Exploring Malaysian ESL Students' Unguided Written Reflections of an Online Poetry Engagement Activity

Nazarul Azali Razali, Nor Atifah Mohamad*, Ameiruel Azwan Ab Aziz, Amirah Mohd Juned, Nurshaza Farah Md Sharif, Nursyafiqah Zabidin, Aqilah Arshad

Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Self-reflection has become a popular practice in teaching and learning as it provides a space for self-assessment with numerous benefits to both learners and educators. As part of their Creative Writing course requirement, a group of Malaysian ESL students participated in an online poetry engagement activity. While a traditional instructor observation method was employed for grading students' performances, little is known about the utilisation and integration of professional and positive attitudes toward this task from students' perspectives. The purpose of this case study was to utilise unguided written reflections to shed light on matters of concern and importance from the students' perspective and describe experiences related to the tasks' intended learning outcomes. Purposive sampling was used to recruit study participants who met the sampling criteria. This approach can enhance the depth and richness of the data collected, as it ensures that the gathered are particularly relevant to the research questions. They were invited to write and submit an unguided self-reflection of the online poetry engagement activity. Inductive thematic analysis was then used to organise and elicit meaning from the collected data. Results indicate that the unguided reflections emulated academic writing convention with introductory statements at the beginning, descriptions and explanations of experiences as the body of writing, and ended with gratifications. The findings also indicated the participants' achievements of the ethics and professional learning outcome. The findings suggest the inclusion of reflective writing for course tutors and programme administrators to improve assessment quality and reliability, especially for learning outcomes that focus on applying and developing generic skills.

Keywords: online engagement activity, poetry writing, unguided reflection

INTRODUCTION

The practice of self-evaluation has been very popular in the field of education. The use of reflection in teaching and learning has provided a space for self-assessment that enhances the learning experience (Beveridge, Fructer, Sanmartin, & deLottinville, 2014). Frequent reflective writing has been found to encourage learners to reflect on their views, thoughts, and performances, increasing self-confidence and self-image (Matheson, Wood, & Franklin, 2017). In the context of a Malaysian undergraduate English for Professional Communication programme, the students are subjected to various learning experiences, instructions, and assessments that are well integrated to achieve the programme's educational outcomes. One of these activities via a second-year Creative Writing course is a task where the students were required to perform an online poetry engagement activity. This activity was intended to achieve the learning outcomes in nurturing the students' professional characteristics and positive ethics in carrying out the

general and sub-tasks of both poetry writing and engaging their immediate community. While a more traditional instructor observation method was adopted for assessing and grading students' performances of the activity, little is known about the utilisation and integration of professional and positive attitudes toward this task from students' perspectives. Thus, the current study intends to investigate unguided students' written reflections on online engagement activity. The aim is for the unguided written reflections to shed some light on matters of concern and importance from the students' perspective in performing this activity.

Current Research / Research Questions

This study explores the contents of unguided students' reflections on an online poetry engagement activity. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What patterns emerged from the experiences of ESL students in their unguided written reflections of an online poetry engagement activity?
2. How do the experiences described in the unguided written reflections relate to the tasks' intended learning outcomes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poetry Writing and ESL

Creativity has often been considered as a uniquely human trait. Regarding language, the human ability to utilise and improvise complex systems to convey meaning allows for and improves the performance of social functions (Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019). Poetry can be defined as a language arrangement that reflects the experiences of the lives of people, a reflection of cultural and social contexts (Wilkinson, Atherton, & Holland-Batt, 2021). Poetry writing has been found to improve English language learners' confidence in using the language while improving their understanding of the language through language play (Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019). It was found to enhance ESL learners' linguistic awareness by expanding and learning new vocabulary and their ability to use and manipulate appropriate lexical items to display motions in texts (Iida, 2012). Many ESL learners find it to be challenging at first, but poetry writing allows ESL learners to communicate their emotions and experiences, which, in a way, also helps encourage self-expression and self-reflection (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2019; Iida, 2012; Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019).

Online Community Engagement and Poetry Writing

Online learning provides an opportunity for a more student-centred and problem-based learning experience via the use of authentic learning settings (Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves, 2003). Successful online learning programmes have been found to operate based on problem-centric learning, teacher accessibility, active learning, peer collaboration, and the usage of course resources (Khe, 2014; Lai, Lin, Lin, & Tho, 2019). Furthermore, digital learning spaces have been found to encourage students in building communities, fostering growth and resilient mindsets as language learners, and construct meaningful and critical perspectives of the world (Amgott, 2023). In terms of engaging with the community online, this activity relies on building trust, establishing alliances, and completing tasks digitally via more robust community-campus relationships that are not bound to time and space (Schwartzman, 2020). Creating a digital space allows for collaboration with immediate stakeholders and the wider audience (Balyasnikova & James, 2020). In this sense, posting poetry online permits the community and producer to engage in an imagined writer/producer-receiver/consumer collaboration where the poem becomes an object of cultural consumption (Sacks, 2020).

A study of young adults' poetic literacy in an online learning space found that engaging with peers and teachers online helped adolescent students improve their identity, motivation, and abilities as poets through

reciprocal interaction and constructive feedback (Padgett & Curwood, 2016). In investigating poetry writing in a blended learning environment, Widodo, Budi and Wijayanti (2016) found that social media platforms helped to form an engaging writer-reader community. Further benefits of mixing instructions and engaging the online community and resources also resulted in constructive support from peers and teachers, strengthening of instructions, sharing other materials related to the produced poetry, and improved assessment experience (Fauzan, Eriyanti, Ardianto, & Asih, 2022; Widodo, Budi, & Wijayanti, 2016). In another study of creative writing faculty members, Fleming-May and Green(2016) found that publishing poetry online provided the convenience of publication, improved writer visibility, and helped build audiences. However, there are also concerns over publication quality and longevity, promotion activities, recognition, plagiarism, copyright, and royalty payments (Fleming-May & Green, 2016). While evaluating an online poetry recital programme, Ard (2022) discovered that social media could function as a platform to produce meaningful social engagement that fulfils students' need for self-expression.

Self-Reflection

Reflections have been found to provide many benefits to professional practitioners and students (Cotton, 2001; Dalal, Hakel, Sliter, & Kirkendall, 2012). Fundamentally, reflection is an effective way to enhance the retention of new knowledge and connect learned materials to established knowledge (Dalal, Hakel, Sliter, & Kirkendall, 2012; Halpin, Donahue, & Johnson, 2020). Reflective essays provide a beneficial way for students to articulate their learning experiences (Halpin, Donahue, & Johnson, 2020) and have a positive effect on improving their understanding and learning practices or performance (Matheson, Wood, & Franklin, 2017; Nowacek et al., 2019). These impacted not only on students' introspection of their personal intellectual growth, but also their emotional and social development (Hulton, O'Rielly, Murdock, & Osgood, 2023). Experts have long argued about the divide between guided (structured) and unguided (unstructured) reflections. Guided reflections have been said to minimise spontaneity but may increase students' sophistication of their descriptions through the use of prompts (Matheson, Wood, & Franklin, 2017; Prinsloo, Slade, & Galpin, 2011). However, it was found that even with continuous prompts and guidance, students may not necessarily improve the depth of their reflection (Beveridge, Fructer, Sanmartin, & deLottinville, 2014) On the other hand, unguided reflections may be too simplistic and turn into learning logs or diaries but allow for more spontaneity and authentic reflection (Prinsloo, Slade, & Galpin, 2011).

On another note, a study of students' unguided online diaries found that it gave students an authentic opportunity to assess their actions and learning while promoting self-awareness (Prinsloo, Slade, & Galpin, 2011). Significantly, the unstructured reflections revealed the content to be concerned about students' state of being, learning experiences, frustrations and challenges, hopes and fears (Prinsloo, Slade, & Galpin, 2011).

Learning Outcomes Domain

The 'ethics and professionalism' learning outcome is based on the Malaysia Qualification Agency's Cluster 5: Ethics and Professionalism (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2017). This was then narrowed down to the Language Program Standards of an undergraduate diploma programme where students should be able to "Illustrate organisational and professional ethics in workplace setting" (Malaysian Qualification Agency, 2019). However, these two documents provided a general description of the learning outcome domain. A previous document by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2016) details the Ethics and Professionalism attribute as an individual's ability to implement the skills and methods while following the values and code of practices. The sub-attributes under this domain are *Work Responsibility*—prescribed duties to be carried out, *Work Relation*—relationships with others, *Work Ethics*—moral rules or principles of behaviour, and *Integrity*—level of honesty and accountability in carrying out tasks (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a case study research design to elicit responses from the participants. A case study design allows for in-depth examination and exploration of the unique experiences of groups of people or an institution (Merriam, 2009; Nieswiadomy, 1993). Case study research design enables researchers to understand complex human experiences and a phenomenon's essence and fundamental structure (Merriam, 2009). A case study provides a detailed account and analysis of cases and may involve an event, process, object, or person. It also allows for identifying complex events or characteristics within a specific system. Nieswiadomy (1993) pointed out that a case study approach is suitable for conducting in-depth examinations of people, groups of people, or an institution. Nieswiadomy further clarified that it is imperative for the researcher to be interested in the meaning of experiences to the subjects themselves rather than in generalising results to other groups of people. Utilising a case study also enables the researchers to explore a given uniqueness to reveal a phenomenon that may not be accessible (Merriam, 2009).

Purposive sampling was utilised in this study, and 21 Malaysian ESL students from an undergraduate diploma programme majoring in English who enrolled in the Creative Writing course were recruited to participate. Before the study began, the objectives of the study were explained to each participant individually. They were also explained their rights in this study before the data collection. Each participant was requested to sign the informed consent for ethical consideration. To maintain confidentiality, the participants were given pseudonyms to protect their individuality.With the aid of the course tutor, the students were invited to write and submit an unguided self-reflection of the online poetry engagement activity upon completion of the activity. However, since the task of writing a self-reflection was voluntary, only ten students responded to the invitation to write an unguided written reflection of the online poetry engagement activity. The researchers could not make the writing of the reflection compulsory as it was not part of the course assessment.

The online engagement activity was undertaken via a popular online video-sharing platform. Students were required to produce their original poem and then create a video presentation of the poem. Students were encouraged to use their creativity and talents to produce the video. Once the videos were ready, a group channel was created where all videos were uploaded and open for public viewing. The students invited friends, families, and the larger public to view their videos. The viewers were encouraged to like, share, or comment. It is important to note that this task is not as immersive as a recurring or extensive service-learning programme, even though it might still, to some degree, achieve the pedagogical principles of meaningful engagement, evaluative reflections, reciprocity of participation, and public dissemination of work (Askildson, Kelly, & Mick, 2013).

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered for this study. Thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyse and report themes of data (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is different from other qualitative data analyses as it focuses more on portraying patterns or themes in the data. Patterns or themes can be identified through thematic analysis, which can be done inductively or deductively (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). This study uses inductive thematic analysis in which the themes identified are closely related to the data itself. It was then used to organise and elicit meaning from the collected data. This method allows for identifying patterns or themes in the data that enable the researchers to draw realistic conclusions that fit the orientation of the study (Bengtsson, 2016). Qualitative data analysis is an evolving process that requires analytic and systematic data evaluation.

Through data analysis, the researcher systematically seeks meaning. To complete the data analysis, strategies were carried out to establish quality, substantiate data accuracy, and verify methods, meanings, and interpretations of data. The data analysis procedures, verification procedures, and procedures to

establish quality assist the researcher in deciding whether or not the study is credible, dependable, confirmable and transferable (Creswell, 1998). Peer debriefing (Merriam, 2009) among the researchers was also performed to establish the reliability of the analysis in terms of the interpretation of data, considering alternative explanations, and defending emergent themes in substantiating the results. Once the first researcher had completed the analysis, other researchers were enlisted to review the analysis and develop themes for comparison with those the first researcher identified. Through the peer debriefing process, the data analysis could be validated through other researchers' experience and expertise.

RESULTS

Contents of ESL Students' Unguided Written Reflections of an Online Poetry Engagement Activity

Analysis of the responses found several recurring contents. These ranged from more organisational and structural contents to descriptions of participants' experiences. After exhaustive consideration, the following themes were established and are presented in Table 1. The analysis revealed six themes: Introducing Project and Self, Benefits Gained from the Project, Challenges during the Project, Strategies and Processes in Completing the Project, Feelings and Emotions, and Thanking and Claiming Support.

Table 1. Established Categories and Sub-Categories from Thematic Analysis of Responses

Themes	Categories	Codes
Introducing Project and Self	–	Introducing (title of) the poem Introducing activities/tasks Introducing self
Benefits Gained from the Project	–	Improved creative writing ability Improved enthusiasm and self-esteem Networking with people
Challenges during the Project	Challenges during poetry writing	Felt that the poem was not good enough Lacking idea No experience writing poetry Struggled to write poems due to limited vocabulary
	Challenges during video production	Novice video editor/producer Problems with editing audio/video
Strategies and Processes for Completing the Project	Strategies and processes of poetry writing	Brainstorming for ideas Considerations on language choice Identified that the poem needed improvement Prior experience with poetry (writing) Relating written poem to the audience (experience)
	Strategies and processes of video production	Choosing music for the video Expressed concern for the audience/disclaimer Learned (video) editing Vision and imagery for (video) background

Feelings and Emotions	Positive emotions	Enjoyed the assessment process Excitement about the poem recital
	Negative emotions	Insecurities about sharing video/poem
Thanking and Claiming Support	–	Support from other people Thanking others

Introducing Project and Self

Participants tend to frequently begin their reflections by making introductory statements when included. Some participants, such as S1 and S4, started their reflections by introducing the poem.

My written poem is entitled, 'I Remember'… (S1)

I managed to come up with something, a poem entitled "Misery's Fall". (S4)

This action can be seen as an attempt at providing a lead-in before they indulge in more detailed descriptions of their experiences.

There were also instances where a few participants began their unguided reflections by introducing the activities/tasks they had to undertake (S8 and S10). However, they only announced the poetry writing activity and did not introduce the online video engagement activity. This could be due to the participants focusing on the work process of the whole engagement activity that started with the need to write an original poem. Furthermore, participants might have subconsciously pointed to the most challenging part of the community engagement activity; poetry writing.

I would like to share my experience in the Creative Writing course, where we had a task to create our own original poem. (S8)

This task required us to write a poem authentically by ourselves using… (S10)

Self-introduction was also found to be at the beginning of the reflection, as used only by S3.

My name is… and I am from the class… (S3)

This action can be seen as a direct attempt by the participant to assert his or her ownership of the written response. It provided a way of introducing the experiences on a personal level.

The inclusion of introductory statements found in the reflections showed that the participants identified the need for some structure in the opening of their unguided writing.

Thanking and Claiming Support

Thanking and Claiming Support theme consisted of statements that were used to thank those who provided tangible and intangible support during the completion of the tasks. These statements were mainly found near or at the end of the reflections.

A few participants claimed the support they received from people they believed helped them throughout the project, as shown by S5.

I managed to do it with my friends' help and also with the guidance of my lecturer. S5

This is a subtle attempt by the participants to acknowledge the contribution of others in completing the

community engagement activity.

Several participants were also found to express their gratitude to contributing parties by writing appreciative thanking statements.

I am very grateful for the love and support that I have been getting from my family, friends and peers. (S3)

The direct approach by some participants, such as the above by S3, used words such as 'grateful' and 'thankful' to state their gratitude clearly.

Interestingly, two participants (S7 and S9) wrote both claims of support and thanking statements in their reflections.

…all of my classmates are very kind and supportive towards each other. (claim of support) S7

I am very thankful to one of my classmates for willingly helping me using the video editor application. (thanking statement) S7

The things that encouraged me to trust the process were the love, praise and appreciation that was shown to me by my lecturers, families and friends regarding my work. (claim of support) S9

I am thankful that my classmates… (thanking statement) S9

These examples reveal that some participants felt obliged to acknowledge and directly thank those who had contributed to completing their work process throughout the community engagement activity. This provided a natural sense of closing to their unguided written reflections.

Apart from these two themes, the other four themes were established to be more descriptive of the experiences that the students had during the engagement tasks. Thus, they are more relevant and will be presented in the next section.

Experiences of ESL Students in an Online Poetry Engagement Activity

The analysis established four themes that reflected the students' experiences of the online poetry engagement task. The themes are Benefits Gained from the Project, Challenges during the Project, Strategies and Processes in Completing the Project, Feelings and Emotions; and they appeared mostly in the body of the written reflections.

Benefits Gained from the Project

The first experience-related theme that participants were found to write in their unguided written reflection was about the benefits they had gained from the activity. The analysis established that the participants believed that the activity had improved their creative writing ability, enhanced their enthusiasm and self-esteem, and showed that they enjoyed networking with others online.

A few participants, such as S7 and S10, mentioned that the activity had helped improve their creative writing skills. As the whole activity started with poetry writing, it is possible that among the main benefits that the students experienced was their development of creative writing skills related to prose composition.

I am quite enjoying my time in completing this activity as it brings out the best of me in becoming more creative and expressing my feelings through poem. (S7)

…this assignment taught me a lot about creative writing. (S10)

Next, some participants described how the activity had improved their enthusiasm and self-confidence in producing original works of poetry and engaging with the larger community.

…this whole project has boosted my enthusiasm and self-esteem for poetry writing. (S4)

I also enjoyed sharing my video with others because it gave a boost to my confidence… (S5)

It is not surprising to see these statements about the benefits of this poetry writing and engagement activity as it involves self-exploration in writing the poems and strengthening one's self-confidence through the sharing of produced works.

In addition, several participants indicated that the activity had also improved networking skills, as shown by S6.

I learned to make good use of my networking to get my friends and followers on social media to share and watch the video. (S6)

The benefits mentioned by the participants correspond to the learning outcomes targeted by this activity. Participants had to plan their strategy to engage their targeted community. Although the participants may be considered frequent social media users, displaying something they produced might be alien, especially when it involves creative writing. It is, therefore, not surprising to see this element being remarked by the participants.

The statements presented reveal that the participants value the benefits of the activity in improving their creative writing abilities, self-confidence, and community networking skills.

Challenges during the Project

The second experience-related theme found in the unguided written reflection was related to descriptions of the challenges the participants faced during the project. This theme was established to have two categories, as the students were found to differentiate the challenges they faced while writing the poem and producing the video.

The first category is the classification of participants' responses that are related to the challenges that they faced during the process of writing the poem. A few participants, like S4 and S7, stated that one of the challenges faced during poetry writing was that they felt that the poems were not good enough. This might be caused by their own insecurity regarding the quality of their poems as they perform this task for academic merit. Therefore, they may be concerned that the written poetry to be presented might not be of value for the merit.

There were a lot of times when I felt as if my poem was not good enough. (S4)

Once I completed these poems, I still think that each of the poem is not good enough to be submitted for the assessment. (S7)

Some participants highlighted that they faced difficulty finding suitable ideas during the poetry writing process.

I really struggled to find a story or an experience for me to turn into a poem. (S5)

I mean, it is definitely not easy to straightaway write a poem on command, especially when I do not have any kind of specifics sparks of inspiration. (S6)

This is a common challenge for new or novice writers as they are still trying to grasp the poetry writing process. Selecting which story or experience to share in poetry can be difficult.

Furthermore, having no prior experience writing poetry was also mentioned as a challenge they faced when required to write a poem for this activity. As sampled in the statement below, having no prior knowledge or experience in poetry writing posed a challenge to some participants as they tried to navigate the complex processes of writing an original poem.

It is not easy to create a literary art or masterpiece, especially if we do not have enough experience in writing one. (S7)

The participants also mentioned that the writing process was a challenge due to their perceived limited vocabulary.

I struggled when I was writing the poem because I do not have a wide range of vocabulary. (S5)

In my case, I also have a limited vocabulary which cause me to face the difficulty in producing a poem without making it sound too cliché and to impress the readers with my word choice. (S7)

The challenge mentioned above is a common issue among non-native language users. As the participants write their own poems, they might have been faced with the obstacle of choosing words that are suitable and may encompass other forms of figurative elements.

The second category found in this theme is related to challenges that the participants faced in producing the video for online engagement. Firstly, a few participants stated that they were new to video production.

…me being a complete video novice… (S2)

…the process of creating this one (video) was something that I have never done before. (S3)

In addition, some participants stated that they struggled with editing the video due to application issues, audio quality, and music copyright.

…it is hard for me to create a video as I do not possess the video editor application. (S7)

For editing, it was a bit hard because I need to remove the background noise and at the same time not to reduce the clarity of my voice and tone. (S10)

At first, I was not aware about the music copyright policy. Unfortunately, when I uploaded my video, my video was getting a copyright claim. (S10)

The challenges mentioned in this category are obvious for new or novice video editors. While they might have enjoyed watching videos, they now find the process of producing one involves multiple processes and considerations, which, as a result, became a challenge of its own.

The categories and statements above reveal that the participants believed that the challenges they faced while writing poems and video production had a significant presence and affected their state of being and

completion of the task.

Strategies and Processes for Completing the Project

Apart from highlighting the problems and challenges they faced during the online engagement activity, the participants also described their experiences in writing the poem and producing the video. These experiences were established to be evidence of decision-making processes.

The first category established under this theme is related to the participants' strategies and processes of writing poetry. The responses were coded as brainstorming for ideas, considering language choice, identifying that the poem needed improvement, engaging prior experience of writing poetry, and attempting to relate the written poem to the audience's experience.

Some participants wrote statements that were reflective of their brainstorming activities while generating ideas for the poems.

I looked back to my school time and started narrating a storyline to my poem based on a real life event that had happened to me. (S2)

During the writing process, I was forced to search up poems to study and have a clear understanding of how I can actually turn it into something that can be enjoyed by everyone. (S5)

I contemplated countlessly and then it suddenly came to me, why not write about something that has to do with the theme of self-worth by relating the context to my past and what I have gone through. (S9)

It is not surprising to see this kind of statement appearing in unguided reflections, as ideation can be considered the starting point of writing any kind of poetry. The above responses show that participants sourced ideas based on their experiences while at the same time performing (re)searches to guide them in the writing process.

Some participants, like S10, mentioned that they also considered the language aspect to be employed in the poems. This reveals that some participants also thought about the language choices that had to be made in the writing process. The participants thought about the audience and other aspects of the language that would best deliver the intended effect of the poems.

I wrote this poem using simple words to make it easy for people to understand, and I also used a lot of personification. (S10)

Another code of responses found for this category was the participants' identification that their poems needed improvement.

I just need to change some parts of the chosen words with more suitable and literary ones so that my poem will sound more poetic. (S7)

The ability of the participants to identify weaknesses and room for improvement is an integral part of this writing process. It shows that the participants did not take this activity lightly and that they analysed the poems multiple times to identify parts of the poems that could be improved.

Other participants, like S4 and S6, relied on their previous experiences writing and working with poetry to produce one for this activity, revealing that some participants had already been involved with writing poetry before this activity. They then delved into and employed those experiences for this poetry writing activity.

Poetry has always been something I dabbled with at a young age. (S4)

I enjoyed poetry myself and I often post my pieces on my social media for my friends to read. (S6)

Other than the writing strategies stated above, the unguided responses also contained statements that attempted to relate the written poem to the audiences' experience.

This poem relates to youths and their curiosity of life as everything that happens is always eventful. I do believe that this event did not only happened to me, but also everyone who had amazing memories as I do back in their school life. (S2)

This shows that the participants had also thought of how to make their poems successful by relating them to the experiences or schemata that the readers might have. This is to ensure that the readers would be able to understand the meaning and the message behind the poems.

The second category established is related to the participants' strategies and processes in video production. The responses were coded as choosing music for the video, expressing concern for the audience/disclaimer, learned (video) editing, and vision and imagery for (video) background.

Some participants, like S1, stated that they had considerations about the accompanying background music for their poetry video clip. This shows that the participants considered the type of sound or music that would suit the mood of their poems.

For the background music, I retrieved it on…by searching "fancy restaurant ambiance" and right off the bat, the particular background music suits the overall mood and hence, giving it more "umph" to the video. (S1)

In addition, S1 also expressed consideration about the effect the video might have on the audience.

…in regards to the technicalities of the video, I have included a disclaimer as this video might be triggering to some. (S1)

The participants' ability to identify while considering their video's impact on the audience is intriguing. It reveals that while the participants want to produce a suitable video for the activity, they also want to be responsible simultaneously.

Some participants, who were not familiar with video editing, took up learning video editing in producing the poetry videos.

I also learned how to make a proper editing. (S10)

For participants that were not familiar with video editing and production they indicated that they overcame it by learning how to perform such tasks. However, they did not specify how they engaged in doing so.

Another code of responses found in the unguided reflections is related to the participants' decision-making on the suitable images for the video.

…envision a child character to be walking in the rain while having a fancy restaurant ambiance for the background to intimidate the audience. (S1)

during the process of creating the video I also filmed myself in applying the use of American Sign Language (ASL) to further express my poem. (S9)

The statements above reveal that the participants also made decisions in terms of determining the type of images that would best suit the deliverance of their poems. They recognised the need for precise considerations in choosing the imageries for their video to achieve the desired effect.

The theme above reveals the strategies undertaken by the participants and processes that involved producing the poem and video by the participants to complete the activity. The participants included these categories of statements in their unguided reflection, which subsequently showed the presence of thoughtful decision-making.

Feelings and Emotions

The analysis also established that the students reflected on their emotions during the online poetry engagement activity. They mentioned experiencing emotions that were positive and negative.

The first positive emotions code was based on statements relating to how the participants enjoyed the whole assessment process, as sampled by S7.

Overall, I am quite enjoying my time in completing this assessment as it brings out the best of me. (S7)

The second positive emotions code established was related to their excitement about the poetry recital task.

So, naturally, I was excited to hear that as this will only be the second ever attempt of me reciting my own poem. (S6)

The positive remarks above show that some of the participants enjoyed the experience of participating in the activity as they were able to experience self-improvement.

Negative emotions category mainly comprised statements conveying the participants' insecurities about sharing their poems and videos.

We were instructed to post a recital video…and I had insecurities about my poem because I never had the experience of the chance to post a piece that I made from scratch and sharing it with the world. (S5)

I never felt that I could fully express myself because I was too concentrated on others' opinions…I do not like the idea of showcasing my emotion to strangers. (S9)

The statements above show some form of self-conscience and anxiety in showcasing their product to the public. While they might be used to doing in-class presentations, the challenge of sharing something they originally produced to strangers (online) may have made them concerned.

This theme revealed that the participants noted their mixed emotions during the online poetry engagement activity. While some mentioned positive experiences, some wrote about their concerns in the unguided written reflection.

Students Experiences and Engagement Activity's Learning Outcomes

As stated previously, the poetry online engagement activity was intended to achieve the learning outcome of fostering students' ethics and professional characteristics. Established participants' experiences that reflect each sub-attribute of Ethics and Professionalism (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2016) are presented.

The first sub-attribute is Work Responsibility, where learners are expected to perform the duties and tasks to

be completed that are related to the job scope. This includes identifying the task at hand and recognising and employing the skills and strategies needed to complete the task. The following statements by S10 and S8 represent the achievement of this sub-attribute.

This task required us to wrote a poem authentically by ourselves using… S10

I had to gather a few out of the box ideas and suggestions from my family members. S8

The statement by S10 shows the ability to identify the project to be undertaken and what is expected to be produced by the end of the project. Additionally, the statement by S8, which reflected on the strategies and processes in completing the project, shows that the participants were able to employ suitable approaches to complete it.

The next sub-attribute of Ethics and Professionalism is Work Relation—the ability to maintain a good (working) relationship with people in the work circle as well as other external parties, be it professional or social communities. While several statements could correlate to the achievement of this sub-attribute, the best that sums up the activity is a statement by S6.

I learned to make good use of my networking to get my friends and followers on social media to share and watch the video. S6

In completing the project, S6 identified the need to promote and reach a bigger online audience. Therefore, S6 used his or her networking skills to engage existing co-working and social communities while possibly establishing new ones.

Work Ethics is another sub-attribute of Ethics and Professionalism that aims for the constant practice of moral rules and behavioural code of conduct, including punctuality, efficiency, and productivity aligned to excellent working culture.

Once I completed these poems, I still think that each of the poem is not good enough to be submitted for the assessment. S7

During the writing process, I was forced to search up poems to study and have a clear understanding of how I can actually turn it into something that can be enjoyed by everyone. S5

The statements above show the participants' achievements in Work Ethics. While both statements reflected on different aspects of the project, they reveal the participants' desire to produce quality work. Their ability to identify shortcomings or inadequacies and devise strategies to overcome challenges is suggestable as a sign of an excellent working culture.

The last sub-attribute is Integrity, in which the aim is for learners to display the level of honesty, trust, sincerity, transparency, and accountability in carrying out a task.

At first, I was not aware about the music copyright policy. Unfortunately, when I uploaded my video, my video were getting a copyright claim. S10

…in regards to the technicalities of the video, I have included a disclaimer as this video might be triggering to some. S1

The first statement by S10 shows sincerity and honesty in admitting to making the mistake of not paying attention to possible copyright infringement while creating the video for the activity. While this was thought to be a genuine challenge by S10, the fact that he/she admitted to making a mistake in the unguided written

reflection is evidence of the Integrity sub-attribute. Meanwhile, S1's disclaimer for his/her video shows signs of accountability for the production and sincerity towards the effect the video might have on the audience.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, ESL students' unguided reflections seemed structurally written in academic writing convention with introductory statements at the beginning, descriptions and explanations of experiences as the body of writing, and ended with gratifications. Two themes appear to behave and perform structural or assignment-like functions: Introducing Project and Self, and Thanking and Claiming Support. Next, the perceived body of the reflections consisted of descriptions of the benefits of the project, challenges encountered, project processes and actions to overcome challenges, and their emotions during the online poetry engagement. These findings are almost similar to a previous study by Halpin, Donahue, and Johnson (2020), where it was found that students wrote about the project description, their feelings of satisfaction with the project, interaction and learning processes, action strategies, and challenges in their unguided reflections. The findings also indirectly support Prinsloo, Slade, and Galpin's (2011) claim that unguided reflections are invaluable to online learning engagement.

With regards to the activity's intended learning outcome, the findings showed that the unguided written reflections of the poetry online engagement activity had managed to show evidence of the participants' achievements of the ethics and professional learning outcome. As previously presented, the unguided written reflections provided more insights into the unique experiences of the participants during the activity and its processes. The statements made by the students could be taken as the activity's success in promoting the intended learning experience of maintaining work responsibilities, work relationships, ethics, and integrity.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted ESL students' learning processes and experiences while undertaking an online poetry engagement activity. It has shown the possibility of using self-reflection, though unguided, as an alternative mode of assessing students' achievement of learning outcomes. However, the small number of responses collected for this study may not allow for a more holistic justification for using unguided self-reflection essays for the case at hand, with the right step to perform would be to conduct further investigation with a more extensive sampling. Furthermore, as this study had laid out the groundwork, the course tutors or interested researchers might want to look deeper into the utilisation of guided, structured, or semi-structured reflections that may be more objective (Matheson, Wood, & Franklin, 2017). Despite the limitations, the results advance the notion of written reflection as a powerful instrument that can be used to explore the experiences of ESL students in performing an online engagement activity to better understand the attainment of learning outcomes. As such, course tutors and programme administrators might consider the formal inclusion of reflective writing as part of the assessment of this creative writing course. The knowledge generated from this study could offer recommendations for changes in educational practices for course tutors and programme administrators to improve assessment quality and reliability, especially for learning outcomes that focus on applying and developing generic skills.

REFERENCES

1. Amgott, N. (2023). "The challenge was fun": Critical literacy and growth mindset in L2 multiliteracies. *System, 113*, 10300. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103000
2. Ard, S. E. (2022). Poetry, pizza, and pandemics: How an academic library successfully moved a popular in-person student engagement program online. *Journal of Creative Library Practice*.

Retrieved from https://creativelibrarypractice.org/2022/02/09/poetry-pizza-and-pandemics/

3. Askildson, L. R., Kelly, A. C., & Mick, C. S. (2013). Developing multiple literacies in academic English through service-learning and community engagement. *TESOL Journal, 4*(3), 402-438.

4. Balyasnikova, N., & James, K. (2020). PhoneMe Poetry: Mapping community in the digital age. *Engaged Scholar Journal, 6*(2), 107-134. doi:https://doi.org/10.15402/esj.v6i2.69984

5. Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *Nursing Plus Open, 2*, 8-24. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

6. Beveridge, T. S., Fructer, L. L., Sanmartin, C. V., & deLottinville, C. B. (2014). Evaluating the use of reflective practice in a nonprofessional, undergraduate clinical communication skills course. *Teaching in Higher Education, 19*(1), 58-71. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.827655

7. Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

8. Cotton, A. H. (2001). Private thoughts in public spheres: Issues in reflection and reflective practices in nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 36*(4), 512-519.

9. Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

10. Cronin, C., & Hawthorne, C. (2019). 'Poetry in motion' a place in the classroom: Using poetry to develop writing confidence and reflective skills. *Nurse Education Today, 76*, 73-77. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2019.01.026

11. Dalal, D. K., Hakel, M. D., Sliter, M. T., & Kirkendall, S. R. (2012). Analysis of a rubric for assessing depth of classroom reflections. *International Journal of ePortfolio, 2*(1), 75-85.

12. Fauzan, Eriyanti, R. W., Ardianto, F., & Asih, R. A. (2022). A Web-Based Learning Media Ruang Ekspresi to Teach Poetry Writing for Junior High School Students. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8*(2), 191-198. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.911553

13. Fleming-May, R. A., & Green, H. (2016). Digital innovations in poetry: Practices of creative writing faculty in online literary publishing. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 67*(4), 859-873. doi:10.1002/asi.23428

14. Frith, H., & Gleeson, K. (2004). Clothing and embodiment: men managing body image and appearance. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 5(1), 40-48.

15. Halpin, P. A., Donahue, A. E., & Johnson, K. M. (2020). Undergraduate biological sciences and biotechnology students' reflective essays focus on descriptive details of experiential learning experiences. *Advances in Physiology Education, 44*, 99-103. doi:10.1152/advan.00144.2019.

16. Herrington, J., Oliver, R., & Reeves, T. C. (2003). Patterns of engagement in authentic online learning environments. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology, 19*(1), 59-71.

17. Hulton, J., O'Rielly, L., Murdock, L., & Osgood, L. E. (2023). Reflecting on Reflecting: How reflections were incorporated throughout a service-learning project in Honduras. *International Journal for Service Learning in Engineering, Humanitarian Engineering and Social Entrepreneurship, 18*(2), 1-13.

18. Iida, A. (2012). Writing Haiku in a second language: Perceptions, attitudes, and emotions of second language learners. *Sino-US English Teaching, 9*(9), 1472-1485.

19. Khe, F. H. (2014). Promoting engagement in online courses:What strategies can we learn from three highly rated MOOCS. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 1-22. doi:10.1111/bjet.12235

20. Lai, C.-H., Lin, H.-W., Lin, R.-M., & Tho, P. D. (2019). Effect of peer interaction among online effect of peer interaction among online engagement and achievement. *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies, 17*(1), 66-77. doi:10.4018/IJDET.2019010105

21. Malaysian Qualification Agency. (2019). *Programme standards: Language.* Cyberjaya, Selangor: Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

22. Malaysian Qualifications Agency. (2017). *Malaysian qualifications framework (MQF) 2nd Edition.* Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

23. Matheson, A., Wood, L., & Franklin, S. (2017). Guided and unguided student reflections. *arXiv Physics Education*, 264-267. doi:https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1710.05259

24. Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

25. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2016). *iCGPA rubric learning outcomes assessment guide.* Putrajaya, Malaysia: Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.

26. Nieswiadomy, R. M. (1993). *Foundations of nursing research.* Norwalk, CT: Appleton and Lange.

27. Nowacek, R., Hoffman, A., Hurlburt, C., Lamson, L., Proodian, S., & Scanlon, A. (2019). Everyday reflective writing: What conference records tell us about building a culture of reflection. *The Writing Center Journal, 37*(2), 93-126. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26922019

28. Padgett, E. R., & Curwood, J. S. (2016). A Figment of their imagination: Adolescent poetic literacy in an online affinity space. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Lliteracy, 59*(4).

29. Prinsloo, P., Slade, S., & Galpin, F. (2011). A phenomenographic analysis of student reflections in online learning diaries. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning, 26*(1), 27-38. doi:10.1080/02680513.2011.538562

30. Rosenhan, C., & Galloway, N. (2019). Creativity, self-reflection and subversion: Poetry writing for Global Englishes awareness raising. *System, 84*, 1-13. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.04.005

31. Sacks, S. L. (2020). Digital voices: Negotiating global forms and local identity in performance poetry from Cape Town. *Postcolonial Text, 15*(3&4), 1-20.

32. Schwartzman, R. (2020). Performing pandemic pedagogy. *Communication Education, 69*(4), 502-517. doi:10.1080/03634523.2020.1804602

33. Widodo, H. P., Budi, A. B., & Wijayanti, F. (2016). Poetry Writing 2.0: Learning to write creatively in a blended language learning environment. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, 13*(1), 30-48.

34. Wilkinson, J. L., Atherton, C., & Holland-Batt, S. (2021). Poetry Now: Introduction. (J. L. Wilkinson, C. Atherton, & S. Holland-Batt, Eds.) *TEXT Special Issue, 64*, 1-8.