



## WRITING ASPIRATIONS IN POETRY: A STUDY OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS' IDENTITY AND REFLECTIVE EXPRESSION IN CREATIVE WRITING

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the practice of writing poetry as a means of reflective expression and articulation of students' aspirations in the context of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian subjects. This study analysed 36 poems by high school students, each inspired by a single aspiration-themed word, to explore how the texts reflect their identity, personal values, and hopes for the future. This study uses a qualitative approach with thematic, stylistic, and reflective-narrative content analysis techniques to examine aspects of diction choice, poetic structure, and affective and expressive dimensions in poetry. The analysis results show that most poems display strength in expressing emotions, using personal diction, and having the courage to voice dreams authentically. However, weaknesses were also identified in poetic structure, cohesion between lines, and the richness of language style. These findings suggest that poetry can serve as an unconventional assessment tool capable of revealing reflective aspects of students, which are often overlooked in conventional cognitive assessments. Thus, writing poetry supports creative literacy and strengthens the curriculum's alignment with expressing students' identities as independent learners.

**Keywords:** reflective writing; student identity; poetry; creative literacy; Independent Curriculum

### INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century requires students to master academic competence and recognise, reflect, and express their identities and aspirations. In the context of Indonesian students, many students have big dreams but are not used to voicing them in the form of meaningful literary reflections. Recognising and expressing ideals creatively can be essential to building self-identity and long-term learning motivation.

One of the forms of expressive literacy that has the potential to channel students' aspirations and self-reflection is poetry. Poetry writing allows students to record their thoughts and feelings through meaning-dense, imaginative, and personal language. Research on poetry writing in the educational realm has explored this creative practice's aesthetic, cognitive, and therapeutic dimensions. Dutton & Rushton (2023) suggest that writing poetry in a translanguaging context can strengthen the linguistic identity of EAL/D students but does not explicitly raise aspects of personal aspirations in the context of local culture. The study of Kubokawa (2022) and D.I. Hanauer, Sheridan, and Englander (2024) highlights the importance of *authorial voice* and agency in L2 learning through poetry. Still, it is limited to the context of adult learners in Japan and has not touched on the dimension of adolescent aspirational Reflection. Other context-based

studies, such as those conducted by Kristiantari et al. (2023a), show an increase in the creative thinking ability of elementary school students through a nature-based approach but still do not associate it with the expression of identity or hope for the future.

In other dimensions, Camic et al. (2022) and Lazarus (2021) place poetry as an instrument of meaning in extreme experiences, such as dementia and educational trauma, and explore poetry's potential as a tool of inner-city articulation. However, no research has examined the role of poetry as a forum for reflective expression and articulation of students' aspirations in the context of secondary education in Indonesia. Even in discussions about human-AI collaboration in creativity (McGuire, De Cremer, & Van de Cruys, 2024), the dimension of affection and student identity is still neglected.

During intense pressure on academic and cognitive performance, expressing aspirations in reflective language through poetry can bridge students' inner world and the world of meaningful education. Observers in grade XI of a high school in North Sumatra showed that many students have a strong urge to express their ideals personally. However, they still feel awkward or limited linguistically and socially to convey it in an open and in-depth written form.

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the practice of writing poetry as a means of reflective expression and articulation of students' aspirations, as well as to identify the extent to which their poetry texts reflect the identity, values, and future expectations of students in the context of the Independent Curriculum. This research is based on the theory of *voice and agency* in creative literacy (D I Hanauer et al., 2024; Kubokawa, 2022), Identity Construction Through Language (Gee, 2000), and a practical expression approach in creative writing (Langer, 1977).

Concerning the Independent Curriculum, this practice also aligns with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, especially in faith and devotion to God Almighty, independence, and global diversity. Writing poetry in the context of Indonesian learning not only supports the achievement of creative and aesthetic literacy but also becomes a pedagogical tool to understand the meaning of teaching from the perspective of the student himself as an individual who dreams, struggles, and grows in an independent learning space.

Writing is a cognitive and practical activity that produces text and actualises the writer's thoughts and feelings. In the context of humanistic education, reflective expression refers to the process of articulating personal experiences consciously and meaningfully to understand oneself and social relations (Bolton, 2000; Langer, 1997). Flower & Hayes (1981). It also emphasises that writing is not a linear activity but a complex series of repeated thought processes, including planning, translation, and revision. It shows that the ethics of a person who writes not only moves information but also shapes and rearranges their understanding (Emig, 1977).

One of the distinctive forms representing this reflective and expressive function is poetry. Writing poetry is a unique form of reflective expression because it allows students to voice emotions, ideas, and aspirations through figurative language and aesthetics. In poetry, meaning is not conveyed literally but through symbols, metaphors, rhythms, and diction of dense and connotative choices. Poetry is an ideal medium to express something that is not easy to express directly, including dreams, identity crises, or hopes for the future (Camic et al., 2022; David I. Hanauer, 2012). In this genre, students are trained to understand form and access deeper inner layers through diction choices, array structures, and imagery. Thus, writing poetry becomes a literacy practice combining

verbal-linguistic and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 2011), strengthening students' self-awareness and emotional sensitivity.

Various research results affirm the importance of reflective writing in shaping self-identity and awareness of the principal's experiences. Lim et al. (2023) state that reflective practice shapes students' value systems and beliefs and encourages the formation of professional and personal identities by exploring emotions, goals, and actions. Support for this is also evident in the research by Aluri et al. (2023), which shows that through an arts-based curriculum, learners can reinterpret their experiences and find new meaning in their lives and participation. Selain itu, Donohoe, Guerandel, O'Neill, Malone, & Champion (2022) found that most students who took the program were dialogical and critical, which showed a deep engagement with personal experience. In this context, writing poetry as a creative-reflective expression can function similarly as a space to process feelings, recognise oneself, and build meaning.

Furthermore, Chan, Tan, and Donkers (2021) research supports previous findings by asserting that written Reflection provides tangible benefits, such as increased self-awareness, the ability to deal with similar situations in the future, and the regulation of emotions. It aligns with the idea that reflective poetry students can use their experiences as a foundation for learning and emotional growth. Even further, Abiolu, Linganisio, and Patrick (2022) highlight the role of Reflection in building a sense of inclusivity and ownership of learning experiences, especially in social diversity. They show that Reflection allows students to overcome identity crises and social exclusion and foster a sense of belonging in the educational process. Therefore, poetry written by Indonesian students can also be seen as a medium of identity liberation and social engagement through reflective exploration.

On the other hand, it is also essential to understand that the success of Reflection depends heavily on the support of the environment and the pedagogical approach used. Research by Kingkaew et al. (2023) emphasises the importance of a learning environment that facilitates Reflection based on Kolb's experiential learning theory, with the support of technology that guides students to connect concrete experiences with abstract concepts. Alsaeed & Aladil (2024) also conveyed the same thing. In early childhood education, integrating interactive technology into the learning environment encourages educators to be more aware of the role of Reflection in choosing appropriate learning tools. Thus, in poetry learning, an experiential-based approach and technology can strengthen students' reflective processes in exploring themselves creatively and critically.

In addition, the teacher's ability to evaluate and guide the reflective process is also a crucial factor. Zhang, Schießl, Plößl, Hofmann, & Gläser-Zikuda (2023) show that *the mixed-methods approach* can be used to assess the depth of students' Reflection through affective, cognitive, and thematic dimensions. Reflections rich in emotions and have personal nuances tend to indicate a deeper level of thinking. Therefore, poems that contain emotional and reflective elements can indicate students' deep expression of the reality they experience. However, as explained by Salahi & Farahian (2021), this process is not barrier-free. They identified three sources of constraints in reflective writing: teachers, students, and the education system. The main barriers are students' lack of guidance and experience in reflective writing. Therefore, educators must provide a safe space and consistent guidance so that students can write reflectively in the form of poetry.

Finally, the effectiveness of reflective writing also depends on the feedback strategy provided. A study by Suraworachet, Zhou, and Cukurova (2023) demonstrated that combining human feedback and digital analytics can improve student engagement

and performance in reflective writing tasks. Data-driven interventions and personal attention encourage students to write regularly and more in-depth, especially for those with low self-study skills. In the same way, in the context of reflective poetry, teachers who give feedback not only on form but also on the content and depth of meaning will be better able to facilitate students' reflective expression. Therefore, writing poetry is not just a literary activity but also a meaningful reflective process, which, if properly facilitated, can be a bridge for students to understand themselves and their environment more deeply.

In the humanistic education paradigm, the learning process is seen as an accumulation of cognitive knowledge and an effort to understand oneself as a whole human being. One of the key processes in this approach is self-reflection, which is the ability of students to perceive their life experiences, interpret the meaning behind those experiences, and formulate their position in social and cultural contexts (Bolton, 2000; Mezirow, 1991). Reflection is not just recalling what happened, but a metacognitive activity involving an individual's emotions, values, and life orientation.

Reflection can be realised in language and literature education through personal and expressive writing activities, such as journals, narrative essays, and poetry. Critical Reflection allows learners to test assumptions, look at power structures in their life narratives, and ultimately form a new understanding of who they are and what they want to be (Brookfield, 2017). This Reflection is vital in helping students discover their identity more consciously as individuals and as part of a community.

The concept of identity is not static but is formed narratively and contextually. Bruner (1991) explains that humans build their identities through narratives; they "become" through the stories they create, recreate, and share with others. This narrative often appears in education as writings that reflect students' values, hopes, and beliefs. Therefore, creative writing, such as poetry, is an aesthetic tool and a medium of articulating narrative identity.

Reflective writing allows students to consciously explore their subjective experiences, give new meaning to emotions or events, and voice them in symbolic form. In this process, self-awareness grows along with their ability to identify, name, and frame personal experiences. Gardner (2011) calls interpersonal intelligence a form of psychological literacy that is important to be given space in learning. Humanistic education plays an important role: producing intellectually intelligent students and individuals who are aware, whole, and able to voice their humanity. Thus, a reflective approach to education encourages students to not only understand the lesson but also to understand themselves. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, freedom of expression through creative texts such as poetry is one of the concrete forms of educational alignment with students' voices and aspirations.

Self-reflection in education has been proven to significantly impact the shaping of students' academic identity and self-awareness. A study by Gebremariam & Asgede (2023) shows that students who are engaged in reflection activities before writing an essay experience an increased ability to formulate arguments and organise ideas independently. This process allows students to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, thus reinforcing their identity as reflective and critical writers. Self-awareness that grows through Reflection not only improves academic performance but also supports the formation of oneself as an individual responsible for the learning process and one's mind. Furthermore, this reflective value is also strengthened in value-based education and spirituality. A study by Kwon, Kim, Jung, and Son (2024) found that students who took courses based on Buddhist teachings experienced significant improvements in self-



awareness, self-design, regulation, and self-examination. These dimensions contribute significantly to the ability of students to interpret their existence more deeply, both in academic and existential contexts. With the Eastern humanistic approach, Reflection is the heart of learning, not just an evaluative tool. The same thing was also emphasised in the study of Dewi, Ardhiani, Sunarto, & Shakka (2024), which highlights how the relationship between the supervisor and students in the thesis writing process opens up a reflective space that plays a role in students' personal development. Relationships based on empathy and openness encourage the formation of a student's identity that is emotionally and intellectually intact.

Moving from a relational context to a physiological dimension, research by Sizikova, Sergei, and Polikanova (2024) has proven that self-reflection affects brain activity, particularly in individuals with high levels of anxiety. In this study, self-reflection activated brain areas related to self-control and attention focus and reduced cognitive fatigue. These findings prove that Reflection touches on mental and emotional aspects and has a neurological impact in supporting individual psychological stability. The educational implications of these findings are obvious: that the development of self-reflection should be an integral part of the curriculum to create learners who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally stable.

To reinforce this idea, various other studies highlight the importance of humanistic education in building transdisciplinary reflective consciousness. Armenia & Oteo (2025) emphasised that incorporating humanities courses in the exact study program can broaden students' perspectives and increase awareness of the limits of scientific methodology. This kind of education encourages students to not only master technical competencies but also to think thoroughly and reflect on social realities. Fan (2025) added that in global uncertainty and technological disruption, self-reflection is the main provision to respond to the changing times. Humanistic education built on a foundation of Reflection and self-awareness will shape resilient individuals who can think critically and ethically in the face of the challenges of a complex world.

Then, the approach to human values in the curriculum is also shown by Suresh & Ganga Lakshmi (2021), which emphasises that higher education must incorporate reflective and moral values in its curriculum so that the younger generation is competitive and compassionate. In this context, self-reflection serves as a bridge between intellectuality and social sensitivity. Support for this view also emerges in the study by Al-Tkhayneh et al. (2024), which shows that the self-awareness of the lecturers correlates with their professional background and experience. Reflection is not only needed by students but also by educators to be able to create a humane and contextual learning atmosphere.

Finally, self-reflection also has an impact on strengthening thinking structures and metacognition. Hoffman, Williams, and Kephart (2024) show that written Reflection directed through four thinking modalities (mechanical, structural, creative, and critical) helps students understand their thought processes, especially in high-level mathematics learning. Although they are different fields, the reflective structures used show that Reflection can increase intellectual awareness and strengthen the formation of an independent and resilient academic identity. Thus, these findings confirm that self-reflection is a fundamental element in humanistic education that shapes personal awareness and deepens students' understanding of their identity and human values.

Poetry as a medium of expressing students' identities and aspirations is a form of writing that allows writers to channel personal experiences, emotions, and ideas through

dense and imaginative symbolic language. Wordsworth (1802) affirms that poetry is born from reflection on emotional experiences. In education, writing poetry is understood as a cognitive and affective practice that allows students to process feelings and experiences into meaning. Kress (2003) said that poetry as a representation of self involves not only words, form, rhythm, and visuality, all of which are ways for students to build identity symbolically.

Furthermore, Schott (2012) calls poetry an inner language that can voice doubts, hopes, and life values that are difficult to express directly. Therefore, poetry is a literary object and a powerful tool for self-expression in education. In this context, the Independent Curriculum, which emphasises freedom of thought and alignment with students' voices, provides a vast space for poetry writing as a reflective literacy practice. Thus, poetry can be a strategic medium to explore self-awareness, build identity, and channel students' aspirations as complete and independent individuals.

Various previous studies have shown that poetry has excellent potential as a medium of student self-expression, identity, and aspirations. Kubokawa (2022) conducted a classroom action study in Japan, which proved that writing poetry in a second language (L2) can encourage students to build *an authorial voice* and improve their learning agency. This study emphasises that success in forming authoritative voices affects students' language skills and develops confidence and ownership of their personal experiences in writing. These findings reinforce the assumption that writing poetry can be a transformational means for students to assert their identity through creative processes, including in foreign language learning.

Furthermore, research conducted by Piscayanti, Mujiyanto, Yuliasri, and Astuti (2024) through the *Narrative Inquiry* method showed that poetry becomes a safe space for students to articulate their inner voices that were previously hidden. In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, students express traumatic experiences, present and future anxieties, and personal expectations through poetic diction and metaphors. Reinforces that poetry is an aesthetic medium and a vehicle to voice and reconstruct students' complex, dynamic, and reflective identities.

The link between poetry, identity, and local context is also seen in the research by Kristiantari et al. (2023b), which uses a contextual learning approach based on rural nature. The results of this study show that the approach not only improves the poetry writing skills of elementary school students but also encourages them to express understanding and sensitivity to their environment. Thus, students' local identities, as individuals and community members, are portrayed through poetry as representing values, experiences, and expectations rooted in their daily reality.

On the other hand, the affective and psychosocial dimensions of poetry writing are also powerfully illustrated in the study by Gitau et al. (2023a), which uses *a collaborative poetic inquiry approach* in researching intergenerational trauma in refugee communities with conflict backgrounds. Through a poem titled "*My Dad Was a Soldier*", it was found that poetry is an essential channel in reconstructing traumatic memories, building resilience, and voicing previously unheard experiences. In this context, poetry exists as a form of documentation of identity that is personal, collective, and historical.

Furthermore, the therapeutic value of poetry writing is also emphasised in autoethnographic works, such as those of Lazarus (2021), who narrates healing from academic trauma through writing poetry during her doctoral studies. In the article, Lazarus asserts that poetry helps him heal emotional wounds, criticise toxic educational institutions, and rebuild his identity as an empowered researcher. These findings are



corroborated by Elke (2024), who utilises art and poetry as a form of spiritual Reflection and transformative pedagogy in education. He emphasised that creative practice in the educational space can pave the way for self-recovery, cultural connection, and re-meaning of self and community.

The cognitive and epistemological aspects of poetry writing have also been highlighted in the study by Wardle & Illingworth (2022) involving geoscience students. Despite coming from an exact discipline, the participants showed that writing haiku from academic texts helped them digest and interpret scientific information more personally and meaningfully. These results show that poetry, regardless of its scientific context, still has power as a medium of self-expression and reflective understanding connected to learning experiences.

Furthermore, the social and critical dimensions of poetry appear in the research by Gitau et al. (2023b), who observe the writing of technical poetry by engineering students. This research shows that despite being in an academic environment focused on logic and technocracy, students still use poetry to express feelings, social criticism, and views on educational and professional life dynamics. It indicates that poetry provides space for describing aspects of humanity often overlooked in science and technology-based education.

From the perspective of ethnographic and social justice, Crockett Thomas's (2022) research shows how poetry is used to reflect on the inmates' experience and the process of social reintegration. Through field poems, marginal experiences, contemplation, and social rejection are represented in intense and emotional language, making poetry a tool to voice identities that social structures have silenced.

Finally, the entire study shows that poetry writing is not just an aesthetic, creative activity but a process of meaning oriented towards identity formation, aspiration channelling, trauma healing, and strengthening students' reflective sensitivity. These findings consistently support the thesis that poetry is an essential educational and expressive medium in shaping students as self-aware, critical, and authentic individuals in voicing their life experiences. Thus, learning to write poetry improves language skills and students' personal and social growth as subjects who think, feel, and aspire.

#### Expressive Literacy and Reflective Assessment in the Independent Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum places students as active learning subjects, emphasising freedom of thought, authenticity of voice, and strengthening self-reflection. In the Learning Outcomes (CP) of the Indonesian Phase F subject, writing is not only interpreted as a technical skill in composing texts but also as a means of personal expression, Reflection on values, and identity formation. It is reflected in the "Self-Expression and Social Interaction" element, emphasising students' ability to write literary and non-literary texts creatively, reflectively, and meaningfully (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Expressive literacy is a form of literacy practice that allows students to authentically voice their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. Through genres such as poetry, students hone their language sensitivity and learn to recognise themselves, build social relationships, and foster empathy and social awareness. In this context, poetry is a very effective vehicle to explore expressive potential while shaping students' self-awareness as independent individuals in thinking and feeling.

More than just an aesthetic product, poetry can be a reflective assessment form describing a student's thought process, personal values, and future vision. This kind of assessment differs from traditional cognitive evaluation in that it assesses the meaning and depth of expression, not just the accuracy of structure or factual content. Brookhart

(2013) refers to reflective assessment as part of formative assessment that empowers students to understand their learning process. Within this framework, poetry can indicate the achievement of students' affective and metacognitive dimensions, which are often overlooked in conventional academic evaluations.

Thus, poetry is relevant not only as an object of literary learning but also as a learning and assessment method based on the philosophy of the Independent Curriculum: educating students in a whole, creative, and reflective way. This approach reinforces the importance of writing poetry as an expressive literacy practice that supports the development of students' identity, freedom of expression, and affective maturity.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand and interpret the meaning of poems written by students as an expression of their identity and aspirations. The qualitative approach allows researchers to delve deeply into the personal, affective, and symbolic dimensions manifested in students' literary texts, especially in Indonesian learning, focusing on self-expression and Reflection.

This type of research is included in the category of text-based qualitative study with a focus on analysing students' written works in the form of poetry. The data analysed are not numbers but units of meaning, themes, symbols, and language styles in the poem's text. This approach corresponds to the view of Creswell & Creswell, J. David (2018), which states that qualitative research is suitable for examining subjective meanings, personal values, and individual experiences that cannot be reduced to numbers.

In addition, the analysis in this study is also influenced by a reflective-narrative approach, which views poetry as a mini-narrative that voices the author's experiences, emotions, and expectations. In this case, poetry serves as a medium of expression that represents students' identities and aspirations implicitly as well as explicitly. Therefore, this research not only describes the structure and content of the poem but also interprets the reflective content and personal meaning revealed in it.

The subjects in this study are 34 poems written by grade XI students of SMA Negeri 1 Paranginan, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, North Sumatra, as part of the Indonesian language learning task in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The poems are written manually based on a single ideal-themed keyword, encouraging students to reflectively express their expectations and personal identities. Poetry is positioned as a literacy artefact containing affective and expressive values relevant to the curriculum's dimensions of freedom of thought and self-expression. The primary data source in this study is the student's poetry manuscript, while the context of the assignment and learning objectives are obtained from the teacher's notes and teaching documents. To maintain the research's ethics, the students' names were not included, and all data were anonymised to reveal personal identities. This research was conducted in good faith and with academic objectives to raise the potential of student expression in literary learning and reflective literacy.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out by collecting documents in the form of poems written by students in Indonesian learning activities. Puisi-puisi tersebut dikumpulkan dalam bentuk tulisan tangan, sebagaimana diberikan sebagai tugas kelas yang meminta siswa mengekspresikan cita-cita mereka melalui satu kata kunci inspiratif. This assignment is designed by teachers as part of implementing the Independent Curriculum, especially in developing students' ability to reflect, express, and

creative writing. A total of 34 poems were collected and documented by the researcher as the primary data source.

In addition to poetry documents, the researcher also obtained contextual information through the teacher's notes regarding the background, purpose, and process of assigning poetry writing tasks. This information is used to understand the socio-pedagogical context of the birth of the student's work and interpret poetry within a broader learning framework. All data is collected without interfering with the learning process, and documentation is done responsibly by maintaining the confidentiality of students' identities. This technique allows researchers to obtain authentic and reflective data from students' literacy products, representing their personal experiences and aspirations.

The data analysis in this study was carried out through three main approaches: thematic analysis, stylistic analysis, and reflective-narrative analysis. This approach is used in an integrated manner to understand both the content and form of the poem, as well as the meaning expressed by students through their literary expression. First, thematic analysis is carried out to identify and categorise the main themes in the poem, such as future hopes, life values, self-identity, or personal experiences. Each poem is carefully read to find keywords, repetitive phrases, and implicit messages that describe students' aspirations. Second, stylistic analysis examines linguistic aspects and writing techniques in poetry, including diction choice, use of language styles (metaphors, personifications, repetition), stanza and line structure, and interline cohesion. This analysis aims to understand how students build their artistic expression and how far they master poetic devices. Third, reflective-narrative analysis focuses on interpreting the meaning of poetry as an expression of identity and the process of self-reflection. In this approach, poetry is seen as a mini-narrative that voices students' life experiences, dreams, and contemplations of the future. The researcher interprets the connection between the form of poetry and the depth of the personal message conveyed. These three approaches complement each other to uncover students' work's cognitive and affective dimensions. In this way, poetry is analysed as a literary text and an artefact of meaningful reflective expression in an educational context.

To ensure the validity of the data in this study, the researcher uses the principles of credibility, dependability, and confirmability, as suggested in the qualitative approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given that the primary data is in the form of poems written by students authentically in the context of learning, credibility is maintained through repeated reading and in-depth analysis of each text to capture the personal and reflective messages.

Validity is also strengthened through triangulation of sources by combining data from poetry texts with contextual information from teachers' notes about the learning process and the background of assigning assignments. It is done to ensure that the interpretation of the meaning of the poem remains in a pedagogically valid context. In addition, the researcher also applies peer checking, namely by discussing the results of categories and thematic interpretations with colleagues with a background in Indonesian literacy and education, to avoid subjective bias. On the other hand, dependability is maintained by systematically documenting the analysis process, including recording the stages of grouping themes, stylistics, and Reflection on meaning. Meanwhile, confirmability is obtained through data reporting, analysis transparency, and efforts to keep the researcher's interpretation traceable logically based on existing data. Researchers also maintain research ethics by not including students' names or other personal

information in publications. All student works are anonymous documents representing the younger generation's collective voice in a safe and independent expression space.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analysed 34 poems by grade XI students from a high school in North Sumatra, written based on one keyword with the theme of ideals. The poems reflect students' reflections on their future, life values, and self-identity. The emerging themes vary, covering 12 categories of professions or social roles. The most dominant theme was entrepreneurship (9 poems), followed by the field of law (7 poems) and education (6 poems). Meanwhile, themes such as the health profession, religious minister, military, police, and other professions are each represented by 1–3 poems.

Table 1. Classification of Themes and Number of Poems

No.	Profession/Aspiration Theme	Number of Poems	Dominant Personal Values
1	Businessman	9	Independence, determination, and social contribution
2.	Lawyer	7	Justice, morality, courage
3	Teacher/Author	6	Devotion, light of knowledge, dilemma, Existence
4	TNI/ Police	6	Nationalism, discipline, and sacrifice
5	Doctor/ Nurse (Medical)	2	Empathy, service, compassion
6	Pastor	2	Spiritual, spiritual vocation
7	Miscellaneous	4	Public service, globality, courage

The distribution of poetry themes shows students have broad and diverse aspirations, covering the social, spiritual, economic, and security realms. It also reflects the variety of personal values internalised in their future projections.

### Stylistic Elements: Language and Style Expressions

This table shows stylistic elements:

Table 2. Common Language Styles and Stylistic Elements Found

No.	Stylistics Unsur	Examples of student poems	Function/ Effects
1	Symbolic Diction	"lamp", "light", "pen", "conscience"	Marking the direction of life, hope, and spiritual values
2.	Metaphor	"Falling like a rainbow", "Not Installed Yet."	Expressions of inner Reflection and dreams of time
3	Reps	"I want to be, "be."	Provide emotional pressure and form a narrative rhythm
4	Free array	Not bound by traditional forms	Facilitating personal expression and freedom of thought
5	Narrative Contrast	"I'm a nobody... I want to be..."	Describing the transition of identity from the present state to the ideal

In general, the students' poems show the courage to express themselves and use poetic devices, even with varying qualities. The dominant stylistic elements include the selection of diction used to strengthen students' expressions and reflect the depth of



emotion and the orientation of meaning. In general, the students' poems show the courage to express themselves and use poetic devices, even with varying qualities. The dominant stylistic elements include the selection of diction used to strengthen students' expressions and reflect the depth of emotion and the orientation of meaning.

These stylistic elements show that although students have not yet fully mastered the technical structure of poetry, they have demonstrated an authentic effort in voicing feelings, hopes, and life values through expressive forms of language.

### Reflective Dimensions and Identity Construction

The poems analysed' main strength is their reflective-narrative dimension. Almost all students begin their poems from the position of 'me' as a simplified or powerless present entity and then move towards future projections. This narrative structure reflects a progressive process of internalising identity and is influenced by moral, spiritual, and social values.

Table 3. The Reflective-Narrative Dimension in Poetry

Reflective Aspects	Examples of Narratives from Poetry	Meaning of Reflection
Current self-awareness	"I'm just an ordinary student."	Honestly, acknowledging the initial social position.
Future Projections	"I want to be a light to others."	Socially and spiritually oriented aspirations
Identity and Values	"Not to be worshipped, but to be light."	Reflection on motives, values of life, and purpose
Commitment and perseverance	"Despite the limping steps... I keep going."	Narrative of struggle and resilience to challenges
Existential anxiety	"Two paths stretch... teacher or writer?"	The dilemma of identity and autonomy in choosing the future

These findings support that poetry as a literary expression allows students to consciously explore and articulate their identities and aspirations. Poetry writing becomes a narrative bridge between the simple present and the hopeful demand period. It becomes a powerful tool of self-reflection in the process of humanistic education.

### The General Strengths and Limitations of Poetry

As a product of high school students' expression, these poems show some advantages, including the courage to voice feelings, the authenticity of the theme, and the diversity of meanings. The main strength lies in the authority of personal expression and the success of presenting self-reflection through powerful symbols and narratives. However, there are still weaknesses in the technical aspects of poetry, such as the unstable structure of the poem, the use of sometimes cliché metaphors, and the tendency for repetition that has not yet developed. It shows the need for further guidance in the aesthetic and cohesion aspects of the text. Nevertheless, these poems have generally reflected great potential in reflective assessment and the development of students' self-identity.

The results of this study show that poetry as a creative-reflective medium of expression can reveal students' aspirations, personal values, and identity construction.

This finding strengthens the theoretical foundation in previous research that writing poetry provides space for developing students' voices and agency (Hanauer, 2012; Kubokawa, 2022) and allows students to form identities through personal narratives (Bolton, 2000). In the context of the Independent Curriculum, the practice of writing poetry has been proven to support the dimension of freedom of thought and authenticity of expression, which are the main characteristics of a humanistic educational approach.

First, finding authentic expression, voice, and agency in poetry writing. The students' poems in this study show how the writing process gives space to forming authentic personal voices. The courage of students to express hopes, dreams, and even doubts shows affective involvement in literacy practice. In agency theory, students are not only objects of learning but also actors who consciously interpret and voice their position in the world. As shown in the study of Kubokawa (2022), Personal expression in poetry correlates with an increased sense of ownership of the learning process. It is reflected in the poems themed 'entrepreneurs' and 'lawyers', where students identify their life values through the metaphors and symbols they create.

Second, finding out about self-reflection and identity construction in humanistic education. The reflective process in students' poems reinforces the idea that creative literacy is vital for developing self-awareness. Mezirow (1991) and Brookfield (2017) state that Reflection is essential to humanistic education because it helps students form meaning and articulate their identity consciously. In the poem with the theme 'teacher', 'doctor', and 'pastor', it appears that students express the hope of becoming a lamp for others or a healer of the soul. It reflects a reflective depth related to spirituality, devotion, and social responsibility.

Third, finding out about the language style and structure of poetry as a mirror of reflection. The stylistic elements found in students' poetry are not just ornaments of language but also tools of articulation of self-reflection. Using symbols such as 'light', 'pen', and 'step' shows the tendency of students to use figurative language to convey something that is not easily expressed literally. It follows the opinion of Camic et al. (2022) that poetry can be a medium to access the deepest emotional layers, especially when ordinary verbal expression is inadequate. In education, this sensitivity to figurative language also strengthens the aesthetic dimension in creative literacy that supports the achievement of the Pancasila Student Profile.

Fourth, finding out about reflective assessment and its relevance to the independent curriculum. The findings of this study also confirm the importance of a more reflective and contextual assessment approach in Indonesian language learning. In the Independent Curriculum, students are directed to develop meaningful self-expression through literary texts. Poetry, in this context, becomes not only an aesthetic product but also an instrument of affective and metacognitive diagnosis of students. As Brookhart (2013b) stated, Reflective assessment allows students to understand their thinking process and identity formation independently. Therefore, teachers should integrate the practice of writing poetry as part of a formative assessment that evaluates writing skills and students' depth of thinking and self-awareness.

Although the analysed poems showed a high power of personal expression, some limitations were found in structure, linear cohesion, and mastery of language style. This limitation is not an obstacle but shows the importance of literacy guidance that focuses on reflective expression. As Salahi and Farahian (2021) state, Students' limited experience in reflective writing is a challenge that educators must respond to through supportive

strategies. Teachers are important in creating safe spaces for expression and providing feedback that facilitates students' cognitive and affective growth.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that poetry writing by high school students effectively expresses aspirations, life values, and self-identity formation reflectively and authentically. Through poetry, students convey their future ambitions and describe their current selves, inner conflicts, and expectations for the social role they want to play. The diversity of themes raised, ranging from entrepreneurs, teachers, and lawyers, to community servants, shows the breadth of the horizon of identity and values internalised by students. The language style used, such as metaphors, symbolism, and free arrays, shows the courage of expression and the depth of personal Reflection. These findings strengthen the view that the practice of creative literacy, especially poetry, has excellent potential to develop *students' voices*, *agency*, and self-awareness, as well as being in line with the values in the Pancasila Student Profile in the Independent Curriculum.

This study provides several important implications, including (1) Pedagogical implications: Language teachers can use poetry as a formative assessment that measures the depth of Reflection and personal expression, not just linguistic aspects. (2) Curricular implications: The practice of writing poetry aligns with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasises differentiated learning, freedom of thought, and the authenticity of students' expression. (3) Theoretical implications: These findings reinforce the literature on expressive and reflective literacy and confirm that poetry is an essential space in forming identity and self-narrative.

This research is inseparable from its limitations, including (1) Contextual limitations: Data are obtained from a single classroom in a single school, so they do not yet represent a broader context. (2) Limitations of the method: The analysis was only conducted on the poem text as the final product without triangulation of additional data, such as interviews or students' verbal reflections. (3) Research duration: Poetry writing activities are carried out in a limited period, so it does not allow longitudinal monitoring of the development of students' reflections.

### Further Research Suggestions

To deepen and expand these findings, it is recommended that further research be conducted: (1) Engage more learners from different schools and cultural backgrounds to understand the relationship between poetry and identity better. (2) Data triangulation methods, such as interviews, reflective journals, or classroom observations, enrich perspectives on students' creative processes. (3) Develop a reflective assessment rubric for writing poetry, which measurably combines affective, cognitive, and aesthetic dimensions. (4) Conduct a longitudinal study to observe how the expression of identity and Reflection in poetry develops over time as students grow.

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