Indonesian EFL Students' Perceptions of the Cognitive, Affective, and Pedagogical Advantages and Challenges of Creative Writing

Parlindungan Pardede[1]

ABSTRACT

Research has shown the significant role of students' perceptions in learning as it correlates with their learning motivation, engagement, and achievement. Yet, research addressing students' perceptions of creative writing (CW) is still meager. This study aims at investigating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' perceptions of cognitive, affective, and pedagogical advantages and challenges of CW. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, data were collected from 34 students of an Indonesian university through a survey and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The questionnaire for the survey was designed based on a framework incorporating established cognitive, affective, and pedagogical theories relevant to writing instruction. The quantitative data was analyzed using the descriptive and Spearman's rho statistical operations in JASP 0.19.3 version. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically to elaborate and triangulate the quantitative data for in-depth analysis. The results show that the students have a positive perception, with various strength, of the cognitive, pedagogical, and affective advantages and challenges of CW and there is a moderate significant negative correlation between the students' perceived advantages and challenges. This article ends with some pedagogical suggestions.

[1] Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia. Email: parlpard2010@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3078-6596

…

INTRODUCTION

Research has suggested creative writing (henceforth, CW) as a powerful engaging tool for enhancing learners' academic writing (Banegas & Lowe, 2021; Maloney, 2022; Santillán-Iñiguez & Rodas-Pacheco, 2022) and improving language proficiency (Bozdoğan & Ekmekçi, 2024; Rehman, 2022). Defined broadly as an act of writing involving exploration, imagination, emotion, and self-expression (Yeh, 2017), CW can be a creative instructional method that promotes critical thinking (Poce & Amenduni, 2019), enhances memory (Shah et al. (2013), and hones creativity (Arshavskaya, 2015). Considering its potential to facilitate engaging and effective learning processes, more and more countries, including China, Japan, Mexico, Taiwan, Thailand (Chamcharatsri & Iida, 2022; Yeh, 2017), Kenya (Maninji et al., 2020), Turkey (Şenel, 2018) and Indonesia (Herawati, 2021), have been integrating it into the curricula of their English as a foreign language (EFL) programs.

Research addressing CW has increased alongside the rise of CW infusion into EFL curricula. Major foci include teaching scenarios (Pokhrel, 2023), pedagogical approaches (Kumar, 2020; Maninji et al., 2020), and facilitating CW using poetry (Manara, 2015) and short story (Herawati, 2021). Other studies concentrated on CW activities advantageous impact on academic writing performance (Maloney, 2022; Santillán-Iñiguez & Rodas-Pacheco, 2022), writing motivation, autonomy, and audience awareness (Yeh, 2017). Some other foci are the beneficial effect of CW activities on CW skills enhancement (Kirmizi, 2015), language proficiency improvement (Banegas & Lowe, 2021; Bozdoğan & Ekmekçi, 2024), students' emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in learning (Larasaty & Yulianawati, 2019). Other studies dealt with the use of technological tools in CW classrooms (Surfaifel et al., 2023; Woo et al., 2023).

The studies above have provided us a broader understanding of the CW teaching approach, techniques, and tools, and some other aspects of CW implementation in EFL settings as well. Yet, research addressing learners' perspectives is still meager, whereas this issue is crucial in learning, because students' perceptions significantly correlate with their learning motivation, engagement, and achievement (Jones & Carter, 2019; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Considering its essential roles, our limited understanding of this issue can be disadvantageous to CW instructions. Therefore, studying it is urgent.

Mardiningrum et al. (2024) involved six Indonesian university students having experienced CW activities in some courses to examine students' perceptions of CW and the advantages of its practices. They collected the data through an in-depth interview. The results show that the students view CW as interesting and important to learn in higher education due to its crucial role in expressing emotions, honing creativity and imagination, and refining writing and language skills. Yet, the students perceived CW as challenging in nature. Thus, it requires clarity in its instructional delivery.

 Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, Yeh (2017) explored eight Taiwanese undergraduate students' experiences while attending a one-year CW course as an autonomous, free-choice writing assignment. Collecting data through an in-depth interview and students' creative writing works analysis, she found that the participants viewed CW as an unstructured writing activity that encourages thinking and offers opportunities to cultivate imagination. Based on the findings, she suggested that CW boosted students' motivation to write for pleasure and for peer readers, promoted their autonomy, and augmented their audience awareness.

Burkšaitienė (2014) investigated EFL students' perceptions of whether they are creative or not and the expectations that drive them to engage in CW learning process. Data was collected using some close-ended and open-ended questions grounded on a perception-based lens and the investment theory of creativity. The results showed that 50% of the participants viewed themselves to be creative, but a majority of them was not involved in CW. Those who joined the CW courses expected to acquire a deeper understanding of creativity and CW, experience in CW process, specific knowledge about creative writers, mastering English as their instructional

medium, and learning more about themselves. The study, despite its small sample, highlights the need for environments supporting intellectual ability and learner agency.

These studies suggest that creativity in writing can cause both cognitive benefits and motivational risks. Despite these insights, no study has systematically explored students' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of EFL CW in terms of cognitive, affective, and pedagogical aspects. This study responds to that gap employing a hybrid framework that incorporates established cognitive, affective, and pedagogical theories relevant to writing instruction. Such a framework supports both the design of a multidimensional instrument and the interpretation of student responses. The results can offer insights to CW instructors to help them design instructions that effectively motivate students to engage in CW classrooms. This study also attempts to see the correlation between students' perceived advantages and challenges. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of the cognitive advantages and challenges of EFL CW?
2. What are students' perceptions of the affective advantages and challenges of EFL CW? What are students' perceptions of the pedagogical advantages and challenges of EFL CW?
3. Is there a significant correlation between students' perceived advantages and challenges?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since CW is a multidimensional cognitive work engaging a dynamic synergy of diverse mental processes, including language processing, attention, imagination, and memory (Oladimeji, 2024), CW in EFL contexts is increasingly recognized not only as a linguistic exercise but also as a cognitive endeavor involving affective and pedagogical factors that fosters imagination, fluency, confidence, problem-solving, and personal expression. This indicates that EFL learners involve their language proficiency, cognitive resources and skills, affective factors (such as confidence and self-efficacy), and pedagogical dimensions, including the instructional design implemented. Thus, to study students' perceptions of CW in EFL contexts more comprehensively, synthesizing key theories underpinning its cognitive, affective, and pedagogical dimensions is necessary.

Cognitive Dimensions

As a cognitive process, CW activates a range of mental processes such as idea generation (by utilizing memory, imagination, and associative thinking to fuel originality), planning and organization of ideas, language processing (through which syntax, semantics, and stylistic choices are constantly negotiated), and metacognition that facilitate learners to reflect on their thinking and revise their writings. Hayes (2012) found that planning, a predominantly cognitive practice, is crucial in the CW process. Skilled writers employ outlining, storyboarding, and creating stories to effectively structure their ideas and develop coherent narratives. Since imaginative capacity has a deep cognitive correlation with linguistic precision (Nosratinia & Razavi, 2016), CW can help learners at all levels of proficiency to learn and use grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, phonology, and discourse (Bozdoğan & Ekmekçi, 2024; Maley, 2012). Yet, students' inadequate grammar knowledge and vocabulary can restrict students' ability to express nuanced ideas creatively (Anh, 2019). Causing them to rely on their native language structures, resulting in literal translations and reduced fluency in English (Jurado, 2023). Moreover, the higher-order thinking skills in Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001)—creating, evaluating, and analyzing—play a central role in creative writing tasks, especially when which students need to generate original narratives rather than recall facts, critique and refine their own story structures, and analyze language choices to enhance clarity and engagement (Mohammed, 2019).

Metacognition theory, i.e., 'thinking about thinking' (Beran et al., 2012), has been widely accepted as a theoretical framework for researching language learner strategies in the field of ESL/EFL education (Zhang & Zhang, 2019). In writing, students' metacognition can help in prior knowledge activation, practicing new writing strategies, reflecting on their strengths and

…

challenges while completing assignments, and articulating the differences between genres, disciplines, and courses. In CW, metacognitive strategies enable students to set goals for each drafting stage, self-monitor vocabulary use and syntactic variety, and reflect on their decision-making to improve subsequent drafts. Sun and Zhang (2023) claimed that metacognitive experiences, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating, considerably affect writing fluency and complexity.

Affective Dimensions

In terms of affective dimensions, CW is perceived as emotionally expressive, allowing students to explore personal feelings and imagination. To accomplish a CW piece, students should be highly motivated and engaged (Syrewicz, 2023), employ self-expressions in the exploration of identity, values, and inner experiences (Xiao, 2024), and make use of empathy while crafting characters and narratives (Golab & Barbot, 2024). Self-Determination Theory, a theory that deals with affective dimensions, suggests that autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). That is why when students choose topics aligned with personal interests, receive mastery-oriented feedback, and collaborate in supportive peer groups while writing creatively, they will experience higher enjoyment and persistence in writing. Pajares and Valiante (2006) accentuated that providing students with greater choice in writing tasks is essential as it increases autonomy and generates greater self efficacy, which, in turns, enhances motivation. Chen et al.'s (2023) study focusing on how learners emotionally engaged during collaborative peer feedback in second language writing using the EWT model—which defines affective engagement as students' emotional responses including enthusiasm, interest, and enjoyment during writing (Philp & Duchesne, 2016), revealed that affective engagement varied widely—some students felt empowered and connected, while others experienced discomfort or disengagement. This indicated that emotional responses shape students' willingness to revise and participate in CW tasks.

Another factor that supports affective engagement is feedback. Teachers' feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing affective engagement, especially when it is personalized and encouraging (Zhang & Hyland, 2018) .

Pedagogical Dimensions

The teaching of CW in EFL contexts in pedagogical dimensions is drawn from a rich combination of pedagogical theories—each offering distinct lenses for understanding how learners engage with language, creativity, and expression. The first is constructivism, proposing that knowledge arises through an active construction process (Mascolo & Fischer, 2005). Thus, while engaging in CW tasks, students explore identity, personal experience, culture, and imagination to construct meaning. Constructivist theory supports CW well due to two reasons. First, it supports personal meaning-making. Second, constructivist environments hone intrinsic motivation, which fuels CW. Since CW is essentially a personal meaning-making, it facilitates students processing their own experiences and ideas and linking new knowledge with personal narratives. While constructing stories, students obviously explore complex concepts like characterization, cause-and-effect, and emotional expression. In such activities, constructivist environments provide intrinsic motivation highly required for CW.

The second pedagogical theory is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which suggests that human learning is mainly a social process and that one's cognitive functions are formed based on his interactions with more skilled people around him. The emphasis on social learning indicates that writing can be a collaborative endeavor; in which peer feedback and group brainstorming sessions encourage students to view ideas from multiple perspectives, fostering empathy and teamwork. Research shows that feedback enhances students' writing abilities in terms of vocabulary, grammar, story structure, and creativity (Fatima et al., 2024). Viewing from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, as a collaborative endeavor, CW could be optimally actualized in

…

writing communities, where students, peers, and mentors co-construct texts and provide a platform for emotional and motivational support, linguistic development, and creative engagement. Peer interactions in writing community boosts genre awareness and vocabulary growth and enhance creative engagement. Herawati (2021) found that peer groups nurtured two key capacities—inciting inspiration via cultural observation and synthesizing diverse inputs into original stories. This demonstrates how social scaffolding drives creative output.

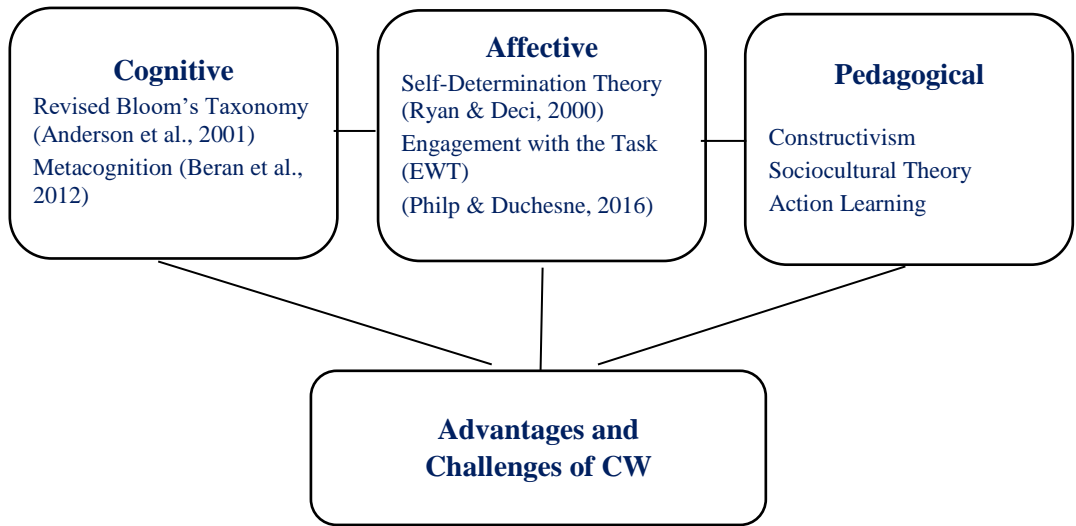| **Cognitive**	**Affective**	**Pedagogical**
Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001)	Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)	Constructivism
Metacognition (Beran et al., 2012)	Engagement with the Task (EWT) (Philp & Duchesne, 2016)	Sociocultural Theory
		Action Learning

Advantages and Challenges of CW

Figure 1. **Conceptual Framework**

The third pedagogical theory is action learning, a process and tool that enables individuals and groups to learn while solving problems and implementing actions (Marquardt & Banks, 2019). Action learning assumes that learning originates from taking action and asking discerning questions about crucial problems or attractive opportunities. Its central process includes action and feedback, asking fresh questions, learning from and with peers, and forming a multiplier effect between individual and organizational learning. Applied to CW, action learning involves drafting narratives (action), reflecting on feedback and self-assessment (learning), and revising drafts based on insights (new action). Such a cyclical approach encourages continuous improvement and deeper internalization of writing strategies.

One of the common challenges related the importance implementing CW as iterative cycles of action and reflection is the insufficient time allocated to CW, whose learning activities naturally needs longer time than that in the traditional writing tasks. Time constraints also limit students' cognitive and affective engagement, as their opportunity to synthesize ideas, imagine scenarios, and make stylistic choices is reduced. Many curricula also still overemphasize product over process in writing courses leading to the neglect of the recursive nature of writing. Many CW instructional designs often rely on Western literary models, which may feel unfamiliar or irrelevant to students, and neglect local cultural narratives. Consequently, the courses are not culturally responsive.

The conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1) translates these theoretical insights into three analytical dimensions: cognitive, affective, and pedagogical. The framework shows that this study looks into some areas in the context of EFL CW class, namely conception, practices, and resources, in order to tease out how Indonesian students and teachers utilize their cultural-intellectual resources to enhance students' creative writing skills.

…

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2018), aiming at providing relevant information necessitated to understand students' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of CW in terms of cognitive, affective, and pedagogical aspects efficiently. It begins with quantitative data collection, and proceeds with qualitative data collection intended to help explain and get more insights to the quantitative results previously obtained.

Participants

Conducted in February 2024, this study involved 34 students of English Language Education study program of Universitas Kristen Indonesia (ELE UKI), Jakarta. The participants were selected purposively by asking students having attended CW course in the study program to participate.

Instruments

Data were collected through a survey and semi-structured in-depth interviews. A 50-item questionnaire was administered in the survey to measure the participants' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of CW across cognitive, affective, and pedagogical dimensions. The data was gauged by asking the participants to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, score 1, to strongly agree, score 5. The instrument was validated via expert review and pilot testing with 5 students. The result of the pilot test showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire is (r=0.82) indicating a high degree of internal consistency. Therefore, the questionnaire is considered reliable. The survey was conducted online through Google Forms apps.

The interviews were conducted in-person one week after the data obtained from the survey was analyzed. Five participants randomly selected from the sample took part in the interviews. Taking place in 20-30 minutes per interview, the interviewees were asked some questions to get more insights for elaborating and triangulating the quantitative data obtained through the survey.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using the descriptive and Spearman's rho statistical operations in JASP 0.19.3 version. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically to elaborate and triangulate the quantitative data for in-depth analysis.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, informed consent was ensured by making the participants fully aware of the research purpose, methods, and benefits. Their participation was voluntary, without any coercion or undue influence. The researcher also guaranteed that the participants' confidentiality by maintaining anonymity and ensuring the data would not be disclosed without permission.

Expected Contributions

This study will hopefully deliver three essential results: (1) a validated, context-sensitive instrument for gauging EFL students' perceptions of CW in terms of cognitive, affective, and pedagogical aspects, (2) insights into how contemporary theories manifest in EFL CW classrooms, and (3) practical recommendations for designing EFL CW instructional models at undergraduate level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students' Perceptions of CW Cognitive Advantages

As shown in Table 1, the participants leaned towards 'Agree' to 'Strongly agree' for the cognitive advantages of learning CW, reflecting broadly positive perceptions of CW's cognitive advantages, with mean scores generally above the 3.7 threshold. The participants' strongest

…

agreement goes to the opportunity to connect their personal experiences with what they write in English CW (mean: 4.206). Since the standard deviation (SD) of this response is 0.687, the students' opinion of this item is positive and consistent. The qualitative data obtained from the interview clarifies this finding. Interviewee B accentuated, "CW facilitates me to write about what I have gone through." The next strongest agreement goes to English vocabulary improvement through CW activities (mean: 4.118). With the SD of 0.880, this perception is positive and relatively consistent. Through the interview, Interviewee D clarified this. She believed CW had enabled her to express her real experiences. These findings confirm Pajares & Valiante's (2006) finding showing that the opportunity to connect their personal experiences with what they write in CW is advantageous, for it grants them a greater choice, an essential factor for generating autonomy and self-efficacy that encourage them to optimize the resources they have to produce the best work. Writing based on their own experiences also facilitates students employing self-expression in the exploration of identity, values, and inner experiences (Xiao, 2024), which hones creativity.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Advantages of CW

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev,
CW activities have improved my English vocabulary activities improved my English vocabulary	4.118	0.880
CW tasks have enhanced my grammatical accuracy	3.676	0.945
CW has helped to write more fluently.	4.088	0.621
CW helps me express my feelings more clearly	3.765	0.855
CW helps me connect my personal experiences with what I write in English	4.206	0.687
CW enables me to outline ideas.	3.824	0.834
CW enables me to express my ideas imaginatively in English.	3.912	0.793
CW improves my ability to think creatively and solve problems in writing	4.088	0.866
CW helps me understand the structural conventions of different creative genres.	3.471	0.961

Their weakest agreement goes to their mixed opinion (M: 3.471) of the contribution of the CW course to their understanding of the structural conventions of different creative genres (e.g., poetry, short story) and to the role of CW to enhance grammar knowledge. Interviewee A clarified the former by saying, "The CW course I attended focused only on writing short stories and personal essays. I did not deal with poetry and play in the course." Interviewee C added, "Since the course did not include poetry and play, how can it familiarize me with the structural conventions of poetry and play?" The moderate agreement to the latter (M: 3.676), despite the relatively high SD (0.945) suggests variability in grammatical learning outcomes. This is possibly due to the implicit grammar learning applied in the course. Interviewee B clarified, "We dealt with grammar implicitly, particularly when someone found interesting grammatical structures in the works we are analyzing."

To sum up, the high means in personal connection and use of creative thinking reveal CW's power to engage the students' cognition and emotion, which, in turn, enhance writing skills and language proficiency. Lower mean scores in genre awareness and grammatical gains point to instructional areas that may need more deliberate structuring. Finally, the SD variability (SDs > 0.85) suggests that student experiences are not uniform—potentially influenced by task design, instructor feedback, or proficiency level.

Students' Perceptions of CW Cognitive Challenges
Table 2 shows that the perceptions leaned towards 'Neutral' to 'Agree' for the cognitive challenges of learning CW. This suggests a moderately positive response. Their strongest agreement (M: 3.706) goes to the statement 'I don't have enough vocabulary to describe my

…

ideas.' With the SD of 0.970, this opinion clusters around "Neutral" and "Agree," with low disagreement. This finding indicates that vocabulary is a 'double-edged sword' for the students in doing CW. On one side, CW helps them develop vocabulary. On the other side, vocabulary causes CW challenging. Through the interview, Interviewee C elucidated that she always experienced a lack of vocabulary to express her ideas as precisely as possible. She added, "I often need to consult a dictionary or thesaurus to get the best diction. This may be tiring, but it enriches my vocabulary."

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Challenges of CW

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
The general topics assigned in CW make me uncertain of what to write.	3.353	0.812
The flexible rules in CW sometimes make me confused.	3.176	0.869
I prefer writing with structure, like essays or reports	3.382	0.985
I find it hard to start a CW task.	3.324	0.945
I don't have enough vocabulary to describe my ideas.	3.706	0.970
I often make grammar mistakes when writing creatively.	3.618	0.888
I'm not sure how to use figurative language,	2.912	0.933
I struggle to organize my thoughts into a story,	3.206	0.914
I find it hard to revise my drafts effectively.	3.324	0.976

Their weakest agreement (mean score: 2,912) goes to the statement 'I'm not sure how to use figurative language,' indicating they did not encounter significant problems in using figurative language in crafting their creative works. Interviewee A clarified this by elucidating that while attending literature class before joining the CW course, she and her classmates had been introduced to stylistic devices and were assigned to pick up the figurative language used by authors in short stories and poems they read. Such activities had raised their awareness of figurative language. Moreover, since they were assigned to craft creative texts allowing the use of personal and cultural expressions, they felt quite free to translate Indonesian figurative expressions into English and used them in their creative texts.

To recap, the moderate means of the participants' opinion of the cognitive challenges of learning CW in demonstrate the demand for students to engage cognitively while doing CW. Writing is essentially a cognitive process. Lower mean scores in disagreement to uncertainty in using figurative language and confusion potentially caused by the flexible, unstructured nature of CW denote that this areas need no more special attention in the next CW instruction design. Yet, the SD variability, especially those with SDs > 0.85 suggests that student experiences are not uniform, probably due to participants' knowledge background, English proficiency level, or instructor feedback.

Students' Perceptions of CW Affective Advantages

As shown in Table 3, the participants leaned towards 'Agree' for the affective advantages of learning CW. Their strongest agreement goes to their having higher motivation when they could choose the topics to write (mean: 4.0), suggesting the importance of giving freedom to students to write their self-selected topics. In the interviews. Interviewee B accentuated this by stating. "While writing a topic I chose, I think it is something I know best, and I feel ownership of the writing. This makes me feel the writing project is something I want to do, not something I have to do." This confirms research results showing that writing about familiar or self-chosen topics reduces extraneous load and allows greater planning and revision effort (Sujannah & Cahyono, 2017).

The second top agreement goes to the possibility to express their emotions while writing (mean: 3.882), signifying the students' increasing confidence to use CW as an outlet to convey

…

feelings, dilemmas, and experiences. Interviewee B said, "CW eases me to explore my inner world and express my happiness, sorrows, hopes, or fears. For instance, when I am distressed, sharing what I feel with an imaginary figure by writing a letter can be helpful." This finding confirms research revealing that creative expression can increase the outcomes of mental health by nurturing self-esteem, resilience, and a sense of belonging (Kern et al., 2015).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Affective Advantages of CW

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
I enjoy writing when I can use my imagination	3.735	0.994
CW allows me to express my emotions in English	3.882	0.880
CW enables me to use my life experiences as the materials.	3.765	0.923
CW makes me more confident in using English.	3.882	0.946
I feel more motivated when I can choose my own topic to write.	4.000	0.778
After attending CW course, I like to write for personal interest (not only my study assignments)	3.412	0.925
I am confident in my ability to write creatively in English	3.529	0.929
CW in English has increased my overall interest in the language	3.794	0.770

The third top agreement, that CW increased their confidence in using English (mean: 3.882), reflects the power of CW to refine students' English proficiency. Interviewee C clarified this by stating, "Writing stories or personal essays pushes me to enlarge vocabulary and apply grammatical rules in a real context. This, in turn, boosts my confidence in using English." Other perceptions in this section indicate moderate confidence in the ability to use life experiences and imagination in CW and to write creatively in English.

To sum up, the moderate means of the participants' perceptions of the affective advantages of learning CW demonstrates that the CW course had had most students engaged affectively up to a moderate level. Since CW is an act of writing involving imagination and emotion, to help students gain better achievement, the instructional designs need to promote higher affective engagement.

Students' Perceptions of CW Affective Challenges

Table 4 reveals that the participants tended towards 'Disagree' to 'Neutral' for CW affective challenges. Their strongest agreement goes to their occasional nervousness before crafting a creative piece (mean: 3.412), and their weakest agreement goes to their uncomfortable feeling to write creatively. The occasional nervousness before working on a creative piece was clarified by Interviewee A, who said. "I never did CW in the secondary school. It's new and challenging. I think that's why I sometimes felt nervous when I should craft a creative piece. Yet, the more I engaged and finished creative pieces, my nervousness withered."

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Affective Challenges of CW

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
I don't know how to make my writing interesting for readers	3.118	0.880
Sometimes I feel nervous before writing.	3.412	0.783
I don't have the talent to write creatively.	2.853	0.744
I feel uncomfortable writing creatively in English	2.794	0.914
I worry that my creative writing is not good enough	3.206	0.946
I feel nervous sharing my creative writing with others.	3.147	0.925

Unlike the students' nervousness, which is temporary, their uncomfortable feeling, or anxiety, emerging when they were writing creatively was due to their linguistic insecurity, lack of

…

creative writing skills, and fear of judgment. In the interview sessions, E said, "Considering that my English knowledge and skills are not yet appropriate to generate a good creative piece often made me anxious, especially when I should present the work to my classmates. Though I know the presentation is meant to get feedback, I'm afraid it has too many weaknesses and errors. Thanks to the easy accessibility of various CW samples. Reading them helps me overcome the uncomfortable feeling."

The standard deviations of the students' perceptions of affective challenges show moderate response variability, ranging from 0.744 to 0.946. It suggests that participants' opinions were somewhat dispersed, with a combination of agreement and disagreement.

Students' Perceptions of CW Pedagogical Advantages

As shown in Table 5, the participants tended towards 'Agree' for CW pedagogical advantages. The top three agreements go to the helpfulness of CW samples and modelling provided in the classroom (mean: 4.176), suggesting the students' high appreciation of the provision of text samples and modelling due to its effectiveness to bridge the theory and practice gap. Interviewee D said, "By reading and analyzing good creative texts, I can learn effective CW skills and apply them in my works." Concerning the importance of modelling, Interviewee A said. "The writing demonstration conducted by the lecturer shows me the CW process in action. It exhibited how to generate and refine ideas, how to create effective outlines, how to edit and revise a draft, and so on."

The next highest agreement goes to the importance of online collaborative CW activities to sustain students' writing community (4.029). To elaborate on this, Interviewee C clarified that CW group projects help her improve her skills to write creatively. Interviewee E elucidated the same ideas:

> "Engaging in collaborative writing provides me direct writing experience, deeper understanding, and feedback useful feedback to emulate my works. Yet, my group mates and I cannot always work on the project on-site. Thanks to technology that makes it easy for us to collaborate anytime and anywhere." (Interviewee E).

The third highest agreement goes to the necessity to include problem-solving skills to mitigate probable challenges in the course (4.0). Concerning this, Interviewee E said: "Since CW is new to me, it's natural to face various challenges while working on it. So, it will be good if CW instruction also provides problem solving skills to meet such challenges."

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Pedagogical Advantages of CW

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
The instructions for CW tasks are clear and easy to follow	3.412	0.657
The provision of various CW sample texts and modelling helps me write creatively.	4.176	0.834
CW course should include problem-solving skills to mitigate challenges in crafting creative texts.	4.000	0.696
I enjoy working in group as a writing community, where I read, discuss, and co-construct text together with my peers.	3.676	0.878
Working in group provides sufficient opportunities to collaborate during creative writing activities	3.588	0.857
Peer feedback helps me improve my writing.	3.882	0.880
Working with my group mates helps me get new ideas.	3.941	0.776
I prefer if the lecturer also, not only students, participate in the group (writing community).	3.971	0.758
Doing writing activities in group through online platforms help us sustain our writing community	4.029	0.969

…

To recap, the participants' opinions of most of the pedagogical advantages of CW lean to 'high' means, including the provision of sample texts and modelling, implementation of online collaborative writing, and the importance of peer feedback and working in groups, suggesting their satisfaction with these instructional elements. Two other opinions with high means, i.e., the need to include problem solving skills and lecturers' active participation in the writing group, indicate the students, expectation to include them in the course instructional design.

Students' Perceptions of CW Pedagogical Challenges

Table 6 displays that the participants inclined towards "Moderate" to "Agree" for CW pedagogical challenges. Their strongest agreement goes to time deficiency allocated for CW exercises in class (3.941), suggesting a perceived structural limitation in CW delivery, which potentially affects task completion and depth of engagement. This is elaborated in the following excerpt:

> "Writing is a process. It requires a lot of time. Yet, the time allotted for CW is too limited. So, the class time was focused only on honing required skills or presenting students' work to obtain feedback. We do the actual writing practices individually or in groups outside the class." (Interviewee B).

Their second top agreement goes to their perceived inadequacy of training to generate new ideas (3.559), reflecting a moderate concern about instructional support for ideation. With an SD of 0.786, students' opinion of this variable varies moderately. Thus, a majority of the students considered including such skills in CW instruction as essential. The following excerpt elaborates on this finding.

> "CW requires original ideas, and to produce new ideas, we need skills. Yes, collaborative writing helps us in generating new ideas. However, finding a fit collaborator can be challenging. We also learned that reading widely, observing life in action, and experimenting with prompts are other effective techniques. Nevertheless, putting them into action is difficult. CW courses should facilitate students mastering them." (Interviewee A).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Pedagogical Challenges of CW

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
I prefer to learn CW individually than collaboratively	3.273	0.719
The time allocated for CW exercises in class is not sufficient.	3.941	0.814
The instruction lacks of training to generate new ideas for my CW.	3.559	0.786
I find it difficult to effectively plan, draft, revise, and edit my CW.	3.412	0.821
The instruction lacks of training for giving and receiving motivating feedback.	3.294	0.906
Members' diverse backgrounds and perspectives makes collaborative CW difficult to conduct.	2.941	0.983
Sometimes my group activities do not run well because some members are passive (not committed).	3.441	0.660
Sometimes my group peers' feedback are difficult to understand.	3.412	0.857
I find many of my group peers' feedback are superficial (not essential).	3.382	0.739

Viewing from their average scores, in terms of strength ranks, the students' agreement with the advantages of the three dimensions of CW explored in this study are respectively the cognitive, pedagogical, and affective, In terms of challenges, the ranks are pedagogical, cognitive, and affective, respectively. Although the cognitive dimension is the strongest in advantages, it goes to the second place in terms of challenges. In contrast, the pedagogical dimension is the second strongest in advantages but the first in terms of challenges.

Among the three dimensions, the affective domain gets the weakest agreement, in terms of both advantages and challenges. This is probably due to the predominance of the academic writing paradigm that emphasizes cognitive aspects in CW practices. Because they were not yet

…

accustomed to creative writing, the students tended to apply the objectives, strategies, skills, styles, and other academic writing elements when writing creatively. Consequently, they paid more attention to the use of cognition than affection, which made the affective dimension receive the least attention. Pedagogical dimensions receive almost the same attention (even higher in terms of challenges) as cognitive dimensions because the former are more tangible than the latter. Pedagogical dimensions are actualized in many forms, such as textbooks, handouts, slides, and learning activities, while cognitive dimensions remain invisible in one's mind.

Advantages and Challenges Correlation

To answer the fourth research question, whether students' perceived advantages and challenges significantly correlated or not, Spearman's rho correlational statistics was administered. As shown in Table 7 the statistical operation resulted a Spearman's rho of -0.593 with $p < .001$. This indicates there is a moderate, statistically significant negative correlation between students' perceived advantages and challenges of CW. It reflects that, if the advantages increase, the challenges will decrease, and vice versa.

Tabel 7. Correlation between Advantages and Challenges

			Spearman's rho	p
Advantages	-	Challenges	-0.593	< .001

The significant negative correlation may reflect a polarized mindset, in which students tend to categorize CW as either beneficial or burdensome, which is shaped by their prior experiences, teacher feedback, or their cultural perspective of CW. Following such a mindset, students recognizing more advantages in CW tend to report lower challenges, and vice versa. To change such a mindset, students could be facilitated to receive challenges as an integral part, not as barriers, to the learning process through the provision of structured scaffolding (e.g., idea-generation prompts, text samples and modeling, peer feedback protocols, collaborative writing) to diminish the cognitive, affective, and pedagogical obstacles (e.g., linguistic limitations, anxiety, self-doubt, lack of ideas).

Applying the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) could also address the problems. The theory hypothesizes that students with higher intrinsic motivation may reframe challenges as growth opportunities by changing their outlook on problems to discover new insights and solutions, i.e., adopting positive thinking and perseverance. Therefore, another solution to increase students' perceived advantages is by increasing the cognitive, affective, and pedagogical advantages. To actualize this, students can be encouraged to reflect on their growth, connecting perceived benefits to moments of overcoming difficulty through portfolio-based reflection or journaling that helps reframe challenges as developmental milestones.

CONCLUSIONS

The results and discussion above reveal that the students have a positive perception, with various strength, of the cognitive, pedagogical, and affective advantages and challenges of CW. The strength rank of the agreement with the three dimensions advantages are respectively the cognitive, pedagogical, and affective. In terms of challenges, the strength are pedagogical, cognitive, and affective, respectively. The cognitive dimension is the strongest in advantages but the second in terms of challenges. In contrast, the pedagogical dimension is the second strongest in advantages but the first in terms of challenges.

Since the result of correlational statistical test resulted a moderate significant negative correlation between students' perceived advantages and challenges, CW course outcomes could be enhanced by either increasing the advantages or decreasing the challenges. Pedagogically,

…

this could be done through the followings. First, reforming the curriculum by extending CW contact hours or redistributing tasks across sessions to allow deeper engagement with drafting and revision. Second, equipping students with more effective ideation strategies by including integrative creativity-enhancing techniques (e.g., clustering, visual prompts, and storytelling heuristics) into instruction. Third, promoting metacognitive writing support by providing scaffolds for planning, drafting, and editing, such as writing logs, process checklists, or peer-modeling exercises. Fourth, enhancing students' skills in formulating, giving, receiving, and applying constructive peer feedback and setting explicit roles during group critique. Developing students' group management skills, including commitment and communication awareness necessitated in their writing community. Fifth, providing students with better problem-solving skills necessary to mitigate challenges.

This study collected data from 34 participants of a single institution using a survey and semi-structured interview. Future studies are recommended to include more participants and employ more data collection methods (e.g., observation, focus group discussion, and student reflection) for triangulation.

References

Anderson, L. W., Krathwohl Peter W Airasian, D. R., Cruikshank, K. A., Mayer, R. E., Pintrich, P. R., Raths, J., & Wittrock, M. C. (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing*. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. https://www.uky.edu/~rsand1/china2018/texts/Anderson-Krathwohl - A taxonomy for learning teaching and assessing.pdf

Anh, N. (2019). EFL Student's Writing Skills: Challenges and Remedies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, *9*(6), 74–84. https://doi.org/10.9790/7388-0906017484

Arshavskaya, E. (2015). Creative writing assignments in a second language course: A way to engage less motivated students. *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, *10*, 68–78. https://doi.org/10.46504/10201506ar

Banegas, D. L., & Lowe, R. J. (2021). Creative writing for publication: An action research study of motivation, engagement, and language development in argentinian secondary schools. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *11*(3), 401–422. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2021.11.3.5

Beran, M. J., Brandl, J. L., Perner, J., & Proust, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Foundations of metacognition*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199646739.001.0001

Bozdoğan, H. N., & Ekmekçi, E. (2024). The effects of creative story writing on EFL learners' vocabulary learning and retention. *Journal of Language Education and Research*, *10*(2), 514–535. https://doi.org/10.31464/jlere.1441076

Burkšaitienè, N. (2014). Creative writing at the university: students' perceptions and expectations. *Societal Studies*, *6*(3), 661–671. https://doi.org/10.13165/sms-14-6-3-13

Chamcharatsri, B., & Iida, A. (2022). *International perspectives on creative writing in second language education: Supporting language learners' proficiency, identity, and creative expression*. Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Hayes, J. R. (2012). Modeling and Remodeling Writing. *Written Communication*, *29*(3), 369–388. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088312451260

Herawati, H. (2021). Learners as story writers: creative writing practices in English as a foreign language learning in Indonesia. In D. Bao & T. Pham (Eds.), *Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects* (pp. 71–88). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-0057-9_3

Jones, B. D., & Carter, D. (2019). Relationships between students' course perceptions,

…

engagement, and learning. *Social Psychology of Education*, *22*(4), 819–839. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-019-09500-x

Jurado, A. M. (2023). The impact of creative writing activity on EFL learners' non-core vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, *8*(3), 325. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v8i3.1189

Kirmizi, F. S. (2015). The effect of creative drama and creative writing activities on creative writing achievement. *Egitim ve Bilim*, *40*(181), 93–115. https://doi.org/10.15390/EB.2015.4552

Kumar, T. (2020). Approaches in teaching writing skills with creative Wwiting: A TESOL study for Indian learners. *TESOL International Journal*, *15*(5), 78–98.

Larasaty, G., & Yulianawati, I. (2019). The contribution of creative writing activity toward student's engagement in poetry class. *Wiralodra English Journal*, *3*(2), 344–354. https://doi.org/10.31943/wej.v3i2.66

Maley, A. (2012). Creative writing for students and teachers. *Humanising Language Teaching*, *13*(2). http://old.hltmag.co.uk/jun12/mart01.htm

Maloney, I. (2022). The impact of creative writing on L2 writer confidence. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, *4*(4), 21–39. https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2022.04.03

Manara, C. (2015). Experimenting with language through creative writing tasks. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*, *10*(2), 69–83. https://ejournal.atmajaya.ac.id/index.php/ijelt/article/view/1504

Maninji, S. A., Lugendo, D. J., & Rabari, J. A. (2020). Approaches in creative writing pedagogy in English in upper primary classes in Kenya. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, *9*(5), 13–20. https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2020/v9/i5/may20014

Mardiningrum, A., Nisa, Y., Sistyawan, I., & Wirantaka, A. (2024). Creative writing for EFL classroom: Students' perception on its benefits. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, *12*(1), 546. https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/jollt

Mohammed, F. A. E. (2019). Creative writing from theory to practice: Multi-tasks for developing Majmaah University students' creative writing competence. *Arab World English Journal*, *10*(3), 233–249. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no3.16

Nosratinia, M., & Razavi, F. (2016). Writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency among EFL learners: Inspecting their interaction with learners' degree of creativity. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *6*(5), 1043. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0605.19

Oladimeji, H. T. (2024). Cognitive dynamics of creative writing and the place of the English language. *Issues in Language and Literary Studies*, *10*(1), 158–169.

Philp, J., & Duchesne, S. (2016). Exploring engagement in tasks in the language classroom. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *36*, 50–72. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190515000094

Poce, A., & Amenduni, F. (2019). Creative writing and Critical Thinking Enhancement at Higher Education. *5th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'19)*, 459–467. https://doi.org/10.4995/head19.2019.9221

Pokhrel, V. (2023). Developing creative writing skills in EFL students: An action research. *The Universal Academic Research Journal*, *5*(1), 1–10. www.ijere.com

Rehman, Z. A. El. (2022). *Creative writing and how it can support second language learners*. Malmo Universitet.

Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 21–44). Springer.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychology*, *55*(1), 66–78. https://doi.org/https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Santillán-Iñiguez, J. J., & Rodas-Pacheco, F. D. (2022). Developing awademic writing skills in EFL

…

university students through Haiku composition. *Revista Electronica Educare*, *26*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.26-1.11

Şenel, E. (2018). The integration of creative writing into academic writing skills in EFL classes. *International Journal of Languages' Education*, *1*(Volume 6 Issue 2), 115–120. https://doi.org/10.18298/ijlet.2869

Sun, Q., & Zhang, L. J. (2023). Examining the effects of English as a foreign language student-writers' metacognitive experiences on their writing performance. *Current Psychology*, *42*(27), 23743–23758. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03416-0

Surfaifel, F., Emilia, E., & Gunawan, W. (2023). Students' Engagement in Virtual Creative Writing: Developing a Creative Writing Style. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *11*(3), 787–798. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v11i3.8733

Woo, D. J., Wang, Y., Susanto, H., & Guo, K. (2023). Understanding English as a foreign language students' idea generation Strategies for creative writing with natural language generation tools. In *Journal of Educational Computing Research* (Vol. 61, Issue 7). https://doi.org/10.1177/07356331231175999

Yeh, C. (2017). Creative writing in an EFL writing class: Student perspectives. *English Teaching & Learning*, *4*(3), 1–29. https://doi.org/10.6330/ETL.2017.41.3.01

Zhang, D. L., & Zhang, L. J. (2019). Metacognition and self-regulated learning (SRL) in second/foreign language teaching. In X. Gao (Ed.), *Second handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 883–898). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58542-0_47-1