writers expressed themselves gave rise to the birth of microfiction and digital poetry. For digital natives, literature works published in digital media or websites provide them easy access and offer visuals that are more appealing (Brameswari et al., 2022). Furthermore, users can have direct interaction with others, "allow for content sharing, widespread communication, and different types of social connectedness" (Van Vuuren & Simpson, 2024, p. 41). However, these studies did not specifically discuss how writers' identities affected creative writing in the digital era, or how the writing process could affect EFL learning.

Yusof (2008) and Boudjadar (2015) particularly explored students' writing in the digital platforms. Even though their studies were not conducted recently, their implications were still relevant to the present research. Both agreed that the publication of students' work on online platforms allowed students to interact with wider audiences, implying that self-representation occurred in the interactions. The online platforms exposed learners to intercultural communication. When required to upload their works to weblogs, students were aware of communicating with broader audiences (Yusof, 2008). However, because the weblog was already provided by the teacher, students did not explore the platform affordances. Indeed, students were empowered due to their publications. However, since the studies explored how digital platform affected language learning positively, the studies did not discuss whether students curated the expressions they wished to reveal online. Therefore, students' digital identities through creative writing on digital platforms as implications were not investigated.

The study of students' digital identities focuses on how and why students express themselves on digital platforms. Therefore, this study aligns with Jenkins' (2006) views on

participatory culture. Jenkins (2006) argued that audiences of media no longer passively consume the feeds. They become active participants in producing and modifying messages on social media. This implied that digitally, audience define their identities in participatory culture. With regards to digital identities created through creative writing published through social media, this study could reveal students' participatory culture through their creative writing. Moreover, the choice of the social media to publish their writing also influenced their desire to display their identities digitally.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, classes developed multimodal learning due to the restrictions on physical classroom interactions. One method is through multimodal digital storytelling that utilized various aspects of technology (Urbieto and Peñalver, 2021). This type of class practice is an example of what Jenkins (2006) defines as the participatory culture. The activities required students to communicate in the online setting. Students not only create meanings through the stories that they wrote. Thus, meanings were delivered through various modes of communication (Urbieto and Peñalver, 2021). When students created stories to produce messages to wider audiences online, students would also select which identities to display on the digital platforms.

Previous studies explored identity in EFL creative writing, but they largely focused on classroom texts rather than publicly curated digital writing space. These previous studies indicate that creative writing has the potential to provide a space for students' identity expression both on social media and in the classroom. They also indicated the positive impact of encouraging identity expressions in students' writing. However, they did not cover the discussions of digital identities in creative writing in the digital era. Considering the changing world in the digital era, it is essential to investigate students' digital identities through creative writing on digital platforms.

Viewing students' creative writing using the lens of identity study in language learning developed by Norton and Toohey (2011) and Peirce (1995) in combination of creative writing studies (Herawati, 2021; Widyastuti, 2021), this research intended to analyze students' digital identities in EFL creative writing. This research also considered theories on participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006).

METHOD

This study intended to investigate students' digital identities in EFL creative writing. It was conducted by observing the students to hear the stories directly from the subject (Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2009).

A. Type of Research

The purpose of the qualitative research is to observe how the research participants interpret and make meaning of their experiences (Merriam & Greiner, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Expressing themselves through creative writing was one way for them to make sense of their experiences and reflect their identities. Given the nature of the phenomenon, this research adopted the qualitative textual and thematic analysis to investigate digital identities in EFL creative writing.

In any research, the researchers need to ensure that data collection and analysis are accurate and credible. Qualitative research recognizes “trustworthiness” as the validity of data findings and analysis (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Creswell (2013, p. 52) notes that data in qualitative research are not collected through a single method but rather “multiple sources of information.” To ensure the validity of this research, the researchers applied two methods of validation: triangulation and member checking. *Triangulation* is “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research (Creswell 2012, p. 259). For this research, the data were collected from the following sources: 1) students’ creative writing pieces and 2) a questionnaire survey distributed after the creative writing pieces had been uploaded on digital platforms.

Prior to the data collection, the researchers distributed the informed consent form containing the research information statement and consent form, where students stated their voluntary participation in the research. The researchers asked permission to use the data for research purposes only and assured student participants that their personal data would be kept confidential. Their names were replaced with pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Due to power relations, the researchers also ensured students that the data given was not used to give them their final score for the class. Eighteen students agreed to participate in the research.

B. Research Subjects

The research was conducted in the English Letters Department of a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where creative writing was a compulsory subject in the department. Classes took place during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Participants were students from two creative writing classes, in their sixth semester, and with an average age around 20 (twenty). All students who agreed to participate in the research signed a consent form.

C. Research Procedure

The creative writing class assigned students to produce creative writing, namely a short story, a playscript, or a poem. They could also choose one of four topic choices: culture, environment, technology, or the mix of all of them. The assignment required students to choose the platform to post their work. After that, the data were collected and analyzed to unveil students’ digital identities in EFL creative writing classes. The data collection and analysis process was divided into two phases.

1. Phase 1

In Phase 1, the researchers assigned students to produce creative writing and upload the works to a digital platform of their choice. In this process, the researchers collected data by downloading texts from social media or screenshotting the feeds. Then, they read and identified the words or expressions related to students’ perceptions of the topics given in the assignments, namely culture, environment, technology, or a combination of all of them. These words were categorized based on according to the themes derived from the research question and objective. For example, identities were connected to the Indonesian word in the poem written in English, technology could include the word robot, and the environment included earth and sea. The classification was then complemented by the findings from the analysis of the questionnaire responses.

2. Phase 2

In Phase 2, the data were collected from the responses to the questionnaire. The questionnaire included seven open-ended questions. By answering the questions, the students described (1) the topic chosen and (2) the reason for choosing the topic; (3) the resources and (4) the reasons for choosing the resources; (5) the writing intention; and (6) the social media platform chosen and (7) the reasons for their platform choice. Then, the researchers categorized students' responses by the theme to identify digital identities. They could include topics, writing intention, resources, and platforms. For example, *kebaya*, as a writing inspiration was related to students' backgrounds as stated in the writing intention. After the report was written, student participants were asked to read the results as part of the member-checking process to ensure data accuracy. *Member checking* is "a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account (Creswell 2012, p. 259)." Students could suggest corrections for misinterpreted responses in the questionnaire.

At this stage, the data were stored in the cloud to facilitate real-time data sharing, monitor the research progress, manage data security, and enhance collaboration among researchers. Data access was limited to researchers to maintain confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study highlights four main points: creative writing topics, creative writing resources, writing intentions, and social media platforms. The first section displays the topics chosen. The second shows the creative writing resources. The third describes students' writing intention. The last presents the social media platforms that students used.

A. Results

1. Creative Writing Topics

To complete the creative writing assignment, students were allowed to choose one of the topics: culture, environment, technology, or a mix of all of them. The following table displays the topics developed in students' creative writing.

Table 1:
Creative writing topics

No	Topics	Number of Creative Writing
1.	Culture	8
2.	Environment	5
3.	Technology	1
4.	Mix of all of them	4

Students gave various reasons for their choices of topics. The following are their responses to the question "Why do you choose the topic?"

I don't know, I think we need to aware about our earth. Right now, the earth is getting older, and we as humans still like to do things that make it older such as

throwing garbage everywhere, cutting down forests and others. So I made a poem out of that. (Keni, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

The theme of culture interests me in a way that it covers social issues which can be discussed about. The specific social issues I want to discussed through my work of digital writing is mental health issues amongst young people influenced by the addiction of social media. (Mery, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

Technology is something always with us and that will continue grow with us forever. (Devi, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

These topics allowed students to develop short stories and poems with various focuses. The following are examples of the work or fragments.

Maybe one day, long long years in the future, because of time, the land will sink beneath the rising tides. Not really fast, but one day, perhaps, inch by inch, unnoticed, the entire island will sunk. As the waters rise, so do the fears and concerns of those who call these islands home. People rely on their leaders, hoping that those in power will act, will save them. (Nala, Short Story, 2025)

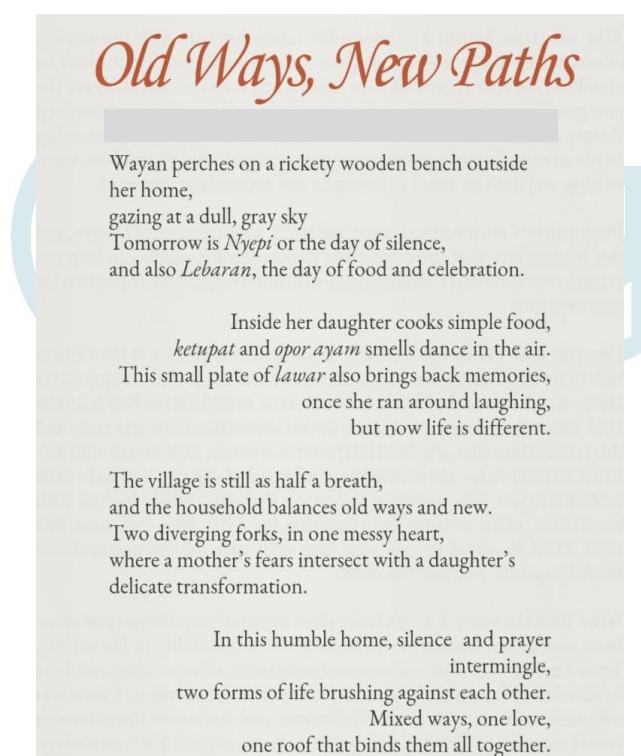


Figure 1:
(Ari, Poem, 2025)

2. Creative Writing Resources

Students' choices of resources were categorized into three: experiences, observations, and other creative works. However, the division was not rigid, so students could combine resources for their writing. For example, Keni (Questionnaire Survey, 2025) claimed that her resources stemmed from her concerns about environmental conditions and her

observations of environmental destruction around her. The following table summarizes the creative writing resources.

Table 2:
Creative writing resources

No	Resources	Number of Creative Writing
1.	Experiences	6
2.	Observations	9
3.	Other creative works	3

These resources described many aspects of students' ideas. For example, students specifically wrote about the search for a new colony due to Earth's environmental destruction, or about a robot who enjoyed dancing in the rain, based on their observations and reflections. The following describes the reasons for their choice of sources of inspiration.

I got the inspiration from my real life where I saw a girl wearing *kebaya* as her top and cargo pants for the bottom, and I find it really attractive that you can wear a traditional cloth as daily wear and doesn't need to look like the 'old outfit', but you can make it trendy in these era. (Carla, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

My inspiration is actually based on my daily life here as a newcomer to study here in Jogja. More or less the story is also in line with what I have been experienced with just in different way I delivered it into the writings. Besides that, study or living abroad was one of my dreams since I was a kid. So, through this writing I want to imagine what if having in the same position as the character in the story. (Arlina, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

From one of my favorite games' names Genshin Impact as it talks about the traveler travelling to a distant land to learn so many things, and from the Anime "Misfits of the Demon King Academy" where it involves the environment of which the races split their land for themselves and create their own nation and culture. (Randy Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

Corruption, a future where the powerless are left behind. (Nala, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

Based on the resources, students created short stories and poems to post on their social media. The following are some works created by the students. "Mecha, The War, and the Young Boy," was inspired by a video game. The second story, "The Kebaya", was created by Carla based on an observation and students' reflection.

In order to save the living being, all of countries government are working together to make 8 colony with solar energy. The space colony was successfully invented in the 2230. The humanity was saved, but it makes a big conflict in the society that is racism and discrimination. The racism and discrimination were happened because of the people that comes from a country that produce gas as their selling point is hated by the society and got blame because of it. (Hardi, Short Story, 2025)

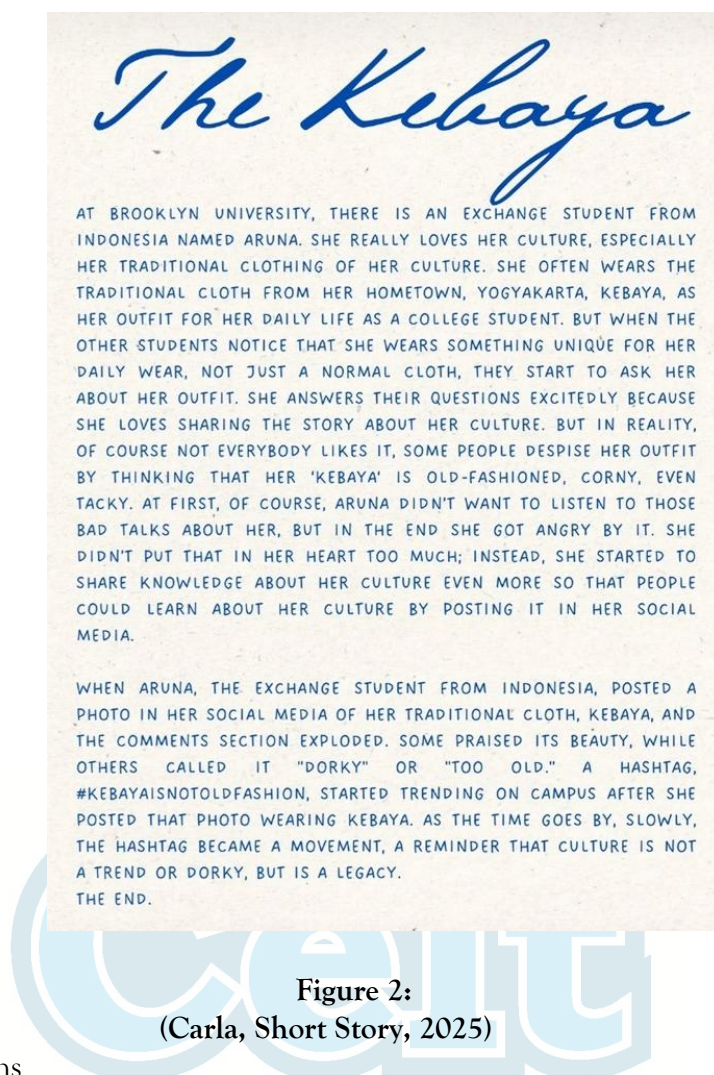


Figure 2:
(Carla, Short Story, 2025)

3. Writing Intentions

The resources that inspired students' writing were chosen to serve the students' writing intention. When asked about their writing purposes, students described as shown below.

The intention of writing this work is to communicate and discuss about an issue that needs to be aware of. This issue significantly appears among young people. It is a mental health issue influenced by social media addiction which this work tries to communicate. This work is expected to create awareness amongst the society regarding the issue, which is seemingly trivial but actually not. (Mery, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

I want to attract people for caring and rejuvenate the nature again once more for the equilibrium of nature and all creatures. (Bernard, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

I want to express the way my feelings can speak by written story about loss, love, and longing for my grandmother. Through this also, I want to capture the bittersweet emotions by explore the feeling of grief can keep a person alive in our hearts. (Evi, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

The short story, "The Sea Beast", was uploaded on Instagram. The following is the final part of the feed series.

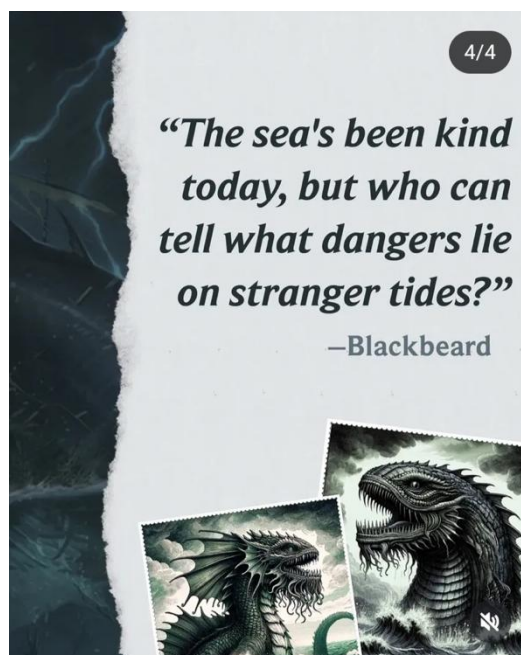


Figure 3:
(Nathan, Short Story, 2025)

A poem, was written intentionally to provide a warning on how cruel humans were to the Earth. It described the conversation with mother Earth, called “Pertiwi” in Indonesian.

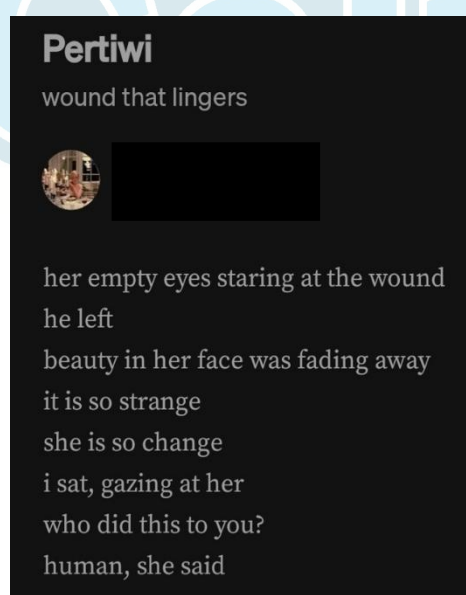


Figure 4:
(Esther, Poem, 2025)

4. Social Media Platforms

The researchers examined students' chosen digital platforms of choices to unveil their digital identities. The creative writing pieces were uploaded to the digital platforms of students' choice. The following table lists the social media platforms used by the students.

Table 3:
Social Media Platform

No	Social Media Platform	Number of Creative Writing Posted on the Platform
1.	Instagram	12
2.	TikTok	1
3.	X	1
4.	Medium	2
5.	Wattpad	2

Students stated that they chose the digital platform for some reasons. For example, Instagram, Wattpad, and Medium were used because students were familiar with the platform and felt comfortable writing their ideas there (Ari, Esther, Fitri, Carla, Hardi, Endra, and Randy, 2025).

TikTok is the digital platform I choose to upload my writing. This platform is intensely used, especially by today's generation. With this choice of digital platform, it is expected that my work will invite people, especially young people to be aware of mental health issues around them. (Mery, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

I use my Instagram account where I upload it on my private place that only my close friends can see it because I feel more secure talking about my feelings there. (Evi, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

I choose to upload it on my X because I think it was one of the platforms that I can upload things in the way I like without having to think about negative reactions or people judging my work. (Arlina, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

Medium. Actually, this is my first time using Medium, but I found lots of good writing in this platform. So, I think, it is cool for me to try this platform. (Nala, Questionnaire Survey, 2025)

One of the students had only one social media account. Therefore, he used it for posting his poem about his concerns on the environment.

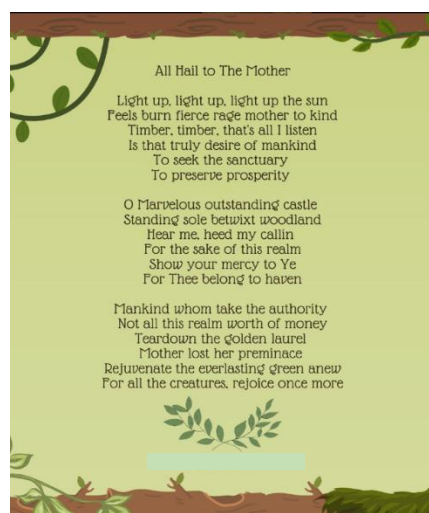


Figure 5:
(Bernard, Poem, 2025)

Another student uploaded the work on X. She said, "I choose to upload it on my X because I think it was one of the platforms that I can upload things in the way I like without having to think about negative reactions or people judging my work" (Arlina, Questionnaire Survey, 2025). The following is a fragment of her creative writing.

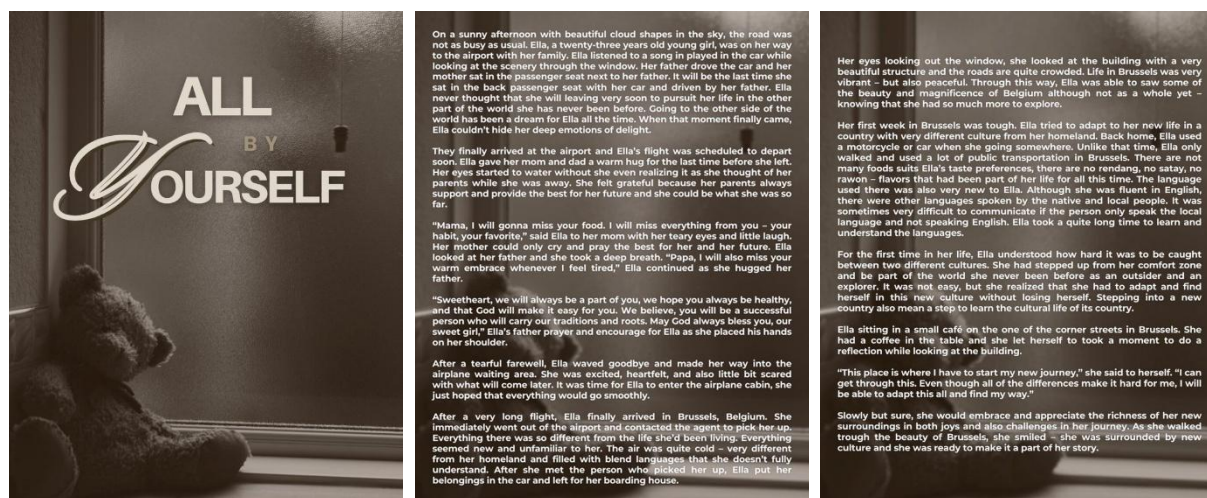


Figure 6:
(Arlina, Short Story, 2025)

B. Discussion

This section explores digital identities in EFL creative writing in Indonesia. The findings show that the participants' choices of topics, resources, intentions, and digital media platforms make significant contributions to the construction of their digital identities.

1. Creative Writing Topics

The changing world witnessed a shift in how people think about themselves. Social media, as a space for self-expression, has affected how individuals express themselves (Chauhan & Bharati, 2025). Previously people only became consumers of media; now they also shape media with their involvement. People no longer participate passively. They get involved in participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) by sending and modifying messages on social media. This phenomenon also shaped students' digital identities. This could be seen in the topics that students chose to develop into creative writing.

When choosing the topics, students were aware of the impressions that could be drawn from their creative writing. Therefore, they selected which identities to display on the digital platforms, as shown in the topics chosen. Engagements with a broader audience, even those unfamiliar to the students, encouraged them to carefully present the identities they wanted others to see. This awareness was related to the fluidity of identities (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

The digital era inevitably led students to be aware of technological development. However, surprisingly, only one student marked 'technology' as her resource. This still reflected students' awareness of being the "global, digitalized citizens" (Dolly, 2017, p. 3). The fact that other topics were chosen did not reveal students' ignorance of technological advancement. Students' perceptions, as shown in their creative writing pieces, confirmed that technological development could come in many forms, such as the establishment of a space colony, the invention of robots with feelings, and medicine with manipulative effects.

These inventions exposed the world to more serious issues. Attitudes towards others, the desire for hegemony in the face of technological advancement, and the development of civilization, for example, were categorized as cultural changes triggered by technological advancement. This implied that students expressed their concerns that technology uncovered more serious issues, underlying societal and environmental problems.

These factors revolved around students' lives and became significant influences. Students acknowledged the advancement of technology and humans' attachment to it. Therefore, it was essential to develop technology that could understand human feelings, such as a robot that could express them.

One of the students' concerns was related to the abuse of power. A short story, "Maybe One Day" by Nala, depicted how the government secretly abused their power by creating a medicine to ensure citizens' obedience. The citizens believed that the medicine, invented through technology, could save their lives. One citizen confirmed to a man that he did not need to worry about the medicine for his ill wife. "Don't worry, each month, the government creates pills that can cure your wife. They will send 3 pills each month to save us" (Nala, Short Story, 2025). It turned out that the medicine created an addictive effect, so that without it, the consumers would not survive. The husband could not revolt against the abusive government for the safety of his wife. Nala's story shows her criticism that power was very significant and dangerous in this digital era. The short story concluded that, "People rely on their leaders, hoping that those in power will act, will save them." (Nala, Short Story, 2025)

The short story reflected the student writer's digital identities. Technological advancement was supposed to support people's lives regardless of their position. This implied that Nala actually conformed to technological advancement of but also became aware that the invention could go wrong in the wrong hands. Thus, technology also became a weapon against humans in the hands of abusive people with power.

Culture was one topic that attracted most students' attention, and eight students chose it as the focus of their creative writing. In this context, culture, may refer to human activities. The participant's concerns about humans' negative activities for their own benefits inspired the short story "The Sea Beast". In this story, humans' greed was depicted as taking whatever they wanted from the sea, leading to sea pollution. This angered of the Sea Beast. Therefore, it took one of the ship crews in exchange for the destruction caused by humans.

"I understand it well enough, our people, we humans have ravaged your ocean, pile of junk we toss to the sea, it's everywhere and has ruined the underwater's dwellers," said Buckley. "But if ye let us pass, I, we, the Beast Hunter crew, we promise to deliver yer message to the world." (Nathan, short story, 2025)

Then, an agreement between the ship captain and the Sea Beast was made. The captain agreed to take care of the sea, while the Sea Beast agreed to return the crew to the ship. After the agreement, the sea became calm again. Through the story, Nathan depicted how humans must face the consequences of their own negative actions. This showed that humans must change their culture to maintain harmony with nature solely for their own benefits.

This awareness was contrary to Maley's (as cited in Babae, 2015) statement that things around us can go unnoticed. The creative writing describing human's abuse of nature indicated that the student writer observed his surroundings carefully to expose humans' faults.

2. Creative Writing Resources

Resources can come from one's own and others' experiences, observations, and others' creative works (Herawati, 2021; Widyastuti, 2023). However, when students utilized these inspirations, they could combine some of these categories to write their creative writing.

Their observations mostly inspired students' creative writing. One class exercise encouraged students to be more aware of their surroundings. In ordinary conditions, "we do not really notice the things around us" (Maley as cited in Babae, 2015, p. 77). However, based on data on students' resources, the creative writing practices enhanced their awareness of their surroundings. The resources also confirmed that "intuition, observation, imagination, and personal memories" (Maley as cited in Herawati, 2021, p. 77) could incite students' creative writing.

These resources used to develop creative writing on digital platforms also confirmed Jenkins' (2006) arguments that students were involved in participatory culture by writing on social media to create messages. This way, they could claim their digital identities. However, their identities were also affected by the social media that they were exposed to.

One of the students' short stories, combining experiences and observation, was written by Carla entitled "The Kebaya". Carla described being inspired by observing a girl wearing a *kebaya* as a top and modern outfits as bottoms. Further, she described her short story character as proud to wear a *kebaya* in another country without worrying about people's impressions of her. This indicated that identities could derive from others' perceptions. However, it was up to individuals whether to confirm the identities ascribed to them by others or claim their own.

Digitally, Carla wanted to confirm her identities as an Indonesian. At the same time, she wished to send a message through the digital platform that maintaining her cultural identities was important.

At Brooklyn University, there is an exchange student from Indonesia named Aruna. She really loves her culture, especially her traditional clothing of her culture. She often wears the traditional cloth from her hometown, Yogyakarta, *kebaya* as her outfit for her daily life as a college student.

...

A hashtag, #kebayaisnotoldfashion, started trending on campus after she posted that photo wearing *kebaya*. As time goes by, slowly, the hashtag became a movement, a reminder that culture is not a trend or dorky, but is a legacy. (Carla, Short Story, 2025)

In this short story, she delivered her ideas about what she considered important in her society. In this digital era, when people are exposed to various foreign cultures, embracing cultural identities is necessary. Through the digital platform, Carla's message confirmed her

identities as an Indonesian and a member of the global and digital communities. Therefore, she would not surrender to the identities ascribed to her by others in global communities. She also claimed and confirmed her own by preserving her cultural heritage.

The conflict of modernized world and preserving cultural heritage was also an issue in the short story analyzed in Widyastuti et al's., (2021) study. One of the short story characters in her study had an internal conflict: she wished to claim her identities as a modern person while at the same time embracing her cultural heritage, which gave her peace. Being different, Carla claimed her cultural heritage from the beginning and remained firm in this belief, whereas the character in Widyastuti et al.'s study initially denied her cultural heritage. The character in "Kebaya" struggled to maintain her cultural identities. However, her use of hashtags, a figure common in social media, confirmed her persistence in maintaining her cultural identities digitally through her social media feed.

Another observation inspired Ari's poem, "Old Ways, New Paths". She described the harmonious culture that once existed. Through her poem, Ari contrasted the two religious festivals, which were celebrated in entirely the opposite ways. While some people in Indonesia celebrated festive Eid al-Fitr with a gathering with their whole family, others followed their religious tradition to stay quiet during "Nyepi".

"Nyepi", meaning quiet, reminded people to stay quiet, to halt talking with each other, to turn off the lights, and to reflect on life in silence. The student described the contrasts of the two celebrations happening at almost the same time to confirm that, even though there were differences, society could live side by side. Ari, as the writer, wanted to validate that religious harmony could be maintained.

3. Writing Intentions

Students' writing intentions were closely related to the topics they chose. The topics chosen should serve their intended purpose. These intentions confirmed students' digital identities. Creative writing could express emotions (Kumar, 2020; Mansoor, 2015; Maley, 2012) while students could reflect on what they considered meaningful in their society as inspiration for creative writing (Sui, 2021). Confirming their intention, students could develop their creative writing with a tone expressing their feelings (Andania et al., 2024). These expressions were linked to students' digital identities.

Students reflected on situations happening in the world through their creative writing. One of the works entitled "War, Mecha, and the Young Boy" described how technology could be used to save people. He wrote, "The space colony was successfully invented in 2230. Humanity was saved, but it created a big conflict in the society that is racism and discrimination" (Hardi, Short Story, 2025).

Hardi's short story described that the lives of those living in the space colonies in the far future were supported by technology. However, the student writer reflected his concerns about the advancement of technology in the short story posted on his Instagram account. Due to technological advancements, humanity was at risk from wars involving powerful weapons. Even though the student writer did not explicitly describe his writing intention, he vividly warned of the implications of technology in the wrong hands. The short story warned of the potential negative effects of technology.

Regarding the era, the adverse effects of technological advancement were not the only problems. Destruction of nature due to human greed also became a highlight. Bernard intentionally wrote a poem, entitled "All Hail to the Mother", to remind people not to be greedy and take too much from nature. In his poem posted on Instagram, Bernard expressed his concerns about ecological problems, such as deforestation, driven by population growth. The poem was written to show the need to conserve nature for the sake of human life. By saying "For all the creatures, rejoice once more", he confirmed his optimism that all creatures could live in harmony with nature and be happy (Bernard, Poem, 2025). This poem agrees with the short story "The Sea Beast" by Nathan (Short Story, 2025).

Similar concerns about the condition of the Earth inspired a poem entitled "Pertiwi" by Esther. In her poem, the narrator has a conversation with Mother Earth called "Pertiwi" in Indonesian. The narrator described her sadness about the condition of the Earth. When she asked Mother Earth about what had happened. The Earth replied, "human she said" (Esther, Short Story, 2025). The personification of the Earth communicating with the narrator implied the student writer's intention. The poem warned humanity's cruelty to the Earth. The student writer wished to warn humans that it was important to listen to the Earth so that she could be saved.

4. Social Media Platforms

Faverio and Sidoti (2024) find that most teenagers in the United States use social media and own a smartphone, and nearly half report being online almost constantly. Similarly, students in this research are constantly active on digital platforms. They also learned to be selective in disclosing their identity depending on various social roles and types of audience (Van Vuuren & Simpson, 2024). They were also aware of the strengths and weaknesses of social media platforms. Thus, they chose exactly which platforms to use to meet their needs, such as expressing themselves or sharing their writing intentions. On digital platforms, students not only shared their emotions but also expressed their concerns, demonstrating awareness of the impressions their posts or feeds on social media made. This implies that social media play a significant role in shaping students' digital identities and could affect them. Students were aware of the platform's affordances.

Social media platforms changed how people communicate and relate with others. Social media posts enabled people to interact and stay engaged with others they had never met. Therefore, it was true that, through digital platforms, young people could develop bonds and form groups, as confirmed by Tariq et al. (2025). Moreover, the interactions on social media followed specific rules. This way, students were aware of the impressions created through the creative writing posts. This implied that students were aware of their digital identities when posting their creative writing on digital platforms. This also showed that social media provided a space for students to express their identities, yet students were aware of the rules and participants of the platforms. Consequently, they selected which identities to display.

Arlina (Questionnaire Survey, 2025) stated that X was a space of her choice because she could upload anything without fear of prejudice from others. It showed that students could choose which ideas to share as expressions of their digital identities on platforms suited to such expressions. This action confirmed that individuals' identities, created through interactions on digital platforms, were also "fluid" (Norton & Toohey, 2011) and "subject to change" (Peirce, 1995; Phan, 2008). Students were aware of which identities to expose and which digital platforms to use. Moreover, this also implied that identities were

multifaceted (Norton, 2016; Peirce, 1995). As a result, students posted only specific ideas on their chosen digital platforms, which they felt comfortable with (Evi, Questionnaire Survey, 2025).

Further, Arlina (short story, 2025) reflected her reflection on her feelings about travelling to a new place in her short story, "All by Yourself". She explained that she must be able to adapt to the new environment. The travel would indeed affect her present identities. However, she was so ready to embrace her new identities. The short story's structure also confirmed that the decision of which identities to claim was in her own hands. Someone must define their identity themselves, not have it ascribed by others. Through her creative writing posted on X, she sought to claim and affirm her new identities on the platform.

Claims by Arlina (Questionnaire Survey, 2025) and Evi (Questionnaire Survey, 2025) also implied that students needed a space to express their identities on social media. However, they chose the social media that they were familiar with. This was because they were also aware of the possible judgments from the audience. This indicated their efforts to negotiate their digital identities. The fear of being judged was more evident in Evi's (Questionnaire Survey, 2025) statement when she chose to upload her creative writing to Instagram, which was set to private. She wished to share her ideas only with her friends. This also implied that she was aware that her creative writing could draw impressions from the audience towards her.

The exposure to social media could affect mental health. Addiction could be one of the effects. Students also expressed their concerns regarding the technology that could affect their mental health. They realized that each digital platform had different purposes. For example, TikTok delivered messages through video, while Instagram accepted pictures and short narrations. To get the message through using multimodal storytelling about their concerns about mental health, students must choose a social media with more viewers.

Mery's (Questionnaire Survey, 2025) explanations confirmed that she intentionally chose TikTok because it had more young viewers of her age than other social media platforms. By uploading the warning on mental health issues caused by social media addiction, she could send the message to a broader audience. "With this choice of digital platform, it is expected that my work will invite people, especially young people, to be aware of mental health issues around them" (Mery, Questionnaire Survey, 2025). Her statement confirmed her awareness of the implications of excessive social media use. Her short message on TikTok set a warning to those who were prone to mental health issues due to social media addiction.

In contrast to Evi who feared being judged by the audience through her feed on Instagram, Mery tried to draw attention from a wider audience. Mery's creative writing also indicated her awareness of identities that could be drawn from her feed.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that EFL students in Creative Writing classes at the English Letters Department construct and negotiate their digital identities through creative writing shared on digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X, Medium, and Wattpad. These digital platforms give spaces to the students to independently choose topics and genres that mirror their personal experiences, observation, emotions, and other literature works as their inspiration. Furthermore,

their intentions in creating their works unveil how writing becomes a medium to express their concerns and emotions. The findings further reveal that students' choice of digital platforms unveil aspect of their curated digital identities as they intentionally choose before publishing their digital creative writing works. These findings demonstrate that students do not merely publish their digital identities online but they actively construct and negotiate those identities during their creative writing processes.

By highlighting students' identities expressed in various digital platforms, the researchers offer the interconnectedness between creative writing, digital literature, and technology. Therefore, educators in creative writing classes can encourage learners to express their experiences, cultures, perspectives, and digital identities for their audiences. Furthermore, integrating digital platforms and social media with creative writing may support students in becoming English language learners who can actively participate in the digital communities.

Future researchers may explore and examine how students in creative writing class negotiate multiple and intersectional identities through social media by highlighting various factors such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, or language background. Moreover, future research can highlight how different educational settings, the choice of digital platforms, and cultural backgrounds shape students' identities in digital media and language learning in the contemporary educational setting.

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