

I am The Voice I want to Hear: The Identity and Meanings of EFL Poetry through Metaphors and Written Narratives

Kadek Sonia Piscayanti¹, Issy Yuliasri²

¹ English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Bali, Indonesia

² English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Correspondence: Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Ahmad Yani Street 67, Indonesia.

Received: December 22, 2025

Accepted: February 9, 2026

Online Published: April 7, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n5p28

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n5p28>

Abstract

The idea of poetry as the strongest and most powerful inner truth or voice of human beings should be more introduced in the EFL classroom. The use of metaphors and written narratives in poetry are effective in conveying identity and meaning. In poetry, metaphors and other figurative language are essential tools for expressing the voice within. However, it is rarely discussed in EFL studies. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring how identity and meanings of EFL poetry can be revealed through metaphors, other figurative language and written narratives. The method of this research is qualitative research, which uses poetry and written narrative inquiry as data collection method. The samples were 29 EFL learners gained from saturated sampling technique. The outlier data from the saturated data were chosen purposively to gain deeper understanding on how identity and meaning is constructed through metaphors and written narratives. This study took the personal and language-learning journeys of chosen data from two poets (all pseudonyms), Cath and Lia. The findings suggest that the poets with distinct voices, distinct narratives, and distinct ways of constructing meaning, showed their identity through their metaphors and written narratives. Self-acceptance is the process of negotiating with the oneself and with past trauma. In the context of EFL learning, metaphor and written narratives are used as tools to reveal a new identity in language learning, deeply rooted in the poetry of EFL learners.

Keywords: poetry, metaphors, figurative language, narratives, identity, meaning

1. Introduction

Poetry has been a part of literacy learning because of its power to reveal learners' identities most honestly and directly. Poetry is the deepest voice of the poets that represents the truth of their lives. Heidegger (1971) said that poetry is the saying of the truth, the saying of the unconcealedness of beings. He later also implied that poetry is the foundation of truth; it is a projective saying, in the sense that it says what is unsaid. Gustafson (2005) implied that poetry is the voice of society. As an individual in society, a poet serves as a personal voice. Therefore, the language of poetry is deeply rooted in personal stories, values, and inner voices. It connects the language experience, language expressions, and language inventions.

In the context of language learning, poetry writing is the first window into learners' most profound reflections in the process of meaning-making. Aladini and Farahbod (2020) found that poetry is effective to be used as an authentic material in EFL to create a more engaging language classroom. They found that poetry could enrich students' emotional response, imaginative power and creativity. This was in line with research done by Hanauer (2012) who found that poetry is used as a pedagogical approach in second-language literacy instruction. Language is not only memorized, but felt and experienced, and then expressed. Piscayanti (2024) found that there are four foundations of language learning that grow in poetry writing: voice of identity, self-esteem, language identity, and language invention. Piscayanti et al. (2024) strengthened these findings by proving that poetry is the representation of voice in its deepest form. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) poetry writing exposed and explored the voices within the learners as they learned to write poetry and discover their identity. In line with this, previous research by Piscayanti et al. (2022) found that identity emerges from self-reflection and develops through poetry into language invention. The construction of individual identity is rooted in social interactions and cultural practices. Adel, et.al (2024) also confirmed that in literary works the identity constructions and voices of truth can be expressed in a raw and honest delivery. It stimulates the questions about social and psychological burden in a society. The language invention in literary works therefore, is a statement about truth in society, and develops lifelong meaning-making.

However, in the context of language learning, especially in EFL poetry writing, limited research has been conducted on the analysis of metaphors and other figurative language that build poetry as a tool of voice expression. There should be more attention to metaphors and other figurative language, as the body and soul, constructing poetry as a whole. The roles of metaphors and figurative language are mirrors of identity in its purest and deepest form.

2. Literature Review

The use of poetry in EFL classroom is increasing nowadays. There are many relevant recent research that show the importance of poetry in EFL learning. Aladini and Farahbod (2020) found the advantages of using poetry as the authentic materials in EFL/ESL classroom as it improves their sensitivity, creativity, and productivity in writing skills. This research was supported by researchers Fithriani (2021) and Piscayanti (2021) who showed how poetry is integrated in the English classroom and how students' language were developed through the instruction. They found the potential of poetry as learning tools to facilitate language development. Bredtmann (2021) found that the use of diverse poetry and poetic forms enable the students to meet their own language learning styles. Poetry is also used as the tool to construct meaning in mindfulness-based EFL instruction (Piscayanti, 2022). In enhancement of that research, Sholihin (2023) found that poetry is an alternative method of teaching and learning in EFL context. These findings proved that poetry is an effective tool to be used in language classroom. There are many different ways to teach with poetry and the benefit is the real touch of feeling in each poetry. In line with that Piscayanti et.al (2024) also found in the context of EFL classroom, poetry could stimulate language identity through the personal and mindful approach of writing. The language of the poetry is born from the realest experience and truest feelings. However the soul of poetry; the metaphors and other figurative languages, and the narratives of the poets are often neglected. There are very few focus are pointed on how metaphors are built and how meaning is constructed.

Metaphors represent the meaning in the form of other things. Heidegger stated that metaphors are not ordinary language in a dictionary; they are more than what is said and what is heard. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) stated that metaphors are understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. Other figurative language, such as imagery and personification, is a tool for expressing ideas and feelings. Imagery is the presentation of the feelings captured in the five senses (Perrine, 1982), while personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, or an abstract term (truth, nature) is made human (Kennedy, 1983). It is the comparison of humans and things in the context of poetry; it is how the thingness is put on human quality. Metaphors, personification, and imagery are the three essentials in writing poetry. They reflect how the poet's voice is captured. The use of metaphors, imagery, and personification is rarely discussed in the context of language learning and meaning construction. The use of metaphors and figurative language is further explored in this study, offering a closer look at the process of expressing identity and language learning within each poet's personal context.

Written narratives such as learner diaries and language learning histories (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), are a mode of narrative inquiry, meant to convey meaning in writing. The importance of the written narrative is to balance the learning view. The written narrative is rarely used, yet it can serve as a tool for deeper interpretation in constructing meaning. In the context of poetry, written narrative is essential for understanding its meaning. Poetry and metaphors are the main subjects of the study however, the written narratives serve as supporting sources that deepen and clarify the interpretation. The role of written narrative is important because it conveys the poetry's meaning in terms of wholeness, reflection, and lesson. Piscayanti et al. (2024) examined the narratives of the Indonesian EFL learners/poets, and found that poetry could be the voice of representation of their trauma in the past. It is essential to view the process of poetry writing as an identity revelation through the voices the poets express. Since the Indonesian culture tends to avoid taboo or personal matters to be expressed publicly, poetry is the tools to express them. Furthermore, Piscayanti (2024) also found in Indonesian EFL learners that culture and language identity that is hidden for years can be represented from the metaphors and figurative language used in the poetry writing. However, the previous study has shown that very few research has been done on the metaphors and narrative inquiry as the means to deliver the voice of the poets haven't explored much. This study shows the novelty in the context that it explored how metaphors and written narrative inquiry gives deeper reflections and understanding in constructing language identity. The metaphors and narratives should be regarded as the meaning of how they process their voices through their choice of words and through their written narratives. However, these were not deeply investigated in the previous study.

This study, therefore, fills the gap between the previous research on voice invention through EFL poetry and meaning construction through poetry by exploring how metaphors and other figurative language are composed and how the poet's written narrative can deepen and clarify meaning. The study will address two issues. First, how is poetry constructed through metaphors and other figurative language? Second, how do the written narratives provide a better understanding of meaning in the EFL poetry context?

The result of this study will present three significant novelties in the context of poetry and EFL learning. First, in terms of theoretical significance, it offers a new perspective on poetry by exploring the role of metaphors and other figurative language in poetic construction. It also brings a newer perspective on the use of written narrative as the poet's identity and voice. The theory of writers' narratives can be deepened in the context of poetry writing in EFL learning. From a methodological perspective, this study is significant for offering insights into how to teach EFL poetry more engagingly by playing with metaphors and other figurative language and make use of written narratives to elevate the meaning making process. It helps to better understand the implementation of teaching EFL poetry. In practical terms, the results can serve as a tool for an EFL poetry classroom, helping students understand what poetry is and how to compose it. It can also introduce the personal voice that can be expressed as freedom in a personal way.

3. Method

The method used in this study is qualitative research, where poetry as the main data used to reveal identity through metaphors and other figurative language. While written narratives are used to gain the identity and meaning construction. The analysis combines the poetry content analysis based on two theories of poetry (Perrine, 1982; Kennedy, 1983) and written narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Perrine (1982) in the *Sound and Sense* elaborates the structure of poetry, the metaphors and figurative languages, and differentiated what

is good and bad poetry. This book suggests that poetry is a work of art that uses metaphors and other figurative language to enhance reader's experience. While XJ Kennedy (1983) dives deeper on the style of poetry and voice of poetry. The two theories are used to analyze the poetry of the EFL learners. Poetry is analyzed from the structure of metaphors and other figurative language to find the style and voice, while the written narrative is used to gain deeper understanding of the poets' identity and meaning. The written narratives were analyzed with Bazeley's (2009) structure of analysis to get the in-depth and more integrated meanings of the data. The written narratives firstly identified carefully, then described based on the meaning, categorized, then compared, and related with other data. The meaning is then interpreted in the context of a narrative inquiry study, which focuses on how humans experience the world (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

3.1 The Participants and the Data

The participants of this study were 29 EFL learners from an Indonesian university, who took a poetry class as part of the curriculum. The method used was a saturated sampling technique in which all participants were equally included. The data for this study were obtained from the poetry the learners wrote in their final course assignment. The poetry is composed through a series of processes that began with mindfulness session to gain novelty of ideas, context of ideas, perspectives and meaning. First phase, they were given context of the poetry, the theory of poetry and the deep reading of poetry. Second phase, they were asked to compose a poem from a draft of metaphors and other figurative language, and compose stanzas. Third phase, they were asked to write a final poetry draft, discussed it, and did the final editing. Fourth phase, they were asked to write a narrative behind their poetry. The last stage was discussing and editing the final version of the poetry and written narratives which were used as data. In the context of language learning, poetry writing and narrative writing are the real experience that shapes learners' identities and reveals the hidden voices that have long been kept in their own minds.

The saturated data showed that the voice of identity of EFL learners are honest, mindful, and original. However, to get deeper understanding of the data, purposive sampling was done to dive deeper on the outlier cases, the data that showed prominent and outstanding voice. The two samples were chosen by purposive sampling technique, based on their prominent works and written narratives. Their poetry represents the deepest and richest language aspects and their voice is deeply rooted on identity construction through self-acceptance.

3.2 The Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The main data of this research are poetry and written narratives. Poetry is used as the means to explore the identity revealed through metaphors and other figurative language. While the written narratives are used to convey the voice of identity and meaning construction. For the data collection method, learners were asked to write the process of poetry writing from scratch, from generating ideas, making a rough draft, and composing the metaphors and other figurative language. Then they were asked to write the written narratives to reveal their identity and meaning construction.

This study is qualitative research with three stages of analysis. The first stage is the content analysis of poetry through figurative language analysis. Two theories of poetry and figurative language were used here; the theory of poetry by Perrine (1982) and the theory of figurative language by Kennedy (1983). Both are significant in describing how poetry is read, interpreted, and analyzed.

The second stage is the written narratives analysis by using the theory of narrative inquiry by Barkuizen et al. (2014). Written narrative is used to record stories and the journey of learning, to ensure that valid and reliable data are meaningful during learning. The third stage is the triangulation of the written narratives with the literature and interpretation to gain the meaning. Using the Bazeley technique (2009) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the narratives are cross-case analyzed, described, interpreted, and related to theories, to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data.

4. Discussion

4.1 Poetry, Metaphors, Imagery, Personifications

The first poem is from Cath.

A Trace Without a Face

By Cath

*I never knew the face
of the one from whom my life began—
yet her pulse gave mine its first rhythm.
Nine months in sacred silence,
she guarded and nurtured me,
though she was never mine to keep.
On a day marked by struggle,
she brought me forth,
wagering her life and her hope.*

Then she left—
 not in escape,
 but to follow a path
 that no longer crossed with mine.
 She walked on,
 building a new story
 with people who now filled her world.
 No warm embrace from her
 to cradle my childhood.
 No tender voice
 to soothe away my doubts.
 Yet her blood flows through me still,
 whispering a strength
 I've never dared to question.
 I long to hold her,
 not to demand healing
 for a hug I never received,
 but simply to say thank you—
 for giving me a life,
 even if it came without togetherness.
 And even if the universe allows
 our paths to meet again,
 even if you walk a road
 no longer aligned with mine,
 I carry your trace
 in every heartbeat,
 without resentment,
 without wounds I let fester.
 Because you are
 the beginning of my story,
 even if not part of the pages that follow.

Cath used poetry as the voice she longed to hear. A voice marked by misery yet calm, by longing yet mindful. The tone of the poetry is soft and peaceful, aimed at giving the silent voice a power to build from within. The figurative language she used here is metaphors, imagery, and personification.

Metaphors can be seen in the first line */the face of whom my life began/*. Face is physically related to a figure, and life is a stage where one is born. Face and life are not usually compared in this way, but in this poem, Cath compares the two as the starting point of her narrative. Here, the face also functions as a visual representative of a mother she missed, and of a life she endured alone. The metaphor opens the gate to the rest of the narratives. She also closed the poem with a metaphor, as follows */because you are the beginning of my story, even if not part of the pages that follow/*. The story is compared to a book that has pages made of memories and experiences. Yet her story and her mother do not seem to continue to other chapters or pages. This metaphor ends the poetry beautifully, painfully, and meaningfully.

Imagery appears in almost all the stanzas, making them visually compelling, and moving. Imagery means that figurative language can carry sensorial elements that provoke the mind and soul to see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. The lines written can be sensed through the five senses:

And even if the universe allows
 our paths to meet again,

*even if you walk a road
no longer aligned with mine,
I carry your trace
in every heartbeat,
without resentment,
without wounds I let fester.*

It makes us see and feel the entire sense: the visual, the hearing, the touch, and the smell. The whole experience is fully explored, giving the sense of a mother's imagined presence. But even if it is just an imagination, it feels vivid and real.

The personification used also appears in almost all the lines, especially these lines:

*No warm embrace from her
to cradle my childhood.
No tender voice
to soothe away my doubts.
Yet her blood flows through me still,
whispering a strength
I've never dared to question.*

All the personifications here serve as a bridge of feelings, where the actions of humans represented by the things empower the meanings behind them.

/Yet her blood flows through me still/, a line with embodied personification stabbing her and the reader when it is the silence that plays a fire within.

Through metaphors, imagery, and personification, Cath reveals her true identity with truth and depth. She missed her mother, who played an essential role in her life, yet she could not embrace her nor barely imagine her. She did not hate her yet she accepted the fact that it could not be changed. This story became her identity. Poetry enables her identity to appear naturally and beautifully.

The second poem is from Lia.

UNSPOKEN APOLOGIES

By Lia

*Apologies never spoken.
It became a silent witness to an event
That came without warning
Breaking the warmth that I had not even had the chance to enjoy.
Only wounds remained,
And sorrow that grew like parasites
On the cracked walls of my heart.
I often asked,
"Why me?"
"Why this family?"
"Why... Dad?"
So many hopes were never conveyed,
So much of your love that I never had the chance to receive.
All wasted by time
That passed without looking back.
And until today,
I still wonder:*

*Should I be the one to forgive?
 Or rather...
 Should I be the one to apologize?
 Now I stand in adulthood,
 But my soul is sometimes still a child
 Looking for you in the silence.
 Swayed,
 Like a ship that has lost its way in a gloomy sea.
 I began to understand
 That even iron can melt at high enough heat.
 Then why can't I,
 A princess,
 Soften my heart?*

*Maybe it's because my heart has hardened,
 Used to keeping to myself, the pieces of love
 That I should have shared with you.
 But if even ice can melt,
 And night can turn to dawn,
 Maybe one day...
 There's room for "sorry"
 To be born, not from the lips,
 But from the soul that finally accepts.*

In the metaphor used here, */Sorrow that grew like parasites on the cracked walls of my heart/*, the sadness is likened to a parasite that grows on the cracked walls, depicting emotional wounds that continue to grow. The other metaphor is */a ship that has lost its way in a gloomy sea/* which means a soul adrift in uncertainty and emptiness. Here, a ship represents a soul finding the right direction.

The other figurative language found is imagery and personifications. The imagery is as follows: */Looking for you in the silence/Swayed/like a ship that has lost its way in a gloomy sea/*. Those lines are the perfect visual imagery that represents the idea of having no direction. A gloomy sea also indicates feelings of sadness and confusion. Other imagery found is this: */if even ice can melt/ And night can turn to dawn/*, it represents the idea of hope or a change of context toward better ideas.

While the personifications found are */Apologies never spoken/ It became a silent witness/*. Here, an apology is personified as a "silent witness," giving a human character to an abstract concept.

The next personification is */time that passed without looking back/*. Time is depicted as a human walking without turning around. This represents the idea of precious time and fragile humans in the immense universe. The poet says that there are times when the most significant relief is to accept things as they are.

4.2 The Written Narratives

Cath stated in her written narrative, "Through this poem, I express the silent bond that still exists despite the absence of physical presence, the gratitude that grows without resentment, and the quiet fear born from a deep sense of loss. This poem tells the story of a woman who gave me life but did not raise me, a mother whose face I have never seen, yet whose blood flows through my veins. It is not a poem of anger or blame, but rather one of gentle acceptance and peaceful tribute to a birth that was fought for, just for me." Even in her written narrative, Cath is so mindful to represent her mother in words. There is no hatred, no fear, no revenge. Just mindful reflection and calmness. She accepts that she is now in her own life, and her mother is in hers.

The meaning construction, then, is the self-acceptance of life that makes her attitude more positive and productive. In the context of language learning, her poetry gives her an authentic voice and a real choice of delivering her identity. Language provides an experience with life and an endurance to face it. Language grows as she also grows. Self-acceptance reaches a mature level when she is ready to face her own issues and tries to be kind to herself and her mind.

The second poet, Lia, stated in her narrative as follows, "I wrote the *Unspoken Apologies* poem based on my personal experience as a

child from a broken home, who grew up without the presence and love of a father. Since childhood, I have often questioned where my father figure was in my life, both physically and emotionally. That absence left wounds that were difficult to heal and affected how I saw the world, especially in my understanding of love and trust. This poem is a space for me to voice things that have only been kept in my heart about longing, anger, and confusion over my role in a relationship that was never whole.”

Lia showed the readers that she was sometimes lost and mentally unstable, yet she tried to be strong. In contrast to Cath, Lia lost her father figure. She has a broken home family that left her confused and hurt from deep within. She hardly believes in relationships based on love and trust because she does not have them in her family. The absence of a father's presence makes her absent from herself. However, this poetry unveils her identity, for which she keeps trying to be a better version. Her self-acceptance also makes her more mindful and peaceful, recognizing that she cannot change. The learning through poetry makes her believe in moving on and keeping life going. The idea is not to surrender to the wounds, but to try to make peace with them.

The meaning constructed here is a child's inner struggle with childhood wounds, the desire for reconciliation, and the question of who should grant or receive forgiveness, which ultimately culminates in self-acceptance.

5. Findings

This study reveals that poetry can be constructed in a way that unconceals the never heard voices and the narratives kept personal for years, and can heal childhood wounds. The function of metaphors, imagery, and personification is not merely to construct the poetry as it is, but to convey more profound and personal meanings, allowing the poetry to be language as 'being' and becoming. It deepens understanding of meaning. As for written narratives, the role is to make a balanced view of the poetry interpretation. Therefore, this study has shown novelty in exploring the relationships among poetry, the voices represented through metaphors, imagery, and personifications, and the poets' narratives. This plays a significant role in creating impact in literacy learning, poetry study, and narrative study.

5.1 Poetry and Literacy Learning

Poetry, according to Byrne (2015), carries the deepest voice from a condensed, compacted narrative, an art representation that enhances meaning making. It is more than that; it carries the whole story with limited words. In this study, poetry and voice are delivered in a compact, concise form. Learning happens when they take the narratives without explicitly saying so. Thus, poetry and literacy learning have been proven effective in the context of EFL. The problems of anxiety and fear of errors in mastering a foreign language can be reduced by having them learn about their own stories. Stories captured in poetry can never be the same for one learner to another, giving learners a greater chance to build their own voice and identity. As this study found, a sense of loss and anxiety over childhood wounds can be healed through poetry. As Fallah (2019) found that poetry could lower anxiety, this study proved that poetry not only reduces anxiety but also heals it. In the context of EFL learning, poetry could be the tools to express voice and identity in the truest form. Language represents humanity where learners as subject of learning is represented by their own language identity.

This study strengthened Piscayanti's (2024) findings, which showed that poetry and mindfulness-based learning can elevate voices in identity, self-esteem, language identity, and language invention. Later, Piscayanti et al. (2024) also found the effective representation of voice. The revealed representations of voices are trauma, anxiety, and hope. Through narrative inquiry, the voice can be delivered honestly and sincerely. It was also found that the stronger essence of self-acceptance in life is a part of language learning. This study showed that the poetry represents self-acceptance and the poets' voices in resolving the issues. Literacy learning is also best learned through poetry, as Hanauer (2012) found that poetry is essential to second language learning. This aligns with Iida's (2016) research, which found that learners' identity can be revealed through poetry. It is not just a tool, but also a method to humanize language classroom. Iida strongly believes that poetry and literacy go hand in hand to foster identity at the core of learning. This current study shows that poetry can do even more to heal the wounds of loss and uncertainty. It empowers research on poetry and literacy learning; therefore, more studies are needed on the specific aspects.

5.2 Metaphors, Imagery, and Personification as Tools for Learning

In this study, metaphors play an important role. It is the vehicle of identity, where the voices of the poets are delivered. Metaphors are not only made for mere ornaments of language, but are the core of the message. Imagery also makes an essential contribution in the sense that it gives a vivid and sharp sensorial presence to the poetry. It does the magic of poetry, making readers see and feel its imagery. Kennedy (1983) believes that imagery offers a flash of understanding. In the context of learning, the search of imagery and other figurative language are ways to search identity and meaning within self of learners. Imagery functions as the soul of poetry, in which it gives the real image of the poetry creating the feeling of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. In poetry, especially in this study, imagery can offer insight into the poets' feelings. It can be sensed as a whole experience. Cath's and Lia's poetry gave real evidence of how the poetry can be felt as a whole. Poetry as a method of healing and enhancing understanding of personal histories. Language learning is taking place personally, and deeply.

While personifications in this study give the poem moves or actions, which makes the poetry believable and convincing. In this study, the poetry of Cath and Lia is powerful because it offers action that moves us from within. Iida (2016) found that poetry in second-language learning is used to reveal truth, with people concerned about its use in relation to the meaning of their own voice. This study strengthened Heidegger's (2001) theory that states poetry as the language of truth. It also supports Perrine's (1982) theory, which holds that poetry is the expression of human beings' most real emotions. In the context of language learning, personification elevates the awareness of being and

becoming human. The learning process takes different way of personal reflection and understanding.

5.3 *The Narratives and Learners' Identity*

Poetic narratives represent learners' identities in the most personal manner. Therefore, poetry can never be as simple as putting words together. It invents an identity that brings together a new perspective of self. Poetry is the language of many things: intellectual, emotional, socio-cultural, and political. Poetry is the source of power for the unpowered ones. In this context, the power of narrative inquiry lies in revealing the poets' most profound truths. This study proves the theory of Connelly and Clandinin (1990) that narrative inquiry explores the stories of an experience. In this study, Cath and Lia proved that their stories are experiences, not just experiences, but feelings and beings in their most real form. Their mindful approach to their loss led them to self-acceptance, as Carson (2006) argues that mindfulness fosters self-acceptance. This very essence of being will lead to more productivity and creativity. This study also showed that mindfulness through poetry subjects leads to the construction of identity, as demonstrated by Barret et al. (2020), who found that combining poetry and mindfulness creates a space for true identity and freedom. Wittgenstein (1958) also implied that if you are seeing things, you are also witnessing identity. Things can never be free from an identity, yet it should be given meaning, as in poetry writing.

The significance of this study in the theoretical context is to enrich the theory of poetry in the EFL context. There are many studies, but this study will deepen our understanding of how the exploration of voice can be elaborated in the broader field. The learning should be made fun and student-oriented, not product-oriented, such as a fixed-answer final test. Learning about identity should be put more into the learning process. Only by giving learners a chance to study their own identity will they come to know themselves better. In other words, self-cultured language can be born. Boden (2001) stated that self-culture arises from combinational, exploratory, and transformational thinking. Poetry, in this context, enhances the possibility of those processes occurring simultaneously. This study, in particular, provides insight into how poetry writing elevates the power of language learning and enhances creative thinking.

In the methodological context, this study contributes to the research methodology for teaching poetry in EFL learning. It gives a contribution on how literacy learning should be implemented in the classroom. How metaphors, imagery, and personification are not just tools in poetry but the power of language learning. The language learning and the teaching of poetry should be more engaging and involve these types of figurative language. The practical significance of this study for teaching can be implemented at many levels of education, from primary education to university.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to elucidate how poetry, particularly through metaphors and other forms of figurative language, serves as a medium for meaning construction and identity formation within language learning. Analysis of the poetic narratives of Cath and Lia demonstrates that metaphor functions as a central cognitive and affective mechanism, enabling learners to articulate inner voices, negotiate past experiences, and construct new meanings. Although Cath and Lia exhibit distinct poetic styles and personal trajectories, both converge on self-acceptance as a pivotal outcome, indicating that language learning through poetry constitutes a deeply reflective and transformative process.

Theoretically, this research contributes to language and poetry studies by foregrounding the interconnection between metaphor, narrative, and identity in meaning construction. It extends existing perspectives on figurative language by positioning metaphor, imagery and personification as embodied and experiential resource rather than a purely linguistic ornament. The findings also support views of language learning as an identity-driven, mindful process, in which personal histories and emotional engagement play a crucial role in shaping learners' linguistic expression. By situating poetic meaning within lived experience, this study offers a more holistic understanding of how language learning unfolds beyond formal structures and competencies.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the study underscores poetry's potential as a powerful instructional resource in language classrooms. Encouraging learners to engage with metaphors and figurative language in their own writing can foster deeper self-expression, critical reflection, and emotional engagement with the target language. Integrating poetic narratives into language instruction may thus support learner agency, affirm identity, and create more meaningful learning experiences, particularly for learners navigating personal or emotional challenges.

The limit of this study, however, lies in the challenges posed by the fact that poetry is rarely used at the primary and secondary levels of education. Poetry is considered a tough subject, so it is seldom used as material in the EFL context. Its function is limited and used only for literature teaching; this research, however, could give richer and deeper understanding of how metaphors and narratives could explain the personal meaning construction in the learner's perspectives. This study hopes to invite more researchers, especially EFL researchers, to study poetry and literacy learning, especially in Indonesia.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation and deep gratitude are delivered to the students of English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, for allowing this study to take place in poetry classroom. Without the cooperation and wonderful relationships, this study will never happen. Special thanks to Cath and Lia, you two are real poets and real learners in real life.

Authors' contributions

Dr. Kadek Sonia Piscayanti was responsible for study design, data collection, and drafting the manuscript. Prof. Issy Yuliasri was

responsible for proofreading the draft and revise it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

Not applicable

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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