

## A poetic inquiry into an EFL learner's identity and study abroad experience in a non-English speaking country

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### Abstract

This qualitative case study investigates the way an EFL student reflects on her identity and study abroad experience through a series of *pantuns*, a four-lined rhyming Indonesian poem. This study conducts a poetic identity analysis on ten English *pantuns* written by a Ukrainian student who studied English education in Indonesia. The poems were analyzed in terms of their context, content and stylistic choices. The study unveils that through the ten *pantuns*, the participant voiced the sociocultural and racial issues she faced as an international student in a non-English speaking country, contemplating her membership in local and global communities, expressing the sense of camaraderie she felt with Indonesian EFL learners and with multicultural community, and constructing new identity in the third space. Further, she recounted her *pantun* writing experience as challenging due to the genre's economic word count and rhyming scheme, but satisfying because writing *pantun* brings her closer to a form of Indonesian literature and its culture by extension. In *pantun*'s prefatory section, the participant set the tone of the poem and drew metaphors of her personal and emotional insight, whereas, in the following content section, she wrote rhyming lines while expressing said insights. Thus, this study illustrates how writing *pantun* helps a language learner exercise her linguistic and literary awareness while also enabling her to explore her memories, emotion and perception. The pedagogical implication is also presented in this study.

**Keywords:** EFL learner, L2 poetry writing, study abroad experience, *pantun*, poetic identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization, language learning has become more complex. Language teachers and learners mobilize between spaces, so language learning is no longer restrained by territory (Elliott & Urry, 2010; Gee & Hayes, 2011). This expanded learning circumstances demand that learners navigate themselves through different experiences, spaces and communities, which would affect the way they perceive themselves and the world, in other words, their identities.

Norton (2013, p. 4) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future". She argues that a learner's identity shapes and is shaped by language (Norton, 1995). Through a longitudinal study of the language learning experience of immigrant women in Canada, Norton found that the change of social identity learners undergo was a part of the affiliation process to a community where they initially feel like an outsider. Through this study, Norton (1995) had mapped out a particular relation between language learning and identity, and it has also accentuated the nature of language learner's identity that is intricate, multi-layered and contradictory. Drawing upon the finding, she claimed that perspective, personalities, learning styles, and motivation are neither unitary nor decontextualized.

As of recent, expansion of studies on language learners' identity in EFL/ESL contexts are especially needed to keep up with the everchanging age that changes the way L2 teaching and learning are done. As such, identity studies can be conducted on either teachers or learners. Some studies of

language teachers' identity have unveiled the construction of language teachers' professional identity and their identity as a student affect the way they teach (Hidalga & Villardón, 2019; Iida, 2016c). As for language learners, numerous identity studies have provided empirical evidence of the idiosyncratic ways language learners perceive, resist and invest in their language learning (Iida, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Kaldina, 2018; Kim, 2018; Wu, 2017). For language teachers, identity study in a classroom context can be an evaluation of the way they adopt language learning pedagogy by which their learners should abide. As for learners, identity study can be an opportunity to discover self, voice their insight and emotion, and deliver criticism and reflect on serves as reflection and criticism towards the pedagogy they are apart. Ultimately, the goal is to improve the quality of language learning.

A model of identity study that has gained many tractions recently is a study of poetic identity. Hanauer (2010) proposed the idea of poetic identity as “identity (or range of identities) that can be interpreted in the act of reading and writing of a poem” (p. 59). This model used poetry written by research participants as the data source, in which their autobiographical information and identity construction are presented. Contextualizes within creative writing for language learning, the demographic participant of poetic identity study are mostly language learners. Hanauer (2012, 2014, 2015) promotes second language poetry writing as a part of meaningful literacy, a language and literacy practice that centres language learning around the production of creative texts based on learners' experience, emotion and individuality. Iida (2016b) asserts that meaningful literacy can be a tool of empowerment for language learners as well as a literacy practice that goes beyond the limit set by traditional L2 pedagogy. Hanauer (2012) also argues that meaningful literacy makes the literacy “meaningful on the personal and social level, as well as giving a sense of depth and ownership to the writing itself.” (p. 108-109). As such, within the EFL/ESL context, this model is suitable to gauge into individual's language learning experiences and self-perceptions, as demonstrated by many previous researchers (Iida, 2016c; Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020; Kim, 2018; Park, 2013).

One of the most eminent identity studies that uses second language poetry writing as a methodology was conducted by Hanauer (2010), from which he constructed the notion of poetic identity. The study investigates a Japanese ESL student's poetic identity by analyzing a collection of poems she wrote about her personal life and language learning experience during her stay in an English-speaking country. The poems are found to reflect the writer's dynamic identity as she navigates herself through culture shock and childhood trauma. Further, the poem reflects her emotional growth as an individual and a language learner. Another instance of identity study through second language poetry was conducted by Park (2013), who studied her multiple identities as reflected by the poems she had written in the course of several years. She combines her autobiographical texts with poetic discourse to pinpoint substantial points in her personal, academic, and professional life. The poems captured her intricate, multi-layered identities as a part of Korean-American society, academic, and mother. She concludes her study by encouraging creative writing as a medium of self-reflection and a way to address issues in TEFL. These studies have shown that a poetic text written by language learners are a potential tool to capture “the history of developing subject positions designed to explore, understand and negotiate different ways of being in the world.” (Hanauer, 2010, p.73). Moreover, poetry writing can be an activity through which language learners shares their voices and perceptions.

These studies have demonstrated using poetry writing as a research methodology in an identity study. The research participants of both studies, international student and immigrant language learners, respectively, also represent a demographic of recommended research participants of identity study, according to Norton and De Costa (2018). The circumstances in which the aforementioned individuals learn the language are complex as the second language they learn goes beyond a classroom context. Instead, language becomes a mode of emotional expression and a mediator between the cultures and

communities or imagined communities of which they are apart. Hence, an identity study of these types of language learners is necessary to understand how language learners navigate their identities across different cultures that affect their language learning.

Inspired by the aforementioned previous studies, this study is aimed to see how an international student learn EFL in a non-EFL country, Indonesia, reflect on her identity and experience in a series of poems. A study by Gerbhard (2013) found that EFL learners who took a study abroad program have been found to experience challenging circumstances in using English for social, academic, and emotional, personal purposes. As a coping mechanism, language learners would either cope by reverting to their mother language and native culture or imitating the local community's conduct in using English. While the former coping mechanism is possible to be used anywhere, the latter was not always applicable if the designated country is a non-EFL country such as Indonesia.

There have not been enough studies that look into international students' challenges when learning English in Indonesia (Hibatullah, 2019), let alone ones that employ poetry writing as a research methodology. In a periphery country like Indonesia, English is rarely used in a natural setting, and its use becomes confined to a classroom setting. International students who study English in Indonesia would have to partake in a living situation and language learning process shaped by local cultural values that are neither from their home countries nor from the English-speaking country. The language functions as an actual mode of communication. Thus, it is worthwhile to listen to the voice of these language learners, to see how they use their own words to express the way they cope with the culturally challenging situation, and to understand how their EFL identity is negotiated given the learning and living circumstances (Gebhard, 2013; Wirza, 2018).

To address the influence of the culture in Indonesian EFL learning situation, this study chooses a local genre of poetry called *pantun* as the poetic text the participant have to produce. *Pantun* is traditional Indonesian poetry that consists of two parts. The first part is the prefatory statements, and the second part is the content. Generally, each part should have two lines, making the poem a quatrain (Hirsch, 2014). The rhyming scheme should be AAAA or ABAB. The prefatory statement often depicts nature (Kaldina, 2018) while the content delivers the learners' voice which can allude to their emotion, insight or perception. Depending on the writer, the prefatory statements could also function as a metaphor for the learners' choice. So, writing *pantun* in English could cultivate writers' associative thinking skills, in addition to helping learners develop language skills (Murti, Siswanto, & Suwignyo, 2016). A study of writing English *pantun* was conducted by Kaldina (2018) in which she studied Indonesian EFL students' desire and perception of L2 *pantun* writing. She found that despite acknowledging the challenge, producing a poem with which they are familiar in their L1, can lead to enjoyment and motivation. Aside from this study, there has not been many studies in L2 *pantun* writing, especially for non-Indonesian EFL learners.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by studying an international students' way of reflecting her identity and experience of living in Indonesia through writing a series of Indonesian poems. By using poetry as a research methodology, this study could also shed some light regarding "how the unique capacity of creative writing as a data-collection tool can provide access to participant's emotion and desire that may be out of reach through non-creative methods." (Kim, 2018, p. 2). Hence, this study is hoped to contribute to the expansion of research areas of identity study through second language poetry writing. To guide the study, the following research question was constructed: How do a series of English *pantun* written by an EFL learner reflect her identities and experiences during her study abroad?

## METHODOLOGY

In order that the research question can be answered optimally, the study was conducted using qualitative methodology. Qualitative research design provides the means to explain the way an event unfolds. It puts an emphasis on the process and how an idea or concept are manifested in real-world (Hamied, 2014). In this case study, the concepts are identity and experience embedded in texts written by learners.

The participant of this study, Yelena (pseudonym), is an international student from Ukraine who studied English Education in Indonesia. She was 25 years old at the time of the study and had been learning English for twelve years in both primary and secondary education in her home country. She participated in a cultural exchange program for one year before deciding to prolong her stay in Indonesia by studying English Education for her master's degree. During her stay in Indonesia, she mainly used English as a lingua franca (ELF) to communicate, especially in an academic and professional context.

The data was gathered over the span of four months, in which four meetings with the participants were conducted. The period in which the study was conducted was late 2019 to early 2020. The participant and one of the researchers were involved in the same mandatory cross-major postgraduate classes and met regularly. Each meeting with the participant last approximately two hours, the length of each meeting is adjusted to the participants' comfort and preference. As such, the meetings were conducted in a comfortable setting to build rapport and trust between both parties. The setting was several neutral public places that the participant and researcher agreed upon beforehand.

The participants wrote ten pantuns in English about her study abroad experience during the course data collecting period. In the first meeting, the participant was acquainted with the concept of *pantun*. For the instruction to write the *pantun*, concepts in meaningful literacy were adapted. Meaningful literacy is an instructional framework for second language creative writing that centres on L2 writing around learners' autobiographical experience, emotion, and/or personal insight (Hanauer, 2012). The framework suggested that before delving into writing, language learners should be acquainted with the genre, in which they learn about the structure of the poem and read and review other people's poems to sense reader-writer interaction (Iida, 2014, 2017). Further, learners should also explore themselves through recalling significant memories, positioning themselves in a phenomenon, or tracing emotion. Thus, their writing can voice their insight and reflect their identity (Hanauer, 2015; Spiro, 2014). In regards to the genre, Yelena claimed to be aware of the genre as her *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing* (Indonesian language learning program for foreign speakers, hereafter BIPA) instructor had talked about it in class and even showed some samples in Indonesian several times. However, she has never written one before, neither in Indonesian nor in English. Thus, in the first meeting, Yelena was reintroduced to the concept *pantun* and read several examples of *pantun*, both in English and in Indonesian. Following her request, she was helped to write a *pantun* on-site to guide her in writing her following ones, in which she was given helpful writing resources like rhyme words generator. The first *pantun* she wrote was not included in the writing collection as she deemed it a practice writing. The participant was then reminded to write two to three English *pantuns* based on a significant experience, all of which would be discussed in the next meeting. In the following meetings, the participant presented her *pantuns* and briefly reviewed her poetry writing experience to report if she experiences difficulties and needs opinion or assistance. These meetings lasted around forty minutes. This process was repeated two times. After she wrote ten *pantuns*, she compiled it into one e-book. She titled the e-book, wrote an introductory section to it and decided the arrangement of the poems. In the last meeting, A semi-structured interview was also conducted as the participants were asked to share the overview of her *pantun* e-book and her *pantun* writing experience. The last meeting was conducted

online as it was during the mandated quarantine period due to the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. The interview lasted about ninety minutes. The interview sessions were conducted in English to ensure the participants' convenience. Even though the participant is able to speak Indonesian moderately, she is more comfortable talking in length in her second language as she is more proficient in English than in Indonesian.

There are two primary data sources in this study, the ten *pantuns* written by the participant and the narrative data collected from the interview sessions. Hence, the data analysis of this study is twofold. Firstly, poetic identity analysis was applied to analyze the participant's poem. Secondly, the thematic analysis was done to process the interview data, which comprises the participants' narration of her experience abroad as an EFL learner and her overview of poetry writing experience.

Poetic identity analysis was proposed by Hanauer (2010), who defines it as. The analysis comprises content, context, and stylistic analysis (Hanauer, 2010). Context analysis concerns inspecting the situation in which the text is written and see how it contributes to the meaning of the text. The analysis can be conducted at the micro-level and macro-level (Hanauer, 2010). Micro-level analysis inspects personalized, small-scale writing activity factors such as the writer's motivation, the writing prompt, and the writing environment. On the other hand, the macro-level analysis looks into the influential factors on a larger scale, such as the history and ideology of communities that shape the writer's identity (Iida, 2016).

The next analysis occurs in the content of the text. Hanauer (2010) defines content analysis as "the analysis of content presented within the poem concerning the events, dispositions, presented memories, ideas, experiences, thoughts and feelings of the autobiographical self." (p.63). In the context of second language autobiographical poetry writing, the content analysis looks into what story, insight or emotion the writer tells in her poem. The analysis entails seeing how the writer chose the central theme for their poem, set tone they set in it or interpreted provided writing prompts.

The last part of poetic identity analysis is stylistic analysis. The focus of this analysis is to see how the linguistic and literary choices made by the writers contribute to the construction of meaning and what are the implications of the writer's choices. Thus, if the content analysis concerns what is told, stylistic analysis is concerned with how it is told. Their conscious effort to use linguistic and literary devices is telling of the writer's emotional and autobiographical information (Hanauer, 2010, 2012; Iida, 2016).

For the interview data, the analysis began with rereading the interview transcription several times. To find the themes of the interview data, the analysis adopted a bottom-up, inductive, and emergent approach (Wirza, 2018). The analysis includes multiple coding levels to pinpoint and analyze the important information of learners' autobiographical experiences in the interview data. The data ultimately amplifies the poetic identity data as it allows the participants to explain and clarify what was written in the poems.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

Yelena wrote ten *pantuns* in total, each recounting a different part of her study abroad experience. The book was compiled into an e-book titled "*Pantun: A Wanderer's Attempt to be in Tune*". In the book, she wrote the following short introductory paragraph.

*"I visited Indonesia thinking I'll just stay shortly, immersing in the culture and connecting with people. Now, I have stayed for over three years, studied Bahasa Indonesia, learned English here and even written Indonesian poem... but in English? Don't worry, it's not confusing at all. The pantuns in this book will show you."*

The introductory paragraph briefly unveils the context of Yelena's writing. Firstly, she is captivated by Indonesian culture and that she desires to connect not only with Indonesians but also with people from other countries she met in Indonesia. Secondly, she acknowledged her growth as a language learner as her experience enriched, while at the same time showing confusion on her subject position. Even so, she ended the statement with an indication of acceptance.

In the interview session, Yelena revealed that she studied English as compulsory subject and was taught standardized English back in Ukraine. She studied English to expand her career opportunity. English is also considered a foreign language in Ukraine, she did not use it for day-to-day communication, but she found a way to actively use English for communication when she partook in an online multicultural community. She mentioned that it was a pivotal moment in her life as she finally uses English for herself as she disclosed:

*"I learn that there are so many people like me, who want to learn other culture and visit new places, and we just talk about it in this forum using English."*

This realization motivated her to partake in a cultural exchange program in Indonesia. During the program, she used English to communicate with the locals and other participants from different countries. Her positive experience inspired her to prolong her stay in Indonesia by taking an English education major for her master's degree. This experience was retold in one of her *pantuns*.

Chronologically, the content of Yelena's ten *pantuns* has three major themes: (1) feeling lost at arrival, (2) negotiating communication, (3) contemplating self, (4) finding company, and (5) feeling at home. Yelena arranged her *pantuns* following the timeline of her stay in Indonesia so that the theme can represent the progression of Yelena's identity construction and negotiation in Indonesia.

Yelena's first *pantun* was about her arrival in Indonesia, describing it as "visiting a new place" as follows.

Floating in dark space  
Until I saw a little light  
Visiting a new place  
A little lost but it's alright

Even though Yelena knew that it was not mandatory to make the prefatory section (the first two lines) and the content (the last two lines) meaningfully connected, she decided to insert content parallelism between the two sections. Both sections are about an optimistic view of an initially difficult circumstance. Thus, she deliberately used the prefatory section to metaphor her experience. The experience she implied in the *pantun*, as she disclosed in the interview, was her inability to speak Indonesian at her first visit, which makes her "lost" or feel like she is in "a dark space", as the *pantun* points out. However, she took solace in her English-speaking ability to communicate with locals and international students. As she was using English to communicate with non-native speakers, she was using English as a lingua franca.

Her second *pantun* is about her experience in teaching English for the first in Indonesia.

Chiron is a wise creature  
But he was odd too  
How could you be the teacher  
When you don't know what to do?

This particular *pantun* expresses her distress assigned the position as a teacher and labelled native speaker, as she expressed:

*“I was quite anxious to teach because I might look like a native speaker, but I’m not. I am still learning English like the students. That time, I felt like some people expected a little too much (of her).”*

In the *pantun*, she used the second-person pronoun “you”, even though the content was based on her own experience. This specific use of pronouns makes the poem confrontational rather than reflective. As a previous study has found, second-person pronoun can refer to the writer’s own emotional experience that they want to impose on the reader (Jeffries, 2013). So, her use of “you” can indicate her contemplation over her competence, her distress of being assigned labels, and her confrontation to the one who put those expectations on her.

Her third *pantun* is about her experience learning English with Indonesian learners in Indonesia. She alluded to the fact that despite being of a different race and coming from a different place, she did not get different treatment in teaching and still had to undergo the same learning procedures as other Indonesian learners.

The greyhounds have long snout  
And they are great runners  
Even though I stand out  
I am no different than the others

This *pantun* does not have meaning parallelism in the prefatory section and in the content section. It means that Yelena could not construct a rhyming word with both the needed rhyme and parallel meaning. The fact that she prioritized telling this experience over maintaining the consistency of her *pantuns* indicated that this particular experience is pivotal and cannot be overlooked in her overall study abroad experience.

Her fourth *pantun* marks the beginning of her adjusting period in Indonesia.

The team lost halfway  
The game’s still fun anyway  
When I don’t know what to say  
I find a middle way

Again, she put parallel meaning in the prefatory section and the content. The experience of which this particular *pantun* was based was her using English as lingua franca. She shared:

*“When I couldn’t describe something in Indonesian, I used English. If I cannot find it even in English, I just make references. There is always a way to communicate with my friends”*

Her statement illustrates Yelena’s outlook on her experience living among Indonesian EFL speakers, which is optimistic, as depicted by the tone of the poem. Considering that English is her classroom lingua franca, the experience she described was outside of the classroom. Thus, her statement unveils that the communication strategy she applied during her stay in Indonesia is to resort to English and make references to get her meaning across.

In the fifth poem, Yelena starts questioning her subject position. She depicted her neither-here-nor-there position as she felt like she was not a part of the Indonesian EFL learners' community, nor was she a native English speaker.

That one box on the shelf  
Have been misplaced for so long  
Wondering about myself  
Where do I really belong?

The content is delivered using denotative language. When it comes to distressing memories, Yelena chose to express herself directly. However, she still makes a connection in the prefatory section as she uses the word "misplaced" to describe the state of the object. She made parallels to her own struggle and uncertainty in placing herself amongst the communities she encountered.

Yelena's sixth *pantun* is also about her struggle, specifically in classroom context, but it also depicts how she modulates her emotion regarding the struggle.

Leaves fell to the ground  
Until a pile it became  
I struggle but not beaten down  
Cause my friends all feel the same

This *pantun* captures the sense of camaraderie she felt with her peers and her feeling of being an equal member of the EFL student community. By using visual imagery in the prefatory section, Yelena illustrates how individuals will be a "pile" or a community in given circumstances. In the interview, she shared the following.

*"Sometimes I felt that some people expect me to be better, because you know... I'm Caucasian. But I'm not native and I struggle too. But I know my friends don't have it easy either, so I feel like I'm not alone, like I'm just a part of them."*

Yelena alluded that her sense of camaraderie comes from this shared struggle in language learning. At the same time, she shares her struggle living with the predisposed expectation that comes with looking like a native speaker.

The seventh poem is about her elation of bonding with her friend over a food that originated from Ukraine.

By the time the summer end  
The leaves start to blush  
Eating borscht with my friend  
Can't help but gush

The prefatory part of the *pantun* alludes to autumn by using visual imagery to depict a browning leaf. While Indonesia does not have autumn, Ukraine does. So, it makes sense that she makes references to the environment or nature of her home in a poem that tackles that theme. She said the following when asked about the reasoning behind writing this experience:

*"It's a small moment but meaningful. It's more than just remembering home, it's like visiting home with new friends. It's exciting"*



Yelena considers this particular experience a pivotal point in her study abroad experience as it shows that multicultural communication is not a one-way interaction. As much as Yelena can learn about the Indonesian language and culture, she can also share Ukrainian culture with her Indonesian friends, and this awareness brings her joy.

Yelena's eighth *pantun* is also about learning the language with other international students and making her feel "at home".

A busy day for launderers  
Their laundry makes giant foam  
I am learning with fellow wanderers  
And I feel like I'm at home

This time, Yelena did not make parallel meaning in the prefatory and content section. Instead, she used figurative language in the content. She referred to the international students as "fellow wanderers" and her communal identity as "home". Like her previous *pantun*, this *pantun* captures her sense of camaraderie with different communities.

The ninth *pantun* shows a progression in Yelena's emotion as the theme was acceptance.

Couldn't find rice or sweet bun  
Just settle for oatmeal  
Having two, three homes instead of one  
Really is not a bad deal

Up to this point, she has mentioned "home" multiple times. However, she does exclusively use it to refer to Ukraine. She uses it to express the feeling of acceptance, which frame her identity. Interestingly, she alludes to the presence of three separate identities in the *pantun*. She explained in the interview:

*"I always say I am a global citizen because sometimes it's hard to explain. I am Ukrainian, but I am learning English in Indonesia. I can be all of them at the same time."*

Therefore, whilst developing her second language identity in Indonesian EFL context, she also constructs an identity as a global citizen, a meeting point of her multifaceted identities.

The last *pantun* is a meta-reference to the *pantun* writing activity. She concluded her *pantun* book with the following poem.

The rainy season is done  
Dry season comes in on time  
Writing *pantun* is fun  
Following ABAB rhyme

She used another seasonal reference in the prefatory section. However, in this *pantun*, she features seasons that exist in Indonesia. Therefore, not only does the last poem reviews her writing experience, it also references her subject position in the Indonesian context. She depicted an intimate relationship with Indonesia by showcasing her familiarity with the environment and its literature through *pantun* writing.

In terms of the designated readers of her poem, Yelena talked about them in the last interview  
*“I showed my pantun to my classmates the other day. They responded very positively. It motivates me to write more. So, I can’t help but thinking about them when writing more pantun.”*

She revealed that she voluntarily showed her classmates, who are Indonesian EFL learners, her *pantuns* and received positive feedback. This action showed that she desired to showcase her writing to people from whom the genre of a poem originated. The desire to showcase her writing indicates that she took pride in her writing skill and her experience of producing a traditional Indonesian poem.

By the end of the study, Yelena reviewed her *pantun* writing experience as the following:

*“It makes me realize I haven’t thought of myself so deeply in a while. Pantun is so short so I realized I have too much to tell. But that’s the fun part, it pushes me to make the first part metaphor. I know I don’t have to do it but I want the first part to represent me too. It was hard to find rhyming words that have the connected meaning. The rhyme generator really saved me. I won’t force making metaphor if it doesn’t work, as long as the meaning’s delivered. If it’s just rhyme, I guess it’ll be a lot easier. I even thought about teaching it to my students if I got another teaching gig.”*

By implying that she thought of herself deeply in *pantun* writing, she alluded to her desire to explore herself and to express it. She reviewed her *pantun* writing experience as enjoyable albeit a little challenging. Her experience comes from writing following the rules of *pantun* and from her own deliberate choice in writing. She made conscious linguistic and literary choices to abide the rules of *pantun* while simultaneously expressing herself in a way she preferred. When she was unable to abide by the rules of a *pantun* and use the preferred literary device, she chose to prioritize meaning delivery over style. Not only does this phenomenon indicate her writing value, it also suggested that she exercised her literary and linguistic awareness to ensure her meaning was delivered.

## Discussion

The ten *pantuns* Yelena wrote reflect how she understands herself in relation to her surroundings in different points of time, alluding to her identities (Norton, 2013). The poetic identity analysis revealed that Yelena’s identity formation and negotiation when studying abroad in a non-English speaking country is affected by sociocultural and racial issues. As illustrated by chronological arrangement of Yelena’s *pantuns*, the negotiation of her identity occurs when she interacted with different communities in Indonesia. At the same time, she constructed a new identity as a global citizen.

During her stay in Indonesia, Yelena navigates her identity between being a member of a member of EFL student community amongst Indonesians and a member of multicultural communities amongst other international students. Each of these community represents the way she used English in the classroom context and beyond-class context, respectively. Within the classroom context, she perceived herself as an equal member of EFL students with her Indonesian peers as she shared a sense of camaraderie in struggling to learn English. Similarly, she builds a sense of camaraderie with other international students over using English in Indonesia to communicate with locals or with each other and learn Indonesian culture and language. Yelena’s case has demonstrated how one of the navigators that direct the movement of her identities is her membership with communities she is apart or encounters as well as with and her interaction with the members (Iida, 2016b; Norton, 2013), the negotiation of Yelena’s identities is affected by.

Despite depicting a close association with both communities, referring to them as “home” in the *pantuns*, Yelena still wrote a *pantun* depicting her struggle to associate herself with either of the community. Thus, she settles in a third space (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 2011). When a learner takes part in multiple language and cultural practices, they need space to validly enact their multiple identities, one that is not bounded by geography and a specific cultural value. In Yelena’s case, she identifies herself as a global citizen. She positioned herself as a global citizen with multiple and mobile identities and shared that title with those entitled to the same circumstances. Yelena’s circumstance is an instance of how globalization allows individuals to mobilize their identity construction and create new identities that can be considered their millennium identity (Higgins, 2015).

As suggested in her *pantun*, a racial issue affects the construction of Yelena’s millennium identity. One of the most pivotal points in Yelena’s study abroad experience was being offered the opportunity to teach English to Indonesian students while being labelled as native speaker. This suggested the issues of idealizing the idea of native speakers to a particular race (Esch, Motha, & Kubota, 2020). Yelena’s experience tells that in Indonesia, there are some issues on essentializing language learning (Baker, 2018), which lead to premature judgement of competence in a professional context. This is reflected in Yelena’s *pantun* in which she was unsure of her teaching competence and language competence and how she was assigned the position of English teacher regardless.

Moreover, her race and the presumption that she was a native speaker make her face predisposed expectation of being much better at English, which puts pressure on her learning. This experience could be a contributing factor to the formation of identity as a global citizen, as she could not connect with the identity to which she was assigned in the context of language learning, nor is she technically the same as her peers. This phenomenon also affirms that being a minority in the context of language learning often leads to the construction of learners’ third space (Quan, 2018).

From the methodological and pedagogical standpoint, this study has demonstrated some values of *pantun* writing in the context of language learning. Studying Yelena’s identity through an analysis of a series of *pantun* she wrote has provided empirical evidence that poetry writing is an effective tool to capture learner writers’ voice and experience (Iida, 2012, 2016b; Hanauer, 2012), which makes it valuable in identity study in a language learning context. Not only can a learner express their autobiographical information in the poem, but they can also use poetry’s specific structure as well as language and literary devices to carry their authorial voice (Iida, 2016a, 2016b; Hanauer, 2010).

From the pedagogical standpoint, Yelena’s poetry writing experience suggested several values of poetry writing as a language learning practice. Yelena’s review of her *pantun* writing activity suggested that she experienced emotional benefit as she was given an opportunity to explore and express herself. Further, poetry writing guides them to a writing activity where a learner has to negotiate the use of the linguistic and literary device to fit the structure, rhyming scheme, or other characteristics of the poem and manipulate it to deliver their meaning. To express her experience, insight, and identity, Yelena used specific linguistic and literary devices in her *pantun*. For instance, she used metaphor and visual imagery to set the tone of the *pantun* while simultaneously representing her emotion or insight on the matter described in the content section. Her liberty of choice is indicative of her agency during the writing process.

Further, it accentuates the adjustable nature of *pantun*. *Pantun* is a succinct form of expression in which writer can be as creative as possible in the prefatory section and be as expressive as possible in the content section. With enough agency to exercise and rules to guide, *pantun* writing can be a beneficial activity for cognitive and personal development.

Language learning should include practice that allows the learner to discover and understand themselves through the act of L2 writing, so they can develop their ability to communicate their

personal and emotional insight (Iida, 2016b). In addition, this study has shown that second language *pantun* writing has a cultural ramification. For Yelena, witing *pantun* is associated with engaging with Indonesian culture and community. Thus, it becomes a valuable sociocultural practise to bridge the gap between cultures. Further, Yelena's desire to teach L2 *pantun* writing to her future students indicates that using *pantun* writing in a language learning setting could promote and persevere Indonesian culture.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand how poetic text written by an EFL learner reflects her identities and study abroad experience in a non-English speaking country, which is Indonesia. This study shows how a series of *pantun* captures the negotiation of multiple identities of an international student from Ukraine as well as the formation of her millennium identity. Her identity was shaped by her study abroad circumstances, her engagement with people from different communities and her involvement in sociocultural practices. Further, her specific experience of being offered professional opportunity based on her race and not her language or teaching competence indicates that there are lingering ideas that English belongs to a certain race in Indonesia. All of this culminated in forming her new identity as a global citizen. Thus, this study has captured a phenomenon where an EFL learner created an identity in a third space to acknowledge and exercise her multiple identities without being restrained by specific cultural values or others. This tells of a learners' desire to be acknowledged as complex individuals and be given the opportunity to express and exercise their multifaceted identity.

Poetry writing has the potential to be an outlet to that desire in a language learning context (Iida, 2012, 2016b; Hanauer, 2012; Spiro, 2014). Poetry writing offers a challenging task that challenges learners intellectually but still gives them enough agency to be creative and discover themselves. In the context of this study, *pantun* as a genre has a succinct and compact structure but still allows writers to exercise their writing values and priorities and establish their writing style. It also provides the participant of this study emotional benefit as it makes her closer to the Indonesian community and culture. Therefore, the *pantun* serves as a reflective text of a language learner's personal experience, the *pantun* can also be a mode of empowerment for language learners. Further, it can be a useful language learning tool to exercise learners' linguistic and literary awareness while simultaneously promoting and preserving Indonesian culture.

This study was conducted in a very limited context and not designed to collect a generalizable finding. However, the study has provided empirical evidence on the potential use of poetry writing as a teaching methodology and research methodology in the EFL context. Further studies on the identity formation of international EFL learners, especially non-English speaking, are recommended to see the landscape that constructs their identity formation, especially regarding the racial issues they experience during study abroad. Future poetic identity studies can also focus on how EFL learners use different types of poetic text to depict the construction of their identity and experience.

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