

Utilizing Haiku as a Learning Reflection: Students' Perception

Fera Sulastri¹, Sitti Syakira², Melisa Sri³

¹ Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia; ferasulastri@unsil.ac.id

² Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia; sitti.syakira@unsil.ac.id

³ Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia; melisasri@unsil.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Haiku Poetry;
Learning Reflection;
EFL Context;
Students' Perception

Article history:

Received 2021-11-18

Revised 2022-04-20

Accepted 2022-09-21

ABSTRACT

Haiku, the 5-7-5 syllables of Japanese poetry, has been known widely as a tool to express voice and reflect on what happens to personal life experiences. Therefore, this study aimed to uses Haiku as a learning reflection on the Children's Literature Class. Two questions were addressed to examine (1) Students' perception of writing Haiku as a learning reflection and (2) challenges in writing Haiku as a learning reflection. Descriptive case A descriptive case study was used as the research methodology, while 49 students taking children's literature class participated. In data collection, this study used open-ended questionnaires given to all participants, while semi-structured interviews were delivered to 11 representative students. Students' Haiku also were used as additional data. In addition, the data were analyzed thematically, using the framework of Braun and Clark (2006) and students' Haiku were analyzed through document analysis. The findings show that students find that writing haiku as a learning reflection is fun and interesting. It also promotes their creativity in writing. However, since Haiku is fixed verse poetry, it does not cover students' ideas of expressing their experience of learning freely and effectively. Eventually, Haiku still supports creativity, not effectiveness.

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Fera Sulastri

Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia; ferasulastri@unsil.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, reflection has been one of the important tools for knowing one's strengths and weaknesses. Yuekming and Manaf (2014, p. 973) state, "Student reflection is central to a student's learning experience. Reflection captures the conceptualization of knowledge, thoughts and feelings that are undetected in normal class routine." Moreover, the importance of reflection involves the personal voice on how they experience, conceptualize, and feel the teaching and learning process.

In relation to the form of reflection, journaling was the most used form of reflection. It encourages students to reflect, recall, and write what they have experienced in the teaching and learning process

(Chang, 2019). However, a study proved that journaling could be overwhelming and exhausting at the same time. Therefore, a creative and innovative way is needed to overcome these common problems.

Haiku originally comes from Japan, found by Matsuo Basho (1644-1694). It consists of three lines, including five syllables for the first line, seven syllables for the second line, and five syllables for the third line. Basically, it is a poetic form that allows Japanese writers to express their thoughts and feelings without being restricted to the simple observation and description of the natural phenomena surrounding human life (Higginson & Harter, 1985; Iida, 2010; Reichhold, 2002). In relation to the EFL context, Haiku has been widely known for having a positive impact on the teaching-learning process. Iida (2016a) establish that Haiku not only a tool to express one's life feeling, emotion, and experience but also helps the students learn to write fluently and acquire vocabulary because its form requires close attention to select the appropriate words to communicate specific feelings. A further study done by Lewis (2017) states that Haiku can enhance students' learning in a nurse field study. Therefore, Haiku has been a beneficial tool both in learning generally and specifically in learning language.

It is true that the focus writing at the university level tends to focus on grammatical accuracy rather than creativity (Iida, 2013). Therefore, students are required to produce academic writing, learning the strategies of standardized tests such as TOEFL or IELTS, which unintentionally force the students to learn language rigidly, ignoring their voices. At the same time, Voice is seen as a key concept to learning to write in the target language (Brown & Lee, 2015; Iida, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). In addition, Cummins (2014) stated that by allowing students to explore the writing process more creatively, we can give them confidence in their own writing and encourage them to enjoy the process.

To bring the voice back into the teaching and learning process, some educators applied creative writing as one of the ways to explore students' voice in learning foreign languages (Cummins, 2014; Iida, 2017; Xerri, 2011). Hanauer (2012) and Dai (2015) called it as meaningful literacy, where it leads to language use that comes from 'the true desire for personal expression,' and as a result, language learning is centered around 'authentic, meaningful, personal expression,' where '[the] real reason for learning a language becomes an issue of extending personal understanding and personal expression'.

There are several ways to have meaningful literacy activity in the classroom, one of them is writing haiku poetry. Suzuki et al. (2003) and Iida (2010) argue that Haiku helps produce a writer's voice by reconstructing his or her experienced events. In addition, Iida (2010) argues that expressing personal experience encourages L2 writers to be more reflective and engaged and "to come to know who they are, what their beliefs are and why this is so. It is clearly stated that writing haiku is one of the ways to express students' voice in order to make L2 learner be more reflective and engaged on what they learn.

Based on the previous explanations, this study tries to reveal the use of haiku poetry as one of the creative writing forms. This study specifically investigates students' perception on writing Haiku as a learning reflection in an elective course called Children's Literature class. In addition, students' challenges in writing Haiku as a learning reflection is also investigated.

2. METHODS

49 students taking Children's Literature class were the participants of this research. They are in the fourth and sixth semester, between 21-22 years old consisted of 47 female and 2 male students. They have written Haiku for 8 meetings of Children's literature class as a reflection to their teaching-learning process of each class. They wrote one or more Haiku in 5 to 15 minutes before the class ended.

The data were collected using three ways. They are open-ended questionnaires done twice. The initial purpose is to find their perception and attitude towards writing Haiku followed by the interview at the end of the semester to strengthen and confirm their judgment in the first open-ended questionnaire. 11 students were selected to be interviewed as they wrote more haikus and willing to participate in the interview session through the Zoom meeting. The interview was done to clarify and strengthen the previous data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire (Yin, 2003). Meanwhile, students' haiku writings of each meeting of children's literature class were used as additional data presented in the finding.

In analyzing the data, there are two techniques used. Since the data was obtained from the questionnaires and interviews, thematic analysis was done to answer the questions of the research. In doing thematic analysis, the following procedure was done, among others; familiarizing the data by reading and rereading the transcription of the interview, finding the initial code by highlighting the important information related to the study, searching for theme as the first finding, rearrange the theme by selecting the most potential and representative ones, finally reporting it in description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Meanwhile, the data analysis from students' haiku writing was done as a supporting source and analyzed using content analysis (Yin, 2003).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Writing haiku as a learning reflection: An interesting activity

For all participants, writing Haiku is a new activity that has never been done in their previous level of education. Despite its original form in Japanese, Iida (2008) proves that Haiku can be used in the EFL context. In relation to writing Haiku as the learning reflection in the children's literature class, it was found that most of the participants are interested in writing this kind of poetry. It is interesting, fun and helpful in expressing their idea. The data showed.

"... this (writing haiku) is more interesting than other reflection." (P3)

"I think it's a fun way for learning reflection." (P9)

"It's quite helpful in reflecting our experience" (P2)

(Source: 1st open-ended questionnaire)

The unique form of Haiku makes the students find a new experience in expressing their idea. Most of the students argue that it was an interesting activity since they had to fit the syllable into the form, find the appropriate vocabulary to deliver their reflection, and at the same time, create the poetry as aesthetically as possible. This joyful activity is beneficial not only to increasing their creative writing but also reflecting their learning experience into practical writing. It is in line with the statement that Haiku, as a creative writing form, is regarded as one of the effective ways to explore students' voices in learning foreign languages (Cummins, 2014; Iida, 2017; Xerri, 2011).

Several reasons why Haiku is an interesting activity are also found in different voices. Haiku's simplicity and efficiency cause creative activity in the process of writing.

*"It (Haiku) covers all the important/valued parts, and it is **efficient** in time." (P1)*

*"I thought that writing haiku seems to be **simple**." (P5)*

(Source: Interview)

Writing Haiku means writing 3 lines of sentences, phrases or clauses with formed syllables. However, since it only needed 3 lines, Haiku is regarded to be simple and efficient. Most of the students need 5-10 minutes to write Haiku. Time efficiency is a positive point of writing Haiku as a learning reflection. In other words, students already had the idea to write, and they just needed to deliver them in 3 lines.

As one of the principles of learning reflection, it is argued that it can increase students' perceived recall of experience (Larsen et al., 2016). Despite its simplicity in form of writing, Haiku still can deliver students' recalled learning experience. Some students' Haiku are expressed below:

Table 1. Students' Haiku Writing

Haiku 23	Haiku 10	Haiku 9
Learning literature	Hey! more fun stuff here.	I feeling of joy,
Especially for children	All games and the Haiku.	Knowing about fiction, myth
Lots of fun knowledge	Where? Miss Fera's class.	Non-fiction, fable

The data showed students recalling their experience in children's literature class in their Haiku. As it refers to games, haiku writing, fiction, myth, all of them are subjects studied in the classroom. It can be assumed that Haiku is an efficient way of recalling students learning experience.

3.2 Promoting students' creativity in writing

Creativity is one of the important skills in the 21st-century of learning. it is often related to the term "out of the box" meaning that the students can go beyond the original thing (Sari et al., 2020; Zhao, 2014)(Zhao, 2014). Based on the result of the interview, it is found that students' creativity existed in writing Haiku. The data is shown below:

"it encourages students (referring to herself) to give their creativity". (P19)

"It helps me to be a more creative person". (P24)

"I became creative". (P31)

(Source: 1st Open-ended questionnaire)

As students write a haiku at the end of the meeting, they are forced to get the idea of writing in such a short time (5-10 minutes). Therefore, the spontaneity of writing is also built by this activity. This finding is in line with Read's (2015) statement that creativity involves the opportunity to play with ideas freely and spontaneously. Writing Haiku gives the students an opportunity to play with the language by using fixed syllables. In addition, they also have to write their idea of recalling learning experiences spontaneously. Both of the previous conditions signify creativity.

Moreover, not only promoting creativity, many students think that writing haiku as a learning reflection increases their creativity. The data is shown below:

"I think this is a positive way because it can increase creativity." (P37)

"(Writing haiku) with aesthetic words but simple, can increase our creativity". (P1)

"It makes us more creative." (P15)

(Source: 1st Open-ended questionnaire)

Based on the data, it is assumed that writing haiku as a learning reflection is one of the ways to promote students' creativity in the classroom. This is in line with what Pettry (2019) and Andries (2011) state that creative writing activities enable L2 learners to feel a sense of control in their L2 linguistic and/or literary identities.

3.3 Limited Idea to Convey

Just like two sides of coins, the fixed form of Haiku is also viewed as a weakness in writing reflection. If it is previously found in the students' perspective, this section provides negative statements toward writing Haiku as a learning reflection. Some students find it a rigid form, not only limited words but also counted syllables. Meanwhile, in reflecting on their learning experience, students need more words to explore and more sentences to write. The result of the interview shows:

"Sometimes I think there are so many things to say/write as the reflection, but I have to simplify and choose 3 simple sentences to describe it all". (P14)

"Writing reflection in one Haiku is lacking because there are some things that cannot be expressed if only writing one Haiku." (P21)

"Sometimes I wanted to share another experience as reflection, but I can't because of the limit of Haiku." (P30)

(Source: Interview)

Based on the data displayed, it can be indicated that writing haiku has limited students' expression. Meanwhile, reflection is a way of thinking to understand what, how and why the students learn (Daudelin, 1996). Unfortunately, writing a haiku for learning reflection does not promote all those aspects of reflection. Students got difficulties in expressing their idea of what, how and why they learn in limited words.

In addition, learning reflection is also aimed at making judgments or evaluations about the learning process. Expressing such an evaluation and judgment need more than a sentence or two. Haiku, with only 5 to 7 syllables, definitely could not facilitate them making judgments and evaluations clearly in a sentence. What they could express in only a word representing their judgement, for example:

Table 2. Students' haiku Writing

Haiku 45	Haiku 36
It is amazing	It is a fun way
To learn children's literature	Literature art and child
Which is full of values	Taught me more lesson

As it is written in those haikus, students made judgements about the process of the learning experience. Haiku 45 shows the words amazing and full of value. However, she could not reflect more on why and how this learning experience is amazing and full of values. The same case also happened in haiku 36. No later explained how children's literature class was fun and gave her/him more lesson. From the explanations above, it can be concluded that Haiku cannot facilitate the students in expressing their idea about learning reflection in detail.

3.4 Students' challenges in writing Haiku as a learning reflection

There are two challenges faced by the students in writing Haiku as learning reflection. Firstly, it is concerned on fitting the vocabularies into fixed form of Haiku. Secondly, it is related to the idea of writing.

Based on the result of the first open-ended questionnaire, 85% students of the children's literature class showed their difficulties in finding the appropriate vocabulary to fit Haiku's form. Finding 5-7-5 syllables form needs effort to do since students also got difficulties in vocabulary mastery of their target language. The data shows;

"I should make the sentences or the reflection or maybe my experiences written by haiku as simple as possible, but it's hard to choose the right number of syllables." (P 12)

"The difficulty in writing haiku is when we have to determine the syllable pattern, which is 5 7 5". (P 21)

"I'm having difficulty in compressing my reflections into three lines/17 syllables which is why I often made more than one haiku in my past reflections. But it's fun nonetheless." (P 50)

(Source: Interview)

Based on the data above, three participants show their difficulties in finding the right words to fit the syllabus. Even though most of them have a positive attitude in writing Haiku, however, they could not convey their learning reflection through this kind of poetry because of its rigidity. P 12 and P 21 shared the same opinion and tended to keep trying to write Haiku as it is. Differently, P 50 tried to solve the rigidity by writing more than one Haiku to deliver his/her reflection clearly.

In addition, the problem of their difficulties in finding the right words is related to their limitation of vocabulary mastery. Since English is not their mother tongue, word choice becomes their barrier too. The better vocabulary mastery they have, the easier writing they will have. It is in line with Mahmudah (2014), stating the importance of vocabulary mastery as the source of ideas the writer to express. Without vocabulary mastery, one cannot develop their writing. From the statements, it can be illuminated that students' problems with vocabulary choice hinders them on idea as well as the theme of writing Haiku. Therefore, vocabulary takes an important role in students' writing skill both academic or creative.

The second challenge of writing haiku deals with the idea of writing. Some students find it is hard what to write, what genre, and what theme to deal with their haiku writing. Since it is in the form of poetry, some students think that their reflection needs to be an aesthetic one. The data show:

"Sometimes I find it challenging to decide what I want to write about because usually, I focus on a theme." (P 32)
 "Of course, to find ideas, and I think it is hard to be creative." (P39)
 "When I don't know what I should write about." (P 47)

Based on the excerpts above, it is clearly shown that students' challenge in writing Haiku is finding the idea. As it is mentioned previously that students wanted to be a creative writer of Haiku, they face more challenges as to write both creatively and clearly. Even though it was clear that they had to write about their learning experience, they find it hard to select which part of teaching-learning process they should write, as shown by participants 32, 39, and 47.

This finding is in line with Husna (2017) emphasises that in expressing an idea one should consider many aspects that will support writing, such as the relationship between topic, idea and context, correct grammar, good spelling, mechanics, and vocabulary. In relation to the theory, it is clearly shown in the data that the result of students' difficulties in finding the idea led them to other aspects of writing, such as spelling, mechanics, vocabulary, etc. In other words, the idea plays a main role in students' writing.

4. CONCLUSION

Utilizing Haiku as learning reflection, however, has its strengths and weaknesses. Haiku is regarded as effective in promoting and improving students' creativity in writing since it is one of the creative writing forms. In addition, students also feel interested in writing Haiku, and enjoy fixing the appropriate word for the rhyme. However, since it was used for a learning reflection, Haiku cannot facilitate all the components of a learning reflection, such as the strengths and the weaknesses, interesting parts of the activity, etc. In a nutshell, students could not elaborate on the reflection due to 5-75 syllables. Moreover, students tend to focus more on creativity rather than the content.

The finding has practical significance related to creative writing and learning reflection. Haiku has been proven to promote students' creativity. Since it is a fun and interesting activity, teachers can use Haiku to boost students' motivation to write, especially in creative writing. Therefore, further study can investigate specifically students' creativity in writing Haiku.

REFERENCES

- Andries, A. M. (2011). Positive and negative emotions within the organizational context. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 11(9), 26–39. <http://www.socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/view/224>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-35913-1>
- Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principle: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Chang, B. (2019). Reflection in learning. *Online Learning*, 23(1), 95–110.

- <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v23i1.1447>
- Cummins, J. (2014). Creative writing in ELT: Helping students find their voice. *English Australia Journal*, 29(2), 59–62. <https://doi.org/10.3316/INFORMIT.638040018429150>
- Dai, F. (2015). Teaching creative writing in English in the Chinese context. *World Englishes*, 34(2), 247–259. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12136>
- Daudelin, M. W. (1996). Learning from experience through reflection. *Organizational Dynamic*, 24(3), 36–48. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3372780.3378172>
- Hanauer, D. I. (2012). Meaningful literacy: Writing poetry in the language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 45(1), 105–115. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000522>
- Higginson, W. J., & Harter, P. (1985). *How to write, share, and teach Haiku: The haiku handbook*. McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Husna, L. (2017). An analysis of students' writing skill in descriptive text at grade X1 IPA 1 of MAN 2 Padang. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Scholastic*, 1(1), 16–28. <https://doi.org/10.36057/jips.v1i1.281>
- Iida, A. (2008). *Poetry writing as expressive pedagogy in an EFL context : Identifying possible assessment tools for haiku poetry in EFL freshman college writing*. 13, 171–179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2008.10.001>
- Iida, A. (2010). Developing voice by composing Haiku: A social-expressivist approach for teaching Haiku writing in EFL context. In U. D. of State (Ed.), *English Teaching Forum*. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs.
- Iida, A. (2013). Critical review of literary reading and writing in a second language. *The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching*, 2, 5–11.
- Iida, A. (2016a). Exploring earthquake experiences: A study of second language learners' ability to express and communicate deeply traumatic events in poetic form. *System*, 57, 120–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2016.02.004>
- Iida, A. (2016b). Poetic identity in second language writing: Exploring an EFL learner's study abroad experience. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 1–14. www.ejal.eu
- Iida, A. (2017). Expressing study abroad experiences in second language haiku writing: theoretical and practical implications for teaching haiku composition in Asian EFL classrooms. In H. P. Widodo, A. Wood, & D. Gupta (Eds.), *Asian English Language Classrooms* (1st ed., pp. 180–191). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315755243>
- Larsen, D. P., London, D. A., & Emke, A. R. (2016). Using reflection to influence practice: Student perceptions of daily reflection in clinical education. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 5(5), 285–291. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-016-0293-1>
- Lewis, H. A. (2017). Haiku to enhance student learning: Experiences from a pathophysiology classroom. *Nurse Education Today*, 17, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.09.018>
- Mahmudah, D. R. (2014). The correlation between students' writing ability and their vocabulary mastery. *Exposure Journal*, 3(2), 192–206. <https://doi.org/10.26618/ejpb.v3i2.837>
- Pettry, D. W. (2019). Exploring emotion through activities. In *Mirrors and Reflections*. DW Pettry.
- Read, C. (2015). Seven pillars of creativity in primary ELT. In A. Maley & N. Peachey (Eds.), *Creativity in the English Language Classroom* (pp. 29–36). Carol Read. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/creativity-english-language-classroom>
- Reichhold, J. (2002). *Writing and enjoying Haiku: A hands on guide*. Kodasha International.
- Sari, W. S., Hasibuan, J. R., & Putri, C. A. (2020). Facilitating novice writers with creative writing workshop in poetry writing classroom (Indonesian EFL context). *Budapest International Research and Critics in Linguistics and Education (BirLE) Journal*, 3(2), 706–713. <https://doi.org/10.33258/birle.v3i2.899>
- Suzuki, M., Minagawa, N., Yamamoto, K., & Yoshioka, R. (2003). Interdisciplinary approaches to Haiku: Launching a cross-media haiku research forum. *Information Processing Society of Japan SIG Technological Report*, 58, 1–7.
- Xerri, D. (2011). Shared writing via contemporary poetry. *English in Education*, 45(2), 176–189.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-8845.2011.01097.x>

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research design and method. In *Sage Publications*. Sage Publications.

YuekMing, H., & Manaf, L. A. (2014). Assessing learning outcomes through students' reflective thinking. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 152, 973–977. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.09.352>

Zhao, Y. (2014). L2 creative writers' identities: Their cognitive writing processes and sense of empowerment. *New Writing*, 11(3), 452–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2014.956124>