The Voice of Identity: The Power of Mindfulness-Based Approach in EFL Poetry Classroom

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Abstract—**Mindfulness-based approach has been widely used in English language learning. It is highly promoted to stimulate and build peace of mind, well-being, and creativity. In EFL poetry writing, a mindfulness-based approach stimulates novelty, new perspective, context awareness, and productivity. The process of how the mindfulness-based approach is implemented is gained through the narrative inquiry of the learning. This study aims to identify the voice of identity revealed through mindfulness-based poetry writing. The researchers focused on the voice of identity because it is a crucial aspect of poetry that can help the reader to understand and feel the message of the poetry. Study data were collected from three respondents that were selected using purposive sampling. Those respondents were the 6th-semester students who were taking Poetry Course. The researchers used mindful journals and interviews to collect the study data and analyzed them using cross-case analysis. The results showed that through narrative inquiry, language learning through poetry writing could be understood as a series of experiences, the journeys of feelings and emotions. From the narratives' data, the poets' voice is revealed. The poetry reveals some voices, such as trauma, sadness, loneliness, and self-validation. Besides, this study also found that mindfulness has a significant role in helping students to frame their voices. Thus, considering the study's results, it is recommended that students find a way to improve their mindfulness, and teachers should find a teaching strategy to support it.**

Index Terms—**language creativity, language sensitivity, mindfulness-based approach, narrative inquiry**

I. INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness and language learning are two inseparable things. Language learning can happen only if the language learners are mindful. Mindfulness is the concept introduced by Ellen J Langer in 1989. It is the state of mind to notice new things, be sensitive to context, have multi perspectives, and create new categories. Thus, mindfulness is believed to support students' creativity (Ch et al., 2023; Henriksen et al., 2020). This concept is applied to many contexts, especially in education. The most fundamental characteristic of Langer's mindfulness is drawing a novel distinction which means an enhanced awareness of seeing facts or phenomena as the result of careful and close observation of something to notice something different from it. According to Langer (2000), by noticing new things, the learners are stimulated to think creatively and to make meaning from their perspectives. As opposed to mindlessness, which focuses on repetition without curiosity, mindfulness trains the learners to closely observe the learning process. It gives a new perspective on the process. In other words, from that explanation, it can be said that mindfulness consists of two main aspects, awareness and observation.

Mindfulness in education has been hugely researched worldwide, and it improves learning quality. Singh et al. (2013) conducted a study on mindfulness implementation in preschool teachers, proving that mindfulness brings more peace and well-being to the teacher. This goes with the finding by Rix and Bernay (2014), who revealed that mindfulness brings more inner peace to students. Mindfulness also enriches students' perspectives by being more open and flexible (Davenport & Pagnini, 2016). In line with this, Wang et al. (2017) found that mindfulness in learning could improve the learners' awareness, and therefore, they are awakened by their voices.

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However, in 2018, research showed no significant relationship between mindfulness and critical thinking (Navaie et al., 2018). It is said that Iranian EFL learners are not mindful. In Indonesia, especially in the EFL context of higher education, mindfulness is rarely used because there is still little research on mindfulness. One of them is done by Piscayanti et al. (2020) on how to apply mindfulness in poetry writing classes at university. The research showed that mindfulness could improve students' creativity in poetry. The mindfulness process could make the students more open and honest about themselves, relaxed and flexible. In general, mindfulness researches show that mindfulness could improve learning because the students' behavior toward learning is different, making them more relaxed and peaceful (Bazzano et al., 2018; Jung & Lee, 2021; Semple et al., 2017). The researchers do not show how mindfulness happens to build the inner voice of the learners. They do not reveal how language learners undergo a process of finding his/her identity, especially to stimulate their bravery to write their voice through poetry. They do not explain how poetry is written and what stories behind that build the voice and choice.

Therefore, this current study tries to give a deeper look at how mindfulness could facilitate poetry production by using the narrative inquiry method to reveal stories behind the words of poetry. The present study's findings will give a new understanding of how mindfulness, narrative inquiry, and poetry could make a balanced process of revealing self-identity, voice, and choice from a new perspective. This research values the individual process as a personal journey worth sharing to empower the poets themselves and later to empower society. The language learners produce is born from their deepest personal perspective, and meaning results from their negotiation of meaning.

The power of mindfulness in language learning is vital to improve the quality of the learning process by at least four characteristics. According to Langer (2000), there are four very basic principles of mindfulness. Firstly, to notice new things. Secondly, to be sensitive to context. The third is to have multiple perspectives. And fourth, create new categories. Those four basic characteristics of mindfulness are essential in supporting the learning environment for language learners.

In 2000, Langer and Moldoveanu conducted a study on the construct of mindfulness (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). This is a significant construct in the mindfulness field. The most paramount concept in mindfulness is to create a new difference. Langer (2001) stated that mindfulness is an evolution of culture, where mindfulness could change the culture by stimulating creativity and productivity. They can develop their personal and professional qualities with more self-awareness, better sympathy, and a deeper ability to face a new change (Stern, 2015).

In the EFL context, some gaps or crises can be found in language learning; one of the essential challenges is the learners' encounter with different languages with different systems, perspectives, and cultures. This challenge could be coped with mindfulness. Since the nature of mindfulness is to notice new things and see things from different perspectives, as it can also create deeper sympathy and understanding, mindfulness also could prevent crises from occurring (Veil, 2011). Sherretz (2011) found that mindfulness matters because her study shows consistency with Langer (2016), who argued that when freedom of choice is given, and information is different, the individual is forced to be a mindful observer. In the present study, mindfulness is used as a bridge to create poetry as a language production and as a result of mindfulness practice to learn a foreign language.

Poetry allows the process of accepting a new world to the existing world, in which poetry becomes the bridge to connect the two. The fact allows the learner to build a new perspective and create a new possibility of meaning. The existing world that stays in the language learners' minds should adapt to the new world the language learners are facing, and the fact that they need to change their perspective of the world is a part of the mindful process. Based on the process of creating something new, the language learners express their voice, their identity, and their perspective of the world. Therefore, mindfulness is crucial in language learning since it develops learners' self-identity while they welcome new information and build their perspective.

In the context of poetry in EFL learning, mindfulness is also essential in language learning because the learners are present at the moment and bring about a new perspective that rises from the novel distinction observed. The learning process where the voice and choice of learners are the centers of the classroom is the best humanizing classroom. Hanauer (2012) stated that language learning in an EFL context rarely has the chance to hear the real stories of the learners. In poetry class, language learners become the center of the language classrooms and should be given more attention (Hanauer, 2012). He has issued that language in the language classroom is decontextualized, even when the setting is 'made up' as real, or the language is set up as real language. The real challenge of language learning is making it personally, mindfully, contextually, and meaningfully. This is the role of poetry, to give space for their voices. Iida (2016) further explores poetic identity in poetry as it reveals the identity of the poets. Poetry is the representation of the voice and choice of the learners. In this research context, poetry is used to speak up about the voice and choice they have within.

Poetry is the most solid and condensed form of literature. It communicates the learners' ideas, feelings, identity, voice, and choices. Poetry is written with highly selected words to deliver ideas and the impression of the words to the readers. Poetry is the bridge between the writer's voice and the readers' mind, where the two are met when poetry is read with sympathy and curiosity to learn. Poetry is the minds of society where it helps find their way to the society of minds. Minsky (1986) stated that the minds of society can be built upon a society of minds. Art, in this context, poetry can be the bridge that can build a society of minds.

Mindfulness and poetry are the combinations of worlds and words, where words build upon the worlds of poets and will be used again to make new worlds. In the art and poetry essay, John Stuart Mill's view is synthesized by Gustafson that poetry is the balance between intellectual culture or analysis and the cultivation of feelings, sentiments, and social feeling (Gustafson, 2005). Poetry is the true representation of society's issues. It is the language that bridges ideas of personal issues to society issues.

According to Hoffman (1993), language can be defined as a tool of society to communicate, and he stated that our languages, by contrast, can communicate anything – locations, emotions, facts, procedures, possibilities, fantasies, lies, and many other things. This means that language is the gate from which we can create meanings based on our interpretation of life. This research context explores poetry from the voice of identity, choices, and the possibility of a new perspective being built. It will take a closer look at the process of how language learners build poetry from their perspective. It stimulates their language learning as it builds up the learner's sensitivity and creativity. Boden (2001) stated that creativity is the ability to come up with something new, surprising, and intellectual but also valuable. Concerning language learning, creativity is the basic foundation of learning.

In this study, mindfulness stimulates creativity, and through narrative inquiry, their stories are exposed and further explored with interviews to reveal the real voice and identity. The context of this research is to explore language learners' voices and choices through poetry that they make by using a mindfulness approach and writing with a narrative inquiry method. Narrative inquiry is used to search for the real voice and choice made by the learners. Narrative inquiry studies how humans, as storytelling organisms, experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It is a tool to make sense of the learner's experience through what they think and value (Abrar, 2019). Mindfulness is the awakening process, and narrative inquiry is how it is revealed. Poetry is the language works of art by which the voice and choice can be heard and seen. By implementing a mindfulness approach in EFL poetry writing, where narrative inquiry is used to record the creative process and the work's track, poetry is used to speak the voice and choice of the language learners. In this research, the language of society's emotion is revealed through a mindfulness approach and engages with the narrative inquiry method to produce poetry.

The main research question is, what voice of identity is revealed through mindfulness-based poetry writing? The voice of identity becomes the focus of this study because the voice is an essential aspect of poetry that can help the readers or listeners better understand the poetry (Carroll, 2005). The contribution of this research in the context of English as a Foreign Language is that through this research, we can hear the feeling of society from the perspective of our learners. From this research, we can hear that our students are the producers of their voices and perspectives from which the evolution of education will be reborn. The research context is Poetry Course in English Language Education at a university in Bali, Indonesia.

II. METHOD

The subjects involved here were 15 students in the 6th semester who are taking Poetry Course in English Language Education Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, the academic year 2021-2022. However, for this paper context, only three students were used as the samples to investigate their process closely. They were chosen with purposive sampling, as their poetry was most prominent among the subjects. It revealed their process of finding self-identity, voices, and choices that they kept long for themselves. Their poetry has been given feedback and discussed to find the final form.

Some instruments were used in this research: a mindful journal, interview guide, poetry writing journal, and poetry rubrics. The gathered data were analyzed with narrative analysis, in which their stories were analyzed to interpret the real voice and choice made through the poetry. The analysis result from the mindful journals and interviews was crossed with cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998) to cross-check the findings based on the commonalities, differences, and linking lines between the findings. This was to make sense of the stories, understand them, and value them.

The poetry writing journal was the third instrument to gain data about poetic moments, ideas, lines, stanzas, metaphors, imagery, personification, rhyme, sound, and sense. The fourth instrument was the poetry rubrics. The dimensions covered include ideas, words, lines, stanzas, figurative language, invention, vision, and voice. The students' poetry was discussed, evaluated, and given feedback to be revised. The discussion took a presentation of poetry first, a discussion of the ideas behind it, and the writing process before the feedback session. The ones selected here in this paper were the four most prominent ones which represent the voice of the poets themselves, the ones that fulfill the dimensions of poetry seen from the ideas, words, lines, stanzas, figurative language, language invention, vision, and voice.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the findings and discussion will be revealed through the works of art (poetry of each student), the analysis of poetry, and the analysis of the process behind each poem. All names here are pseudonyms.

Poem 1

The Dearest Terror
By Adi S.

A slight sight of your presence
Won't shed any light along any man's path
Because your heart bursts into a bloodbath
Any breath you take...
Are nothing but ache
Should I bite my tongue to make me awake?
Run...run... run...
I have to run even if I must drag my wounded leg from you.....
Dearest Terror

The poem talks about terror, about how the poet feels that there is a fear that he faced through which he could not overcome. The words he chose in the poem represent fear, anger within, and unsolved pain. There is a deep sorrow that he showed through his poem. What would be the story behind it?

This is the mindful journal he wrote behind the poem:

Let me tell you an experience of a person, an experience that changes one's perspective, my perspective. It is when that time I felt my heart race but not in a way faster than the speed of love, faster than the speed of death. It was when I saw a figure that carried terror in every step it walked. For some people, this figure might bring more joy than awful horrors. For most people, this figure, or should I say this "thing," will bring more laughter than sorrow.

This poem by Adi S. is a terror in his life. He used poem to show his fear, to show that he has a phobia of clowns. In an interview, it was learned that Adi S. has a phobia of clowns; he explained that his phobia started when he was young. He stated that the clown is a mystery and that the person behind the clown makes him scared. This phobia, for him, was like a terror; he could not trust somebody because he thought he/she could be a clown.

He used the word "run, run, run" in the poem because he wants to escape from the clown, and the fact that he wants to stay away from the clown makes him aware of being as far as possible from the clown. However, in life, where sometimes we cannot escape our own fear, it makes Adi S. down because he feels so lonely and terrorized by a fear, he makes himself.

Poem could be the best escape for expressing his fear because poem is how the soul is liberated and finds their safest space. In an interview with him, he witnessed, *"My experience facing fear shaping my writing style, I eventually put a theme on my poem or prose. Horror. Yes, horror stuff has always been my favorite. I like to watch or read random horror stuff from the mega writer Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe to the anonymous writers whose writings are terrifically underrated".*

Poem makes him face his fear by accepting it the way it is, forgiving himself truthfully, and starting to accept life better. Mindfulness allows him to see the brighter side of life, the brighter perspective of life, and better choices. Writing poem makes him see himself more clearly and objectively observe himself as he grows through his writing.

He could make a possibility with his better version of himself. Gibson (2015) and Leighton (2007) stated that poem is a legacy of a word, the poetics of sound. In the context of Adi's poem, Adi makes a story out of his poetic experience and makes an authentic voice of identity. Furthermore, he also makes his legacy through his words.

Here, he sees poem as a reborn sun in himself that makes sense of himself in warmer feelings and thoughts, and therefore, he takes poem as the new bridge to face his new world. The definition of the new self is rebuilt and renewed.

His second poem is Shades of Grey. This is his poem.

Poem 2
Shades of Grey
By Adi S.

Today is gloomy...
Oh, my dearest dream
The black cloud of sorrow
Revolves around the crying sky

Oh, my dearest dream
I lay here with people dressing in black
I want to go
Please unchain me
The rain calls my name

Oh, my dearest dream
My heart and my soul now realize
These white flowers and candles
I cannot substitute the memoir of myself under the rain

The rain, the fiction,
And the slipknot hanging on the tree
My hours have arrived
For the last tick of time.

In this poem, Adi S. tried to give his voice about his gloomy life; he could not hide his feeling that he wanted to somehow end his life in the way he could have planned with a slipknot. However, this is fortunately just poem to show his feeling that he could always rethink what is happening again and remind himself not to do the fatal thing.

Poem is not only an expression but also a reflection of life. Poem is used as a bridge to channel ideas to society. The personal expression can be shared through poem to reach the awareness of the individual voice and choice; it helps to awaken the society that the unheard voice can be heard and that the choice can be made better. It also helps society be more aware of the importance of unheard voices and creates an image of experience that can be sensed and tasted.

Poets can create imagination and experience and build new possibilities in the world. However, the poet cannot be escaped from truth and reality. But truth and reality have been accepted with high acceptance and awareness. In his essay "Poetry and Truth" in Gibson (2015), Roger Scruton stated that poetry concerns truth as a reality. It represents truth and reality at the same time. As seen in Adi's poem, it is the real truth and reality of having fear and worries from childhood. Now let us read the work of the second poet.

Poem 3
A fear
By Windy

The daylight doesn't care of me
The heads not even crossing
Yes, it's in the darkness
When I fully felt of Fear
Well..I am fearful,
Do I have to stop, tho?
I musn't, but to keep going forward
Realizing…
It was just ongoing fear, not a mortal

In Windy's poem, it can be seen that Windy is fearful of the darkness. He is fearful and doubtful about himself. Should he stop when he is fearful? Should he go on? His doubt is representation of his real reflection of life, that when there are choices, we are questioning about our own ability to face the risk later in the future. However, his doubt is answered by his own choice. He chose to be brave and going forward. He chose that because he was realizing that even fear was not immortal. It was just a temporary feeling that would be soon disappeared.

During his mindful journal, Windy mentioned as follows.

It was just laying on my mind, the time when I had no choice but to go. In an absolute darkness of the street, I was there driving the motorbike for a long journey, counted around three hours. The fog, rain fell down with no excuse. The raincoat did stick around my innocent body but didn't work well. No pedestrians even riders at all. Well…the thing that actually suffered me was fear.

Windy indeed reflected his life on a long journey, where he is only struggling with the fear. This context of fear is darkness, loneliness, and hopelessness. In this context, he faced his fear all by himself. Later, in the poetry he wrote he chose to be optimistic about going forward and leaving the fear behind. It reflected that he is the one that decides his own life by himself. Poetry is about a reflection of a life moment, a representation of the deepest voice of a poet that unveils the voice and identity of a poet. It could renew the point of view and the understanding of a moment in life.

This is a poem from the third poet.

Poem 4
Thorn
By Joana

I don't understand
Why are roses red
As if to show that she is very beautiful
As if to show that he is very good
Even though if you look at it, there are many thorns around it

A thorn that if
Stabbed in my hand

The pain makes me never forget
That she ever stabbed me

Now I know
That the thorns never care about me

Who is red rose here? How could she make a painful memory? This poem reflects how memory could be like a thorn in the roses. It can hurt, but it cannot be seen. It is felt but cannot be cured easily. Moreover, if there is pain inside, that could make the feeling worse, and the poet feels ignored.

The voice that can be heard in this poem is the voice of reality that sometimes someone feels unwanted, ignored, and painful. The voice is loud in words but silent in reality. However, by reading the poem, the perspective of voice can be more appreciated and respected.

In his work Semantic Finegrainedness in Gibson (2015), Peter Lamarque stated that there are at least two kinds of poetic meaning nature; first, the experiential thesis in which the values of poem lie in the experience the poem provides when it is read. Secondly is semantic density, in which poetic language offers a lot of meaning in a dense semantic structure. Dense because it is carefully and mindfully selected, so there is no waste of words or useless words in poem. This can be a very significant voice that has been thoughtfully crafted to meet the expectation of the poet to say his/her voice.

Urban (1939), in his writing "Language and Reality", stated that the artist does not first create his object with intuition and then find the appropriate meaning. It is rather in and through his medium of knowledge and imagination that he creates the definition of the objects.

This is the fourth poet.

Poem 5
Am I valid?
By Dwi W.

Show the emotions that you want to get rid of,
Try to embrace those emotions that you forbid,
Let out the true feelings that you had always hid,
Don't be so hard on yourself as you always did,
You gotta believe ever since you were a kid,
You were and will always be valid.

Dwi W. tried to keep her voice heard by shouting out about validation. She questioned herself about being invalid or being invalidated by society. But what is valid and what is not? There are so many perspectives that can be built. From the poem above, it can be seen that society validates with their standards that don't meet the personal standard. Here Dwi W. tried to be honest with her voice.

This is her narrative about her life.

> *I don't fully remember memories of my childhood or my teenage years. Thus, I have no idea what to write and am also not good with words. Nevertheless, I will still try to share a life story of a little girl trying to move on from her past self. This girl grew up in a nonaffectionate home, so she felt unwanted, unloved, and unimportant throughout her life. She always thought that her emotions and true feelings were meant to be hidden. She thought that those emotions and true feelings were invalid. No, no, her living environment made her think that way. The avoidance she went through as she thought she had no right to feel the way she felt, as she had been told that her parents went through heavier things than her.*

From her narrative, it can be seen that the fact that she feels unwanted, unloved, and invalid, was started from an early age, and the memories have grown with her until now.

Further, in an interview with her, she admitted, *"I've been bullied verbally since I was a kid until I graduated from senior high school for having a birthmark on my lower lip which affected my confidence and made me appear as an antisocial kid since then"*.

From her story, it can be seen that poem is her way out to speak about the burden she has held since she was young. She is different, she is unique, but she is forced to be the same to the normal standard of physical validation as society wants. As society expects, she must look normal and the same to others. Uniqueness is not celebrated yet unvalidated. Her poem symbolizes her authentic voice, the only truth she could speak about.

This is her second poem.

Poem 6
Free
By Dwi W.

I am relieved
As the rain kissed me
I am at peace
As the raindrops echoing
I am reassured
As the rain washed my sadness away

> I am dancing freely
> As the rain sings the lullaby

From the poem above, it can be seen that the voice of sadness is still felt. Rain is the medium that can hide the tears from the eyes. Poem is the freedom to speak out the voice. Poem is the truth that reveals reality. Mindfulness helps this to be revealed. As revealed by Barret et al. (2020) it was proven that combining poem and mindfulness in higher education creates a space for true identity and freedom of self. Poem is a medium to express identity and freedom; therefore, it is very effective to be used as a tool to speak up. Poem is a word compilation and an essence of humanistic values. Poem is the most condensed form of literature that engages the poet and the readers in multi perspectives and multi-context. The new meanings are created in the sense of novelty and creativity. This is where humanity can be sensed in the most essential part. According to Heidegger (1971), poetry is projective saying in the sense that it says what is unsaid. Language in poetry is open to many contexts and many interpretations. Therefore, it could not be only one meaning gained from poetry but many.

Mindfulness and narrative inquiry make meaning to the learners (Byrne, 2015). In an interview, one of the learners, Joana also said, *"When I compose verse, I express my sentiments or states which I attempt to utilize mindfulness to make and express my creative ability way better than recently"*. Joana makes meaning through her experience, and it starts with self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is the beginning of the learning. It helps learners to be able to accept their limitations and stimulates curiosity. With deeper curiosity, comes creativity and identity. Mindfulness helps learners to reveal their true voices. It also helps to strengthen the learner's identity. Therefore, this research is very important to support language learning creativity, productivity and identity in the context of foreign language learning.

IV. CONCLUSION

Voice is an essential aspect of poetry since it will strengthen and lead the readers or listeners to understand the message of the poem better. This study confirmed that the voice of identity is revealed through the mindfulness-based approach. Mindfulness could help the students shape the voice they want to create. Mindfulness accelerates students' creativity by improving awareness of seeing facts or phenomena to make meaning from their points of view. The findings of this research strengthen the power of mindful learning in the context of EFL learning. Since this study was limited to three respondents, a further study can be conducted by involving more study samples. Besides, this study also could be deepened and sharpened in further study to gain a deeper understanding of mindfulness and poem writing in the other context.

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