

# Integrating Local Wisdom into EFL Creative Writing: Students' Perceptions of Story-Based Projects



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated EFL students' perceptions of local wisdom-based creative writing through narrative story projects. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study involved 22 undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Palangka Raya who had completed a local story project in a creative writing course. Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while interview data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed two major themes: perceived benefits and challenges. Students perceived local wisdom-based creative writing as beneficial for developing creativity, increasing enjoyment, providing freedom and creative space, supporting motivation, and reducing writing anxiety. Local stories helped students generate ideas, express personal experiences, and integrate cultural knowledge into narrative texts. However, students also encountered challenges, including limited imagination, low motivation, lack of self-confidence, and concerns about grammar and language accuracy. The study suggests that local story projects can provide meaningful and culturally relevant writing experiences for EFL learners, but students still need structured guidance, linguistic support, and encouragement to balance creativity, confidence, and language accuracy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complex skill that involves multiple cognitive and linguistic elements and is regarded as an important competency for EFL learners (Alharthi, 2021). Writing remains an essential means of communication, enabling individuals to express ideas using the target language and opinions, exchange information, communicate feelings, and persuade others despite its cognitively demanding nature (Derakhshan & Shirejini, 2020; Ariani & Arham, 2020). However, undergraduate students often face multiple obstacles in developing this skill, which can hinder their academic progress and educational outcomes (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). These challenges become even more pronounced in academic writing, where students frequently struggle with generating ideas, organizing essays, using appropriate vocabulary, and paraphrasing source materials (Aldayel et al., 2026; Asnas & Hidayanti, 2024). Consistent with these findings, Mahmood (2020) reported that EFL learners in higher education experienced difficulties in locating relevant references, incorporating citations appropriately, maintaining cohesion and coherence, selecting suitable topics, and using language effectively in academic writing.

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Beyond academic writing, EFL learners also encounter difficulties in developing and organizing ideas when producing narrative texts that require creativity, coherence, and personal expression (Falihah et al., 2022). To address these challenges, creative writing presents as an alternative solution that provide learners with opportunities to develop their ideas, enhance linguistic expression, and improve overall writing proficiency (Bingol, 2023). Fitria (2024) explained that creative writing is a writing activity that encourages learners to express ideas, imagination, and creativity through various forms of written expression.

In line with this, Mahito (2023) found that creative writing enhanced students' motivation in learning English by allowing them to express themselves more freely and by increasing their language awareness through greater attention to their own discourse. In addition, creative writing provides learners with opportunities to express personal experiences, develop their own voice, and engage more meaningfully in the writing process (Banegas & Lowe, 2021; Aitken & Graham, 2023). Therefore, creative writing stands as an innovative form of writing that emphasizes narrative, character development, personal opinions, and the use of non-formal language styles that can be beneficial to develop learners' writing skills (Fitria, 2024).

While creative writing provides opportunities for learners to develop ideas and self-expression, its educational value can be further enhanced when it is integrated with meaningful cultural contexts such as local wisdom. Local wisdom refers to knowledge, values, traditions, and cultural practices embedded within a community (Khusyairin et al., 2024). In Indonesia, integrating local wisdom into education is considered important for preserving cultural heritage and making learning more relevant to students' lives (Sulistyowati & W, 2020; Aprianto & Sutarman, 2026 ). Classroom efforts to preserve culture through writing can be seen in tasks in which students create written works based on local cultural themes, such as folktales (Sari et al., 2024). Ansoriyah et al. (2026) found that the use of digital folktales can improve students' writing skills while strengthening cultural literacy, thereby supporting cultural continuity and promoting learner-centered writing practices grounded in local values. Thus, integrating local wisdom into written forms is essential for preserving cultural heritage and socio-cultural values.

Despite its potential to support learners' cultural literacy, there is still limited research investigating the integration of local wisdom-based creative writing in fostering learners' writing skills through the creation of narrative story projects. Most previous studies have focused on using existing folklore, legends, or local stories as teaching materials to improve students' writing skills. However, limited attention has been given to exploring how students construct and express culturally grounded narratives from their own perspectives. As stated by Chen & Wang (2025), writing personal experience narratives improved EFL learners' narrative competence, particularly in terms of narrative performance and coherence. The study also revealed that such activities encouraged emotional expression and provided meaningful literacy experiences. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how students perceive creative writing projects that involve constructing local narratives based on their personal experiences and cultural knowledge.

Given the limited research on creative writing projects that require students to produce local narrative stories based on personal experiences and cultural knowledge, this study investigates students' perceptions of such projects as a means of supporting writing development and cultural heritage preservation among EFL learners.

## **METHODS**

### **Design**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate students' perceptions of creative writing projects in producing local narrative stories to support the development of writing skills and preserve cultural heritage among EFL learners. A descriptive qualitative design was chosen because it focuses on students' perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of local wisdom into creative writing through story-based projects. This approach enabled the researchers to obtain rich

and in-depth data about students' responses. Data were collected through questionnaires as supplementary data and semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data.

### **Participants**

The participants were 22 undergraduate students from Class A, batch 2022, in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Palangka Raya. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria that they had previously taken a creative writing course and completed a local story project as part of the course requirements.

### **Instruments**

This study employed data triangulation by combining a questionnaire and interviews to collect comprehensive data. The questionnaire, designed using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," was used to obtain an initial overview of participants' perceptions and experiences. The questionnaire results also served as the basis for selecting interview participants. The data were organized and analyzed using Microsoft Excel to classify participants' responses. Responses indicating agreement were marked in green, while disagreement was marked in red to facilitate data classification. Based on this classification, six participants were selected from a total of 22 students using criterion-based purposive sampling (matrix technique), representing both agreement and disagreement responses, in order to ensure balanced data and provide more comprehensive insights into the research topic.

### **The Project Stages and Data Collection**

In this study, students participated in several stages of creative writing activities. First, they worked in pairs to encourage collaboration and idea sharing. Second, they selected a story theme based on their personal experiences. Third, they transformed their experiences into fictional narrative stories while maintaining the core values and messages of the original events. Finally, they added illustrations to their stories to enhance visual appeal and support readers' understanding of the narrative.

Interview data were collected to gain deeper insights into participants' questionnaire responses, particularly the reasons for their agreement or disagreement. To obtain rich and detailed data, interviews were conducted with six selected students who were chosen from the questionnaire respondents. The interview process employed a structured format consisting of six predetermined questions. In addition, semi-structured techniques were applied through follow-up and probing questions that emerged during the interview to further explore participants' responses. Prior to the interview, the researchers provided participants with a list of guiding questions to help them prepare their responses. All interviews were conducted individually and audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data collection. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian and later translated and summarized into English. The audio recordings were then transcribed verbatim and analyzed to identify recurring themes related to students' perceptions of creative writing through local story projects.

### **Thematic Analysis for Qualitative Data**

The data were analyzed using a qualitative design supported by survey-based descriptive statistics. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the distribution of participants' responses. The results were presented in the form of percentages to show the frequency of responses, such as "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Meanwhile, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers transcribed the interview recordings verbatim and then conducted coding to identify significant statements. These statements were categorized into themes to capture students' perceptions of creative writing through local story projects. Furthermore, the findings from

the questionnaire and interviews were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data.

### **Ethics**

This study ensured the safety and comfort of all participants throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, the researchers obtained participants' consent for the data collection procedures, including interviews conducted through audio recordings. Participants' identities were kept confidential and anonymized to protect their privacy. All data collected in this study were used only for academic purposes.

### **FINDINGS**

Based on the data analysis, two main themes were identified in this study: (1) the benefits of local wisdom-based creative writing and (2) the challenges encountered by students during the writing process. These themes emerged from the students' interview perspectives and were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and perceptions regarding local wisdom-based creative writing activities.

#### **Students' Perceived Benefits of Local Wisdom-Based Creative Writing**

##### ***Enhancing Creative Development through Local Story Projects***

Most of the students reported that their creativity in writing had developed throughout the project. It is because creative writing activities give them a space to explore the ideas more freely. As confirmed by informant 2:

*“Creative writing through local story projects helps me develop my creativity because I can take ideas from stories or cultures around me. From there, I can develop the plot, characters, and background, making the story more interesting. I feel creative because I can expand and transform the original story into something different.”*

The finding demonstrates that engaging with local story projects provided students with meaningful inspiration while encouraging them to think creatively and express their ideas more imaginatively.

##### ***Increasing Enjoyment and Engagement in Writing***

Compared to other academic assignments, most students reported being more actively engaged in creative writing activities. They perceived creative writing as a more enjoyable and flexible process, as it enabled them to create stories based on their imagination without the constraints of strict academic requirements. This view was supported by the statement of Informant 2:

*“Yes, I think creative writing is more enjoyable because it is more interesting than regular writing assignments. The topics are related to stories or cultures that I am already familiar with, which makes it easier for me to come up with ideas and feel less pressured when writing. In other writing tasks, especially academic ones, I often feel burdened because they are more formal and demanding. However, in creative writing, I have the freedom to create and develop stories, which makes the activity more enjoyable for me since I do not feel as pressured.”*

This finding suggests that creative writing activities increased students' engagement by providing a more enjoyable and less restrictive learning experience. Unlike traditional academic writing tasks, creative writing allowed students to express their ideas freely and draw upon familiar cultural themes, which reduced the pressure commonly associated with academic writing.

##### ***Expanding Freedom of Expression in Narrative Writing***

Most students felt freer to express their ideas creatively and incorporate words, expressions, and cultural elements drawn from their cultural knowledge. As highlighted by informant 6:

*“In creative writing I can use some language that cannot normally be used in academic writing, and I can also adjust the structure or grammar so that the story feels more realistic and fits the*

*local story that already exists. So, it doesn't feel like we always have to be formal. Instead, we can make the characters feel more alive. Therefore, in my opinion, creative writing is more flexible than academic writing. With my imagination and personal ideas, I combine them so that it becomes a story that is truly authentic or according to what I want."*

This statement confirms that local wisdom-based creative writing helps students use certain terms and expressions that are not typically used in academic writing. They also believed that this freedom in writing activities made their narrative stories more vivid and engaging.

### ***Providing Creative Space for Personal and Cultural Storytelling***

Most of the students reported that participating in creative writing activities provided them with greater opportunities to express their personal experiences. They were able to draw inspiration from their childhood memories and incorporate elements of their local environment into their narratives, making the stories more meaningful and personally relevant. Informant 4 said:

*"So, in creative writing, we have more freedom to shape our stories. For example, we can insert our personal experiences, such as memories or childhood moments, into the story and then develop them to make the story more interesting. We can also add elements from our surroundings, like local aspects or people around us, but with different fates or storylines from the real ones. However, those elements are still present in the story and can simply be further developed."*

Although creative writing activities provide students with opportunities to write about their positive memories, they also enable students to reflect on difficult experiences, such as bullying. Through the writing process, students can express their feelings, share personal experiences, and transform negative experiences into meaningful stories. As confirmed by Informant 6, creative writing provided her with a space to motivate herself and inspire others who may have faced similar challenges. He said:

*"Some of the personal experiences I have included are times when I experienced bullying and had to struggle with many people in order to survive in that school. So, I incorporated that into my story. What I mean by 'struggle' is not physical fighting, but rather defending myself by studying more, making more friends, and so on. I included those experiences in my creative writing, but with additional imagination, I developed the plot to make myself appear braver, even though in reality it wasn't exactly like that."*

The findings highlight that creative writing provided students with opportunities to share their personal experiences, ranging from childhood memories to challenging experiences such as bullying. This indicates that local wisdom-based creative writing encouraged students to write their own narrative stories in a more enjoyable way and to inspire others by integrating their personal experiences with elements of local culture and knowledge.

### ***Supporting Students' Motivation to Write***

Several students highlighted that creative writing activities were enjoyable because they were not constrained by strict academic rules. As a result, their motivation to write increased. As confirmed by informant 2: *"In my opinion, this activity quite influences my motivation to write because the topic is interesting and related to local culture. Perhaps that is what makes me more interested in trying to write stories with more creative ideas."* However, some students reported that the project did not fully motivate them to write because they believed that motivation primarily comes from personal intention rather than external activities. Although they considered the creative writing activities enjoyable and engaging, they still found it difficult to maintain their motivation throughout the writing process. As stated by Informant 4: *"In my opinion, both foreign and local stories are not always interesting,*

*although sometimes they can be more varied. So, I think motivation in writing is influenced by our own intention.”*

The findings showed that not all students reported the same experience. Some of them stated that creative writing activities helped increase their motivation to write narrative stories, while others believed that motivation primarily comes from their own intrinsic factors. However, most of the students confirmed that creative writing activities were enjoyable and engaging.

### ***Reducing Writing Anxiety through Familiar Cultural Themes***

Several students reported that creative writing activities help them become more confident in writing narrative stories. The projects allowed them to write based on personal experiences and combine these experiences with cultural elements to make their stories more engaging. As a result, they are not afraid of making mistakes again. As mentioned by informant 3: *“We created a fictional story, but we incorporated elements of Kalimantan culture, such as akar bajakah, tameng talawang, and others. So, I am not too worried about making mistakes.”*

Moreover, the students also explained that another reason they became more confident was that creative writing gave them new insight that writing does not always need to be formal or perfectly structured, which encouraged them to write with greater confidence. Informant 6 said: *“Writing does not always have to be formal, and the structure does not always have to be perfect. Instead, we can express our imagination and experiences in a story, especially by incorporating local cultural elements.”*

The integration of local wisdom elements into narrative story projects helped students become more confident and reduced their anxiety in writing. It also provided opportunities for them to introduce their local culture to readers and contribute to the preservation of local cultural heritage. Moreover, students felt that local wisdom-based creative writing activities helped them realize that writing does not always have to be perfect. Instead, they could express their imagination and cultural knowledge freely, making their narrative stories more meaningful.

### **Students’ Challenges in Local Wisdom-Based Creative Writing**

#### ***Limited Imagination in Developing Original Storylines***

Limited imagination was one of the challenges encountered by students during the creative writing process. Several students reported difficulties in generating and developing original ideas, particularly when they were expected to create narratives independently. This view was supported by the statement of Informant 1: *“For me, the freedom in creative writing actually makes me feel more constrained because my imagination is limited, it becomes difficult to develop ideas. When I look at references, it no longer feels like my own imagination, but rather someone else’s.”* This finding suggests that the freedom offered by creative writing does not necessarily make the writing process easier for all students. While creative writing encourages originality and self-expression, some students experienced difficulties in generating and developing ideas due to limitations in their imagination. As a result, they often relied on external sources for inspiration, which sometimes led them to question the originality and authenticity of their own work.

#### ***Lack of Self-Confidence in Writing***

Most of the students reported feeling uncertain about the quality of their ideas and writing, particularly when comparing their work with that of their peers. As a result, they sometimes doubted their own creativity and became less confident in expressing their ideas through writing. This perspective was reflected in the statement of Informant 1: *“When I see my classmates’ work, I sometimes feel that my imagination is not as good as theirs. It makes me feel less confident about my own writing. I understand that creative writing is intended to provide freedom, but seeing other students produce more creative stories sometimes lowers my confidence. As a result, I tend to compare my writing with others.”* This finding suggests that peer comparison played a significant role in

shaping students' confidence during the writing process. While creative writing encouraged students to express their imagination freely, some students became hesitant when they perceived their peers' work as more creative. Consequently, feelings of self-doubt reduced their confidence in their own ideas and writing abilities.

### ***Low Motivation to Continue Writing***

The interview findings indicated that creative writing activities did not significantly increase the motivation of all participants. Some students reported that their engagement in the project was mainly driven by academic obligations rather than an intrinsic interest in writing. As stated by Informant 3: *"From the beginning, I wrote because it was an assignment for the course, not because of my own desire to write."*

Similarly, some students explained that writing was not one of their strengths or preferred activities. Consequently, the project had only a limited impact on their willingness to write. This perspective was reflected in the statement of Informant 6: *"Because writing is not one of my main strengths or my most prominent skills, I honestly do not really enjoy writing. Therefore, creative writing has not significantly influenced my motivation to write more."*

This finding suggests that creative writing activities do not automatically increase students' motivation to write. Although the project provided opportunities for creativity and self-expression, some students remained primarily motivated by academic requirements rather than personal interest. For students who did not view writing as one of their strengths or preferred activities, the creative writing project had only a limited influence on their willingness to engage in writing beyond the course requirements.

### **Concerns about Grammar and Language Accuracy**

Some students reported experiencing concerns about grammar and language structure during the creative writing process. Although creative writing allowed them to express their ideas more freely, they remained worried about making mistakes in grammar, sentence construction, and language use. This concern was reflected in the statement of Informant 2: *"I still feel quite worried about making mistakes when writing stories, especially mistakes in language use or sentence structure, such as grammar."* This finding indicates that concerns about language accuracy remained a significant challenge for some students during the creative writing process. Although creative writing emphasizes imagination and self-expression, some students still paid considerable attention to grammatical correctness and sentence structure. As a result, worries about making linguistic errors sometimes affected their confidence and created additional pressure when developing their stories.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the findings of the present study by relating them to previous studies and relevant theories. The purpose is to support and interpret the findings obtained from the participants' perspectives. The discussion is organized around the two main themes identified in this study: (1) the benefits of local wisdom-based creative writing and (2) the challenges encountered by students during the writing process.

### **The benefits of local wisdom-based creative writing**

Regarding creative skill development, the findings of this study revealed that students perceived local wisdom-based creative writing as an effective medium for enhancing their creativity. Most of the students reported that local stories and cultural elements provided meaningful sources of inspiration that helped them develop important narrative components, including plot, characters, and setting. Through the integration of local wisdom, students were able to explore ideas more creatively while constructing stories that reflected their cultural knowledge and experiences. This finding aligns with previous studies by Lekawael et al (2025), which found that students perceived that the integration

of local wisdom enhanced their creative abilities, highlighting the educational benefits of incorporating local cultural content into learning activities.

In terms of enjoyment in writing, most participants reported that creative writing activities were more enjoyable compared to traditional academic writing. The freedom to use their own ideas and imagination without strict adherence to formal structures contributed to a more engaging, flexible, and less restrictive writing experience. This condition allowed students to explore their thoughts more openly and reduced the pressure commonly associated with academic writing conventions, such as rigid structure, grammar accuracy, and formal language use. These findings are consistent with Park (2020) and Mardiningrum et al. (2024), who reported that creative writing activities enhance students' positive attitudes toward writing by increasing engagement and providing greater opportunities for self-expression. As a result, students tend to perceive creative writing as a more enjoyable compared to traditional academic writing tasks.

In relation to freedom in writing, most students perceived creative writing as a flexible medium that allowed them to express their ideas, imagination, and cultural knowledge more freely. Unlike academic writing, which is often constrained by formal structures, strict grammar rules, and academic conventions, creative writing provided students with opportunities to experiment with language and storytelling. This is in line with the previous study by Vicol et al. (2024) and Randolph (2023), creative writing encourages learner autonomy through freedom in linguistic choices, narrative structure, and stylistic expression. The flexibility offered by creative writing enables students to explore their own ideas and express themselves in more meaningful ways.

In the context of creative space, the findings revealed that creative writing provided students with meaningful opportunities to express their personal experiences and imagination more freely. Most of the students reported, they were able to draw inspiration from their own lives, including childhood memories, daily experiences, and challenges they had encountered. By integrating these experiences into their stories, students were able to create narratives that were more personal, authentic, and emotionally engaging. This result aligns with the study conducted by Randolph (2023) who argues that when students write based on personal experiences and emotions, they engage in a meaningful process that supports self-discovery and deeper expression. The findings suggest that creative writing allows students not only to construct fictional narratives but also to reflect on their lived experiences and transform them into meaningful stories. However, one important consideration is that the project should promote a respectful and supportive environment for all narrative stories written by students. This is essential to ensure that students do not lose confidence as a result of comparing their work with that of their peers.

Regarding motivational support, the findings indicate that creative writing through local story projects served as a motivating factor for many students. The integration of local cultural themes and the opportunity to express creative ideas made the writing process more engaging and meaningful. As a result, several participants reported increased interest in writing and greater willingness to develop their stories creatively. Several students appeared to be more motivated because they were encouraged to explore topics that were familiar and personally relevant to them. The incorporation of local stories and cultural elements allowed participants to connect their writing with their own backgrounds and experiences, making the writing process more meaningful. Furthermore, the opportunity to develop original storylines and express their creativity gave students a greater sense of ownership over their work. These factors may have contributed to their increased interest and enthusiasm in completing the writing tasks. This is relevant with the previous study by Banegas & Lowe (2021), who reported that participation in creative writing increased learners' motivation and engagement by providing meaningful, student-centered writing experiences.

In terms of reducing anxiety, several participants reported that the opportunity to write based on personal experiences and integrate local cultural elements made the writing process feel more familiar and enjoyable. As a result, they were less concerned about making mistakes and more willing to express their ideas freely. Furthermore, students explained that creative writing changed their

perception of writing by helping them realize that writing does not always need to be highly formal or perfectly structured. This understanding reduced the pressure often associated with academic writing and encouraged them to focus more on communicating their ideas creatively. The integration of local wisdom also contributed to this process, as students were writing about topics that were familiar and meaningful to them. The finding aligns with Lee & Yoon (2023), who found that students perceived familiar topics as easier to write about, suggesting that familiarity can facilitate the writing process. In addition, Suprianto & Sutarman, (2026) reported that the integration of local wisdom elements can enhance students' engagement in writing activities. The combination of familiar topics and local wisdom elements may help EFL learners reduce the pressure often associated with academic writing, making the writing process more meaningful and accessible.

### **Challenges Encountered by Students During the Writing Process**

Although students perceived various benefits from local wisdom-based creative writing activities, they also encountered several challenges throughout the writing process. Some students encountered difficulties related to idea generation, self-confidence, writing motivation, and concerns about grammar and language structure. These challenges suggest that while creative writing provides opportunities for self-expression and creativity, not all students experience the process in the same way.

Regarding limited imagination in story development, several participants had difficulty generating and expanding ideas for creative stories. Although creative writing supports self-expression, some students felt they lacked the creativity to develop original storylines, characters, and plots. AI helped some students expand their ideas into more structured narratives. As Informant 3 stated, "From the AI-generated ideas, I further developed them according to my own preferences. So, it was partly AI and partly my own creativity." This finding aligns with George and Lasher (2024), who noted that idea generation is influenced by individual differences. Febriana et al. (2023) also found that limited ideas are a common challenge in creative writing. Therefore, AI support should be balanced with narrative development (Chen, 2024).

In terms of lack of self-confidence in writing, most of the students felt uncertain about the quality of their writing and were concerned that their ideas might not be as interesting or well-developed as those of their peers. Peer comparison also emerged as a factor influencing students' self-confidence. When students perceived their classmates as having better writing skills or more creative ideas, they tended to underestimate their own abilities. Such comparisons sometimes led them to question the value of their ideas and become less confident in their writing. These feelings often made them hesitant to express their ideas fully during the writing process. Although creative writing provides greater freedom for self-expression, not all students felt confident in utilizing that freedom effectively. As a result, they were more likely to hesitate, revise excessively, or rely on external sources for reassurance before completing their work. This finding aligns with the previous study by Mitchell et al. (2021), who emphasized that writing self-efficacy is influenced not only by individual abilities but also by the social and learning environment. As students interact with their peers, they may evaluate their own writing abilities in relation to others, which can affect their confidence in writing. This finding also aligns with Cui et al. (2021), who highlighted that writing self-efficacy, or confidence in one's writing ability, plays a crucial role in writing performance. Students who perceive others as more capable writers may become less confident in their own abilities, which can discourage them from expressing their ideas freely.

In the context of low writing motivation, the findings revealed that creative writing activities did not necessarily increase students' motivation to write. Although creative writing provided opportunities for creativity and self-expression, some students remained primarily motivated by academic requirements rather than personal interest in writing. For these students, participation in the creative writing project was driven more by the need to complete course assignments than by an intrinsic desire to engage in writing activities. This finding is consistent with Alzubi & Nazim (2024)

who emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation in EFL writing. Their study found that students were more motivated to write when they were able to engage with topics that matched their personal interests and preferences. In addition, Al-Shboul et al. (2023) found that learner autonomy was positively associated with intrinsic motivation in EFL writing. However, autonomy alone may not be sufficient to enhance motivation when students do not perceive writing as an enjoyable or personally meaningful activity. Thus, students who lacked personal interest in writing tended to demonstrate lower levels of motivation.

A similar perspective was expressed by Informant 4, who stated, *“I think writing motivation is influenced by our own personal interest and intention, not simply by whether the story is local or foreign.”* This suggests that students’ motivation to write is shaped more by their individual interests than by the source or cultural background of the writing topic itself. As a result, the local wisdom-based creative writing project had only a limited influence on the motivation of some students to engage in writing beyond the course requirements. These findings indicate that activities designed to promote creativity may not automatically enhance motivation for students who do not perceive writing as one of their strengths or preferred activities.

Regarding grammar and language structure, the findings revealed that language accuracy remained an important concern for some students despite the flexible nature of creative writing activities. Although creative writing encourages students to focus on imagination and self-expression, some students continued to pay considerable attention to grammar, sentence construction, and appropriate language use. This finding suggests that students may still associate successful writing with linguistic accuracy, even when engaging in less formal writing tasks. This finding aligns with Fan & Wang (2024) who found that perceived writing difficulty and writing anxiety are important factors affecting EFL students’ writing performance. Concerns about grammar and sentence structure may therefore create additional pressure for learners, even in relatively flexible writing activities such as creative writing. As a result, students may become more focused on avoiding linguistic errors than on developing and expressing their creative ideas. This tendency can limit the benefits of creative writing, as students may hesitate to experiment with language and fully explore their imagination. Therefore, although creative writing provides greater freedom for self-expression, some students may still require linguistic support and constructive feedback to help them balance language accuracy with creativity during the writing process.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that local wisdom-based creative writing activities contributed to students’ writing development, particularly in generating ideas and incorporating cultural elements into narrative stories. Local wisdom-based creative writing provided meaningful opportunities for students to develop their creativity, enjoy the writing process, express their ideas more freely, utilize personal experiences as sources of inspiration, increase motivation, and reduce writing anxiety. The integration of local cultural elements enabled students to create narratives that reflected their cultural knowledge and experiences while making the writing process more meaningful and engaging. However, the findings also indicated that some students encountered several challenges during the writing process. These challenges included limited imagination in story development, lack of self-confidence, low writing motivation, and concerns about grammar and language structure. The findings suggest that while local wisdom-based creative writing can support creativity and self-expression, its effectiveness may vary depending on students’ individual characteristics, interests, confidence levels, and writing abilities. Therefore, educators should provide appropriate guidance, encouragement, and linguistic support to help students maximize the benefits of creative writing while overcoming the challenges they encounter during the writing process. Future studies may investigate the implementation of local wisdom-based creative writing in different educational contexts or explore instructional strategies that can further enhance students’ creativity, motivation, and writing confidence.

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