Inner Structure and Poetry Education: An Analysis on Poems by Malaysian ESL Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

Poets write poem as a way to articulate their emotions, ideas and perspectives, which allow distinction from other literary work. This qualitative study explores the structural patterns in terms of theme, tone, feeling, and mandate and educational values in war-themed poems composed by 26 ESL pre-service teachers at a public university in Malaysia. It also explores other elements to enable in-depth understanding of human experiences, differences in society and the intricacy of human emotions, eliciting empathy, insight and critical thinking. The participants who were pre-service teachers were purposively chosen based on their elective course which was literature. The data collection procedures also included an analysis on war-themed poems, followed by structured interviews. Content analysis was used to categorise and interpret the data. The results showed that in general the poems produced by these pre-service teachers did not only adhere to the literal meaning of war but focused on diverged interpretations of war. Categorising the poems using their inner structure allows readers to relate to the poems better, thus addressing the gap in understanding the structural patterns in terms of theme, tone, feeling, and mandate and educational values in war-themed poems among ESL pre-service teachers, particularly at a public university in Malaysia by examining the correlation between thematic elements. This study helps in developing effective pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing ESL students' creative writing skills. The study sought to ascertain how these ESL PSTs structure their poems concerning theme, tone, feeling, and mandate, and the educational values conveyed in these poems.

Keywords: Creative Expression, Content Analysis, English Language Education, Inner Structure of Poetry, Teaching of Literature in ESL Classrooms

Introduction

Literature in English Language Education: Across the Globe and in Malaysia

Since the last two decades, there has been a considerable increase in interest in the integration of literature into language curriculum. This aligns with the current yield for 21st-century skills that include creative thinking World Economic Forum (2018), which is quickly observed by curriculum planners, syllabus and material designers, and educators in the fields of English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) on a global scale

(Lazar, 1996; Carroli, 2002). The teaching of literature, even with a small 'l' has prompted the inclusion of literary component into language curricular in various countries, including the United States (Langer, 1995), the United Kingdom (McRae, 1991), Australia Carolli (2002), Turkey Erkaya (2005), Taiwan Carlisle (2000), Japan Norris (1995), and Singapore. Literature's unique ability to promote meaningful language learning, critical thinking, and student engagement explains this tendency. In Malaysia, literature is acknowledged as a component within the English language education (ELE), which was initiated in all public schools since 2000 (Mohaideen et al., 2020). ELE was introduced with literature to encourage students to read English language materials and sources. This integration of literature benefits language instruction and learning. As Sidhu et al (2010) note, studying literature can increase students' interest in alternate learning materials, which promotes deeper English language engagement. However, since the Malaysian English syllabus was revamped in 2015 to align with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), literature components have been frequently neglected to make way for the new CEFR textbooks. Literature components continue to be neglected even more as literature is no longer tested in the new Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) anymore since 2021. By denying the students the opportunity to learn literature, they might not be able to explore their creativity and potential to allow them to participate actively, express and produce freely (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2020)

Creative writing was originally presented in the 1990s as a highly disciplined, aesthetically driven, and deeply personal effort (Maley, 2012). Several grounds support its use in language instruction (Cook, 2000). Using language in creative ways to express their own meanings helps learners engage with the language at a deep level, improving grammatical accuracy and word choice. Creative writing also fosters fun, encouraging students to experiment with words and discover themselves. Creative writing improves aesthetic reading and writing by helping students grasp how texts are created.

Poetry, a form of creative writing Olsen (2023), is useful for language learning for several reasons. Poetry is a chosen teaching resource due to its shortness, unique structure, uncommon linguistic attributes, emotive nature, imagery, and deep connection to emotions and personal experiences (Llach, 2007). Immersion in poetic literature has taught teens to write poetry with advanced English and vocabulary, indicating a keen understanding of societal issues (Ladapo & Onyeakazi, 2017). Thus, literature may critique society. When students can express themselves and grow personally, poetry can provide them joy (Yavuz, 2010). Creative students synthesise information in novel ways, express ideas creatively, discover wonder in everyday things, and create unique products (Brookhart, 2010). Students can get creative insights by exploring poetic language. Consequently, writing poems can boost their creativity.

Understanding the structure and expressive nuances of poetry composition among ESL pre-service teachers at one of the local public universities in Malaysia remains an unexplored area, particularly in examining the correlation between themes, tones, feelings, and mandates within their poetry. Addressing this gap in research is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies involved in the students' poetic construction, thereby enabling the development of effective pedagogical strategies to enhance ESL students' creative writing skills as this seems to be a forgotten area. Drawing on Scudder's communication theory (1980) by emphasizing the significance of communication in human interaction and experience, it becomes evident that effective communication not only shapes our understanding of the world but also plays a crucial role in fostering meaningful connections and facilitating the exchange of ideas, ultimately influencing the dynamics of

various social contexts. This approach delved into the behaviours of individuals or entities in generating, sharing, and understanding messages as part of their pursuit for survival (Amadi & Paul, 2017). As a result, the trajectory of communication theory centres on the dynamics of human communication and its essential role within society. Two research questions have been constructed for this research:

1. What are the structural patterns produced by ESL pre-service teachers at a public university in Malaysia in terms of theme, tone, feeling, and mandate?
2. What are the educational values conveyed in these poems?

Literature Review
Poetry in Education, Poetry Pedagogy and Meaningful Expression through Creative Writing

An English Language syllabus that emphasises literature is thought to provide more comprehensive education. Learning can be well-rounded by encouraging critical thinking and emotional awareness (Lazar, 1993). Importantly, the integration of literature into English Language Teaching (ELT) not only makes pedagogic interactions more captivating but also provides access to authentic materials that enhance language skills and expand linguistic knowledge (Khan & Alasmari, 2018).

Poetry plays a significant role in fostering students' self-awareness and enabling them to find their unique voice (Akiyoshi 2017; Dymoke et al., 2013). In this context, it does not only serve as a tool for self-discovery and contemplation Furman et al (2008) but also as a tool for social recognition through the voices of students (Hanauer, 2014). Voice, in this case, is a dual function; it conveys the writer's thoughts but also communicates with the audience (Iida, 2010).Poetic self-expression is about the poet and how others interpret their writing. When creating poetry, poets contemplate how to best express their feelings and how others would react (Iida, 2012). Hanauer (2011) proposes "meaningful literacy" to teach English to second and foreign language (SFL) learners in a humanistic practical manner. Hanauer believes language acquisition should let people express themselves meaningfully. He emphasises the importance of language learning in personal development and communication, saying it can change one's life. Hanauer's meaningful literacy emphasises the importance of genuine and personally relevant expression in language development.

As such, a framework was developed by Hanauer (2011) to guide writing instruction in the context of second or foreign language (SFL) learning, and his approach centres on the individual learner, personal experiences, historical perspectives, and social context. Hanauer believes that writing instruction can shift the focus to the learner as the central figure in their language learning journey. It also aligns the process of written language production with the expressive needs and intentions of the writer. One practical application of this framework is creative writing, where learners are encouraged to engage in meaningful, authentic, and personally relevant writing experiences. Creative writing offers Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) learners the freedom to openly express their thoughts without the burden of adhering to strict grammatical rules, thereby enhancing the fluency of their writing (Hanauer, 2011). Furthermore, creative writing, including the specific genre of poetry, is known to contribute to various aspects of language development, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, and discourse. It fosters creativity in language usage and engages the right side of the brain, which is associated with emotions, physical sensations, and more (Kırkgöz, 2008). In this context, poetry writing serves as an exemplar of creative writing, embodying these benefits.

Inner Structure

Poetry is a literary genre that creatively conveys the thoughts and emotions of the poet, utilising the full potential of language and emphasising the physical aspects of expression including the physical structure and inner structure (Waluyo, 1995). While a poem can be appreciated from its physical form (e.g. rhythmic patterns and stanzaic structure), its beauty also lies within its inner structure. The term "physical structure" refers to the language framework, whereas the inner structure pertains to the underlying components; "elements that can be internalised or conveyed implicitly" (Yuana et al., 2023). The structure of a literary work represents the internal manifestation of the author's creative creativity. Waluyo (1995) stated the physical structure pertains to the tangible building blocks of poetry, encompassing elements that are visibly present in the text, such as diction, imagination, concrete words, figurative language, rhyme, rhythm, and typography. In commenting on the works of Chretein – a French poet, Lacy (1972) maintains that there is a relationship between form and meaning through the use of inner structure. The inner structure comprises elements such as theme, tone, feeling, and mandate.

According to Gani (2014), the inner structure of a poem comprises four key elements. Firstly, the theme embodies the central subject matter or idea explored within the poem. Secondly, the feeling encapsulates the poet's emotions, attitude, or appreciation towards the subject matter, spanning a spectrum from wonder to sadness, joy to anger, surprise to counsel, and beyond. Thirdly, the tone represents the poet's attitude and approach towards the discussed issues, manifesting in various forms such as patronising, berating, seducing, whining, inviting, or employing satire. Finally, the mandate or message constitutes the underlying purpose that the poet aims to convey, whether it is to evoke anger, inspire enjoyment, or incite rebellion within the reader.

War Poems

Poetry has always been used to describe war. For example, Siegfried Sassoon and George Orwell both wrote about World War I (WWI). War poems were often written to promote patriotism Hamadneh et al (2022) and were considered a form of propaganda. War poems were included in school curricula and were used to influence public perception of masculinity (Kent, 1999). This suggests that war became a symbol of masculinity, with men expected to display physical strength, courage, and protectiveness toward women. Das (2013) observed that war poems not only portrayed soldiers as affected by trauma but also as resilient. This contrasts with Britain's national narrative, which emphasizes compassion alongside its well-known collection of war poetry, rather than offering a nuanced portrayal of the conflict.

In the years leading up to WWI, many Europeans believed that a widespread conflict would not occur in 1914. However, the events of that summer shattered this belief, leading to an unprecedented industrial war fought in trenches (Ağır, 2013). This war introduced innovations such as barbed wire, machine guns, exploding shells, and tanks, fundamentally changing the nature of warfare. As a result, both sides became entrenched in a tactical stalemate characterized by brutal trench warfare. The static nature of trench warfare, compounded by constant bombardment, led to high casualty rates, primarily due to diseases (Araujo, 2014). These harsh conditions profoundly affected the psychological well-being of soldiers, making it difficult for them to express their emotions or discuss their experiences openly (Barber, 2014). Fussell (1975) famously remarked that "Dawn has never recovered from what the Great War did to it" (p. 63), reflecting the lasting impact of the war. Poets such

as Rupert Brooke, Sassoon, Owen, and Robert Graves expressed their traumatic experiences through poetry, using descriptive and persuasive language to convey their emotions and reflections on the war.

Methodology
Research Design
This qualitative study utilised post-positivism to systematically categorise the type of structures employed in poetry compositions by 26 ESL pre-service teachers (PSTs) enrolled at a local public university in Malaysia. According to Bloor and Wood (2006), Content Analysis is needed to delineate the content characteristics of the document by examining "who says what to whom and to what effect." The research design is guided by the theoretical frameworks of Scudder's (Communication Theory, 1980; Waluyo's Inner Structure, 1995).

Population and Samples
This study looked at 70 PSTs enrolled in a Malaysian university's undergraduate bachelor's programme in ESL teaching. The four-year programme covers pedagogy, linguistics, and literary teaching. For the purpose of this study, 26 ESL PSTs whose elective focuses on literature, penned a compilation of poems. They were specifically selected from a larger pool of PSTs enrolled in a poetry course using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves the intentional identification and selection of individuals or groups with a high level of knowledge or expertise on a particular topic of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Despite having more PSTs in the course, only 26 met the criteria for this study. Among these, 21 works were written by female PSTs and 5 by male PSTs, all in their 20s. Each PST had to write a war-themed poem. Later, structured interviews were conducted with 12 conveniently selected PSTs. Convenience sampling involves investigating topics within the population that are easily accessible to the researcher (Given, 2008).

Instruments
In this study, instruments such as the interview protocol and questionnaire were employed to gather data pertinent to the research questions. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on the creative processes and thematic choices of pre-service teachers (PSTs) in regards to war-themed poetry.

With nine predefined questions, the questionnaire covered various aspects such as demographics, creative process, title choice, human experiences, problems encountered in composing war-themed poems, and the perceived educational value of such works. In order to align with the objectives of this study, the questionnaire was self-developed as no current ones matched the need of the researcher. This questionnaire had undergone pilot testing to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the questions, thereby enhancing the validity of the instrument.

The questionnaire then was administered using Google Forms due to its convenience in data collection, processing, and analysis. Potential biases associated with manual data entry were minimized with the utilisation of digital platform, leading to the reliability of the findings. Additionally, standardizing the questionnaire ensured that all PSTs received identical questions, facilitating comparisons and enhancing the instrument's reliability and validity.

Data Collection Procedure

The PSTs took a 14-week course with sufficient case studies to understand poetry elements. Their poems were due at the end of the semester. Data for this study came from 26 poems. They were then categorised to see recurring themes. It includes the identification of internal structures within the poems and subsequent interpretation based on the designated categories: theme, tone, feeling, and mandate.

For the second means of collecting data, a structured interview was also conducted with 12 ESL PSTs through convenience sampling as the researchers had no access to all the PSTs prior to the study and, therefore, had to manage with data provided voluntarily. In the analysis, these PSTs are referred to as PSTs A, B, C, etc.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedure commenced with a systematic organisation of collected poems and interview transcripts, ensuring clear labels and categorization, followed by Content Analysis. After a thorough reading to understand the content and context, content analysis was used to code and categorise. This method sought to discover poem themes including tone, feeling, mandate, and general themes. This approach created a coding framework for content analysis, allowing data to be condensed and summarised to highlight key patterns and excerpts that expressed these elements.

Content analysis of the condensed data revealed relationships, meanings, and connections between themes, tones, feelings, and mandates after coding. Integrating findings from poetry and interviews helped reveal similarities or discrepancies between PSTs' artistic approaches and interview responses.

Validity and Reliability

a) Validity

Several key design and methodological choices controlled the validity of this qualitative study. The research design, grounded in post-positivism helps ensure a systematic categorisation of structural patterns in poetry compositions. Scudder's Communication Theory and Waluyo's Inner Structure guide the study and provide a foundation for the analysis. The population and sample selection demonstrate careful consideration, with 26 ESL PSTs chosen purposively based on their literature focus. This purposive sampling approach aligns with Creswell and Clark's (2011) recommendation for selecting individuals with expertise in the research topic.

Moreover, the data collection instruments which included the war-themed poems and structured interviews, contributed to the content validity of the study. The focus on a single theme ensured relevance to the research questions. The structured interview questions, distributed through Google Forms, enhance reliability by presenting all PSTs with the same set of predefined questions.

b) Reliability

Careful data collection ensures reliability. Poetry training and case studies conducted over 14 weeks provide a structured grounding for PSTs. Final-semester poems provide a consistent dataset for analysis. The use of content analysis, as defined by Bloor and Wood (2006), maintains a systematic and replicable approach to examining the poems and interview transcripts.

Structured interviews using convenience sampling investigated accessible population issues, improving reliability. Predefined questions and Google Forms also enabled consistency of data gathering and reduced biases.

The content analysis procedures, involving systematic organisation, coding, and categorization, are conducted with precision and transparency. The integration of findings from both poems and interviews enhances reliability by cross-verifying perspectives expressed by participants in different contexts.

Findings and Discussion

26 war-themed poems by ESL PSTs at a Malaysian public university were analysed using content analysis. Each poem has a unique title and theme. Table 1 shows the inner structure of these PSTs' poetry.

Table 1
Identification of the Inner Structure of Poems based on War

	The Inner Structure of Poems			
	Theme	Tone	Feeling	Mandate
	Bystander of a War	Thoughtful and reflective	the moon's presence as a sign of hope and comfort in life's difficulties and chaos.	finding comfort and hope in the moon's constant presence throughout hard times.
	Victim of a War	Thoughtful and reflective	soldiers ignore a general's warning about war's harshness until they see its devastation.	to urge an understanding of war's cruelty and the heavy price it demands.
	War Rescuers	Thoughtful and reflective	honours an unidentified leader's bravery, courage, justice, and historical effect.	to inspire others with their courage and principles for generations to come.
	Rise and Fall of a Celebrated Mongol City	Thoughtful and reflective	a brilliant, knowledgeable city that was devastated in a war, destroying valuable books, art, and intelligent people.	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	War of Life	Thoughtful and reflective	compares life to a triathlon, expressing trials, loneliness, and perseverance.	to persevere through difficulties,

	Aftermath of a War	Thoughtful and reflective	scars symbolise strength and resilience by reminding of hardships and accomplishments.	To overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	War of Life	Thoughtful and reflective	poet struggled to combine devotion and happiness.	to persevere through difficulties
	Embracing Freedom	Thoughtful and reflective	accepting heartbreak as a gift of freedom and resilience.	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	Internal Conflict and Doubt	Thoughtful and reflective	overcoming doubts, learning and growing, and finding strength in discovery .	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	Father and Son	Thoughtful and reflective	war's suffering, innocent lives lost, and soldiers' lingering questions of responsibility	to reflect on accountability and the value of peace
	Youth's Struggles	Thoughtful and reflective	the hardships of a young person, potentially without family support	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	Child's trauma	Thoughtful and reflective	the child's perspective during a frightening, secretive, and locked event	to call for attention towards children facing traumatic experiences
	Desire for a Fresh Start	Thoughtful and reflective	resentment of society's tendency to condemn and judge, even when not hostile.	Finding acceptance and understanding in a harsh and unwelcoming world
	Aftermath of a War	Thoughtful and reflective	war victims recall the war and struggle to recover.	To overcome challenges and hope for the future.
	Aftermath of a War	Thoughtful and reflective	war's brutality and desire for peace	To overcome challenges and hope for the future.
	War as a Life Challenge Metaphor	Thoughtful and reflective	continuous struggle filled with challenges and moments of near defeat	To overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.

	nternal Conflict and Doubt	Thoughtful and reflective	the struggles and uncertainties one faces in their journey of learnin and growth.	To overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	ilent Struggle	Thoughtful and reflective	hidden pain hidden by smiles and laughter, but also celebrating strength and resilience from internal difficulties.	to embrace and support this silent fight with love and resilience.
	nner Strength	Thoughtful and reflective	fighting internal conflicts alone, encouraging the reader to discover strength.	to overcome past hardships, and rebuild their inner resilience
	nternal Conflict and Doubt	Thoughtful and reflective	highlights the struggles and uncertainties one faces in their journey of learning and growth.	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	Horrors of War	Thoughtful and reflective	conflict victims experience damage, loss of innocence, and fear of death.	to plead for peace and a reflection on the human cost of warfare
	amilial Bonds	Thoughtful and reflective	family relationships go beyond blood.	escaping toxic family environments
	ympathy for the Victims	Thoughtful and reflective	witnessing war victims' struggles and offering comfort	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead
	tesilience and Endurance	Thoughtful and reflective	highlights the struggles and uncertainties one faces in their journey of learning and growth.	to overcome obstacles and remain hopeful for better days ahead.
	teality versus Illusion	Thoughtful and reflective	A struggle to show reality on Instagram	to show their real lives rather than idealised ones.
	ge Gaps	Thoughtful and reflective	Lack of understanding and communication between older and younger generations causes problems.	To understand each other's opinions, attitudes, and lifestyles with empathy.

Inner Structure

According to Waluyo (2002), the inner structure refers to a framework that develops within a piece of work, which is not discernible to the naked eye or in physical terms. Comprising a theme, feeling or atmosphere, tone, and message or mandate, the inner structure is a concealed but integral aspect of artistic composition. The study involving 26 PSTs tasked with crafting poems centred on the theme of war revealed an intriguing pattern as shown in Table 1. Despite the directive, the majority of the compositions, 15 diverged from the explicit depiction of war, opting instead for a more interpretive approach. While 2 can be interpreted both literally and figuratively. On the contrary, the remaining 9 poems followed the war theme closely based on their explicit themes, imagery, and emotions. All poems shared the same contemplative and reflective tone, indicating a similar understanding on the subject matter despite the diverged approaches in portraying the concept of war.

Literal Representations of War

Analysis of the poems produced by PSTs revealed a consistent thematic focus on war, despite not having been in a war. The use of war as a theme in PSTs' poems showed their deep connection with the theme and the reality of wars. PSTs conducted a lot of research on historical wars to justify their creative narratives, highlighting their efforts to contextualise their work within broader historical and contemporary contexts despite not directly been involved in one. The findings of this study aligned with the historical significance of war poetry, particularly in relation to WWI which brings about the original purpose of war poems . PST A wrote, "*I did some research about 'War' as a theme and also looked into the historical events revolving wars*" while PST J wrote, "*It is unrelated to me, especially the war theme, so I watched movie and video game clips*".

Table 1 showed that there are 9 poems that focused on the literal theme of war. The usage of the word 'war' is used ubiquitously in all 9 poems to reflect a direct connection between the poems and the literal representation of war. To further strengthen the argument, words and phrases associated with weapons such as 'guns', 'gunfire', 'swords', 'metal birds in sky', and 'rocks and pebbles' are used in these poems highlighting how the persona in each poem fought in a war to defend themselves, their loved ones or their country which is a true representation of the initial purpose of war poems in WW1 as seen in Sassoon and Orwell's works. The importance of their contributions lay in their ability to convey a powerful message to the public, educating them about the realities of warfare. They portrayed the common experiences shared by all soldiers (Reisman, 2012).

Findings also revealed a consistent use of evocative words that underscore the imperative for protection. In the analysis, certain key terms emerged as poignant representations of this theme. Poem C, for example, emphasises the concept of protection through the word 'warrior' (line 14) to highlight the valour and defensive role in the face of conflict, *"A warrior for justice, where others may dread"*. From the result of the interview with PST C, she had drawn the idea for her poem from her prior reading as she wrote, "*During the time I was tasked with composing a war-themed poem, coincidentally, I had just read a book on Theodore Roosevelt. I was inspired by his remarkable qualities and achievements associated with his persona, which includes his strength, determination, and leadership*".

Both Poems B (lines 1, 3, 5 and 9) and U (line 7) feature the term 'soldier,' emphasising the dedicated and protective stance taken in times of war. Moreover, Poem A introduces the word 'beacon,' (line 26) symbolising guidance and safety amid turmoil, *'A beacon of hope, transcending the ravages'*, while Poem D invokes the 'phoenix,' a powerful metaphor for

resilience and rebirth, suggesting the enduring hope for protection even in the aftermath of devastation.

The poems consistently used specific words as reflections of the personas' anguish. The term 'cry' emerged consistently across several poems (D, G, J, O, U, W). This serves as a symbol of emotional turmoil and vulnerability of being in conflicts. Moreover, these poems used words that symbolise endurance in wars such as 'scars,' 'loss,' 'blood,' 'death/dead,' and 'pain.' These words are pervasive throughout the poems to showcase the lasting impacts and the harrowing experiences long after the end of conflicts. They also serve as important reminders of the human toll and the psychological and physical wounds caused by the war.

These findings also indicated their loyalty towards the theme of war and how they were able to use their creativity and language skills to relate emotionally and personally to a subject that they have never been a part of – war. It is important to note that when they were given this task, the entire world was abuzz with the news of Russian-Ukraine war which could further influence their creative writing process as revealed in the structured interviews with some of the PSTs.

In the structured interviews conducted via convenience sampling through Google Forms with 12 PSTs (A, B, C, G, W, J, K, M, S, T, U, and Y), 6 of the PSTs (A, B, C, J, U, W) centred their discussions on the literal definition of war. They mentioned getting their ideas from war videos and research on historical and contemporary wars. The possible fact that the Russian-Ukraine war might have influenced their creative writing process adds an additional layer of educational value. These findings also suggest exploring the motivations and influences shaping these PSTs' thematic choices, creating an awareness of how real-world events can impact creative writing process. This connection between current events and creative writing process should motivate PSTs to actively engage with the world to reflect upon, analyse, and respond to societal issues.

Diverged Representations of War

Analysing the PSTs war poems allows analysis on different perspectives of war in creative writing. "Diverged representations" means the PSTs' varied views, emotions, or experiences of war in their poems. These differences appear in the themes, feelings and mandates. These findings supported Hanauer's (2012) concept of 'meaningful literacy' that focuses on fostering genuine and personally relevant expression. Most poems used metaphors to explore themes of conflict, struggle, and internal fights. The analysis shows that these poems explore human experiences, differences, and emotional upheaval rather than war, weaponry, or battlefield imagery.

Findings from the interview aligned with the broader exploration of diverged representations on war in the poems. PST G, for instance, emphasised the use of metaphor to depict an internal struggle between peace and happiness, employing imagery to illustrate the clash of these forces. She acknowledged the challenge of conveying emotional depth while avoiding ambiguity, highlighting the careful selection of words and metaphors. This aligns with the broader findings that certain poems (Poems E, F, G, I, K, P, Q, R, S, T, X, Y) which diverge from literal representations of war, opting for metaphorical exploration of conflict, struggle, and internal battles. PST Y, on the other hand, expressed reluctance toward the war theme, stating that it is not her "cup of tea." She then chose to explore a metaphorical representation of war based on social media, emphasising the contemporary relevance of emotional battles, *"People nowadays are battling more with emotional war. That is why I decided to create a war-theme poetry based on social media".* Similarly, PST T provided insights into the

challenges of expressing specific feelings and ideas while reliving tough moments in the process of crafting a war-themed poem. He ultimately chose to focus on the internal battle within himself as found in his interview, "*I imagined a fight inside us between peace and happiness, like two powerful forces*" aligning with the broader finding that the term 'struggle' is a significant pattern in Poems H, I, P, T, Z, which represent the diverged theme. These poems serve as a metaphor for internal conflicts. In the interview with PST K, he revealed "*I remember tough times I have been through and how they make me feel*", indicating a subjective and creative approach to defining literature and composing poetry. This finding resonates with Hanauer's notion of fostering genuine and personally relevant expression in language learning, as these poems transcend conventional narratives to explore nuanced human experiences (Hanauer, 2011).

However, while the findings support the literature's emphasis on the transformative potential of literature and poetry in language education, they also contest certain aspects. For instance, the literature review suggests that poetry training and creative writing can enhance language skills and foster emotional awareness (Lazar, 1993; Hanauer, 2012). While this may be true for many PSTs' poems, the findings also reveal challenges in expressing emotions and ideas which showcase potential limitations in the effectiveness of poetry writing course alone. Despite the literature review highlighting the role of poems in fostering self-awareness and personal voice Akiyoshi (2017); Hanauer (2011), the findings suggest some PSTs' struggle to find their unique voice in composing war-themed poems.

Educational Values in the Poems

The PSTs interviewed agreed that poetry education helps improve critical thinking, cultural awareness and language skills. This is further proven in the findings about the versatility of creative expression and how these young PSTs in their 20s deal with metaphors to convey human emotions and internal conflicts, thus matching the interview results.

The poems and interviews offered educational insights into both literal and diverged representations of war. In exploring literal war themes, PSTs demonstrated commendable research skills into historical contexts which helped improve their historical awareness. While they supported the literature emphasis on the creative freedom of poetry, they also highlighted the complexities and challenges involved in tackling the theme of war and using their personal experiences in their creative writing.

Despite the challenge, language development is evident through the consistent use of impactful words associated with war. PSTs were also able to use impactful words to describe their own interpretation of the theme – war and how their poems could be used to express emotions they were not able to express verbally. They also recognised the educational values of their war poems as seen in the different poems composed. The possible impact of Russia-Ukraine war along with the research that these PSTs had to do added another value to this study.

Conclusion

This study reflected on how these PSTs engaged with the war theme given, composing both literal and diverged war poems. The findings also show that a significant portion of the PSTs engaged directly with the theme of war based on their research into past war history and the usage of vivid imagery associated to war. On the other hand, the findings indicate that these PSTs employed various creative strategies to approach the theme of war using metaphorical approach. Their poems explore themes of internal conflict, emotional struggles,

and contemporary societal issues, demonstrating the versatility of creative expression among the PSTs.

Moreover, the study highlights the educational value of poetry education such as enhancing language skills and critical thinking abilities as well as gaining a deeper understanding of historical contexts and societal issues.

Moving forward, further study could explore deeper into the effectiveness of poetry training in fostering emotional awareness and personal voice among ESL PSTs to provide valuable insights for language education practitioners. Overall, this study contributes towards understanding the versatile role of poetry in language learning and encourages continued exploration into the transformative potential of creative expression in education, while at the same time helps in developing effective pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing ESL students' creative writing skills.

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