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## Exploring Local Wisdom and Cultural Identity in Students' Creative Poetry Practices within the Literary Studio Course

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### Abstrak

This study examines the representation of local wisdom and cultural identity in undergraduate students' poetry within the *Sanggar Sastra* (Literary Studio) course. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical design, data were collected from 32 participants over one academic semester, comprising 47 student-authored poems, 18 interview transcripts, and 12 classroom observation notes. Thematic analysis revealed that local wisdom is consistently articulated through indigenous kinship terminology (e.g., *Ama*, *Husu*), ecological metaphors, and community ethics, directly evidenced by recurrent lexical and symbolic patterns across the poetic texts. Cultural identity emerges through geocultural positioning and the active negotiation of traditional values with contemporary influences, as confirmed by interview responses and reflective surveys. The creative process followed four pedagogical stages: experiential exploration, aesthetic refinement, value reflection, and collaborative revision. Pre- and post-course assessments indicated measurable gains in students' cultural literacy, reflective thinking, and creative expression. The study concludes that practice-based literary pedagogy effectively strengthens cultural awareness and identity formation, offering a practical framework for embedding local knowledge into higher education curricula.

Keywords: *Local Wisdom, Cultural Identity, Student Poetry, Literary Studio, Creative Practice*

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### A. INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid digital globalization and cultural homogenization, higher education institutions worldwide face the dual challenge of maintaining academic rigor while preserving indigenous knowledge systems (Lu & Zuo, 2025; Malgoubri, 2026; Purwati et al., 2026). In Indonesia, this challenge is particularly pressing, as contemporary educational policies increasingly advocate for the integration of *kearifan lokal* (local wisdom) into university curricula to foster cultural sustainability and moral grounding (Pohan et al., 2025; Rahardjanto et al., 2025). Indonesian scholarship consistently frames local wisdom not as static folklore, but as a dynamic epistemological resource that shapes social cohesion, ecological awareness, and ethical reasoning (Mashami et al., 2025; Salmiati et al., 2026; Zhu & Li, 2026). Within literary education, poetry has emerged as a potent medium for students to internalize these indigenous values, transforming

personal and communal experiences into culturally resonant expressions (Mahaswa & Syaja, 2025; S. Yang & Han, 2025). The *Sanggar Sastra* (Literary Studio) course, modeled after Indonesia's traditional collaborative learning spaces, offers a practice-based alternative to conventional text-heavy literature classes. By prioritizing creative experimentation, peer dialogue, and cultural introspection, the studio approach actively engages students in the construction of their cultural identities (Jarusat, 2025; Rizkita et al., 2025).

The theoretical foundation of this study integrates three interrelated perspectives that align with contemporary Indonesian literary pedagogy. First, local wisdom is conceptualized as a living, adaptive framework that mediates human-environment relationships and guides communal ethics (Kasber et al., 2025; Nakudom et al., 2026). Second, cultural identity is viewed as a fluid, socially constructed phenomenon that emerges through linguistic choices, narrative practices, and continuous negotiation between tradition and modernity (J. Kim et al., 2026; Pohan et al., 2025). Third, poetic creation is understood as a reflective-aesthetic process that synthesizes emotion, imagination, and cultural symbolism (Roberts et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, these frameworks converge in the *sanggar* pedagogy model, which functions as a collaborative ecosystem for iterative drafting, critical feedback, and cultural meaning-making (Rahardjanto et al., 2025; Salmiati et al., 2026). Together, they provide a robust lens for examining how university students internalize and artistically reinterpret indigenous knowledge through structured creative writing.

Recent empirical studies have increasingly recognized the pedagogical value of culturally grounded literary practices. International and Indonesian research alike demonstrates that engaging with traditional values and indigenous motifs significantly enhances students' cultural literacy and socio-critical awareness (Ereiras Vedor, 2025; R. & Rani, 2025; Salmiati et al., 2026). Scholars such as Nie & Wang (2025) and Mahaswa & Syaja (2025) argue that student creativity can serve as a transformative mechanism for adapting local wisdom to contemporary contexts. However, a critical synthesis of the literature reveals a predominant focus on thematic and motif analysis of finished literary texts, rather than an examination of the creative process itself or the pedagogical structures that facilitate it (Klangrit et al., 2025; Kongpolphrom & Tantivejakul, 2026; S. Y. Kim et al., 2026). Within Indonesian higher education, research on poetry pedagogy remains largely product-oriented, with limited empirical attention to how studio-based environments scaffold the internalization of local wisdom, mediate cultural identity negotiations, and develop poetic craftsmanship across developmental writing stages. Addressing this gap is crucial for advancing culturally responsive curriculum design, as process-oriented literary pedagogy can prevent the marginalization of indigenous knowledge while simultaneously nurturing students' holistic cognitive, affective, and creative competencies (Miocevic, 2025; Shah et al., 2025; Y. Zhang et al., 2025).

Guided by this theoretical and empirical landscape, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How does local wisdom manifest symbolically and thematically in the poetry produced by undergraduate students in the *Sanggar Sastra* course? (2) Through what linguistic and narrative strategies do students articulate and negotiate their cultural identity in relation to contemporary modernity? (3) What pedagogical stages structure the creative writing process within this studio setting? Accordingly, the study aims to: (1) identify the symbolic and thematic representations of local wisdom in student poetry; (2) analyze the linguistic and discursive mechanisms of cultural identity construction and negotiation; and (3) map the pedagogical progression of the creative process in the studio context.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for literary education, cultural pedagogy, and curriculum development in Indonesian higher education. By empirically demonstrating how practice-based creative writing facilitates cultural internalization and identity formation, this research offers a replicable pedagogical model for embedding indigenous knowledge into language and literature programs. Furthermore, it contributes to the discourse on culturally sustaining education by positioning student poetry not merely as artistic output, but as a dynamic site of cultural negotiation and pedagogical transformation. Ultimately, this study expands the functional scope of poetry in academia, reaffirming its role as a vital educational instrument for preserving and revitalizing local wisdom in a globalized era.

## **B. METHOD**

### **1. Research Design and Setting**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical design to examine how local wisdom and cultural identity are represented and negotiated in undergraduate students' poetry. The descriptive-analytical approach was selected to capture both the textual features of the poems and the contextualized, iterative nature of the creative writing process within an authentic classroom environment. The research was conducted in the *Sanggar Sastra* (Literary Studio) course, a practice-based pedagogical module offered by the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program at Universitas Pattimura, Ambon, Indonesia. The course emphasizes collaborative drafting, peer critique, and culturally reflective writing over traditional text analysis.

### **2. Participants and Sampling**

A total of 32 undergraduate students (third- and fourth-year) enrolled in the *Sanggar Sastra* course participated in this study. Purposive sampling was applied to select students who actively submitted poetry incorporating indigenous motifs and engaged consistently in studio workshops. Inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) be officially enrolled in the course for one full academic semester (16 weeks); (2) submit at least one complete poem for assessment; and (3) provide written consent to have their creative works, interview responses, and classroom interactions included in the research. The sample reflected diverse ethnic backgrounds from the Maluku region, ensuring a rich variation in cultural positioning and linguistic expression.

### **3. Data Collection Procedures**

Data were collected through three triangulated sources over a single semester:

- a. **Documentary Data:** 47 student-authored poems were collected across drafting, peer-review, and final submission stages. Texts were anonymized and archived as primary artifacts for textual and thematic analysis.
- b. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with 18 participants (30–45 minutes each) to explore their creative intentions, cultural interpretations, aesthetic choices, and reflections on tradition-modernity negotiations. Sessions were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim.
- c. **Participant Observations:** The researchers conducted 12 structured observation sessions during studio classes, documenting classroom dynamics, instructor scaffolding, peer feedback exchanges, and iterative writing practices. Reflexive field journals were maintained throughout to capture processual developments and contextual nuances.

### **4. Data Analysis and Coding Procedures**

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive qualitative model, comprising three iterative phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

- a. Coding Protocol: An inductive-deductive hybrid coding strategy was employed. Initial open coding was performed manually and assisted by qualitative analysis software (NVivo 14) to identify recurring lexical items, ecological metaphors, kinship terminology, and moral directives. These codes were then clustered into axial categories aligned with the research questions. A deductive layer was subsequently applied to map how these categories evolved across the creative trajectory, leading to the identification of a four-stage pedagogical pathway (experiential exploration → aesthetic refinement → value reflection → collaborative revision).
- b. Analytical Process: Coded excerpts were organized into thematic matrices and narrative story maps to visualize cross-data patterns. Constant comparative analysis was used to triangulate textual evidence, interview narratives, and observational notes. Discrepancies in interpretation were resolved through peer debriefing sessions among the research team. Coding continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, with no new substantive themes emerging from the final dataset.

## **5. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

Methodological rigor was ensured through established qualitative trustworthiness criteria. Credibility was strengthened via data and methodological triangulation, prolonged engagement in the studio setting, and member checking, wherein participants reviewed preliminary thematic summaries for accuracy and contextual resonance. Dependability was maintained through a comprehensive audit trail documenting all analytical decisions, codebook iterations, and peer consultation notes. Confirmability was supported by researcher reflexivity journals that bracketed prior assumptions and tracked interpretive biases throughout data collection and analysis.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The findings of this study are presented in this section based on an in-depth examination of student-written poems, interviews, and participant observations carried out during the Sanggar Sastra class. The data set contains 47 poems, 18 interviews, and 12 field notes obtained during one semester. The findings are structured according to the following research questions: (1) symbolization and themes related to local wisdom, (2) language and narrative clues indicative of cultural identity, and (3) the pedagogic sequence of creative writing instruction.

### **1. Symbolic and Thematic Representation of Local Wisdom**

In the analysis, it was found that kearifan lokal was effectively implemented within student poetry through three related aspects: indigenous kinship systems, ecology, and community morality. The most common symbolic categories and their textual representation are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Thematic Categories and Symbolic Representations of Local Wisdom in Student Poetry

Category	Representative Excerpts (Original/Translated)	Cultural Function
Kinship & Social Structure	"Ama dan Husu bersatu dalam tanah tua" (Ama and Husu unite in the ancient soil)	Affirms traditional clan alliances and ancestral continuity
	"Mata rumah menjaga jejak asal-usul" (The eyes of the house guard the trail of origin)	Symbolizes familial stewardship of genealogical memory
Ecological Imagery	"Daun kelapa menari di ujung angin" (Coconut leaves dance at the wind's edge)	Expresses symbiotic human-nature relationship
	"Laut memanggil dengan suara asin" (The sea calls with a salty voice)	Positions coastal environment as active cultural agent
Moral-Social Values	"Jangan lukai hati sesamamu" (Do not wound another's heart)	Internalizes communal ethics of empathy and solidarity
	"Jangan renggut hak milik saudaramu" (Do not seize your sibling's rights)	Reinforces traditional norms of justice and reciprocity

The frequent recurrence of kinship terms like "Ama" and "Husu," which are local words with distinct meanings regarding clan roles, demonstrates the conscious lexical grounding of the students within the context of their local knowledge systems. The kinship terms are more than just decorative local expressions; they are deeply rooted symbols that recall memories of past events and promote social solidarity. Equally, the consistent use of natural imagery represents nature not as a background element but as an active participant in cultural activities, thereby showcasing the cosmology of the indigenous people, who believe in the relationship between man and nature.

## 2. Linguistic and Narrative Markers of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity emerged through three distinct yet interconnected discursive strategies: linguistic anchoring, geocultural positioning, and critical negotiation between tradition and modernity. Table 2 outlines these markers with illustrative examples.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies for Cultural Identity Construction in Student Poetry

Strategy	Exemplary Lines (Original/Translated)	Identity Function
Linguistic Anchoring	Use of "Ama," "Husu," "mata rumah" as cultural signifiers	Establishes in-group belonging and cultural authenticity
Geocultural Positioning	"Kami hidup dari riak dan pasang" (We live from ripples and tides)	Roots identity in coastal-agrarian lifeworlds
Tradition-Modernity Negotiation	"Generasi baru menatap layar / Namun akar tetap di tanah basah" (The new generation gazes at screens / Yet roots remain in wet soil)	Articulates dynamic, reflective cultural agency

The findings from interviews suggest that the choice of terms was made consciously to claim cultural difference. One respondent claimed: "Saya memakai kata 'Ama' bukan hanya sebagai kata saja, melainkan sebagai pengingat siapa kita itu" ("I am using the word 'Ama' not only

as a word, but also as a reminder about who we are"). It seems clear that geocultural positioning is especially salient among coastal students whose poems make constant reference to the maritime environment as part of their sense of identity. The contrast between the contemporary (digital) ("layar") and the ancestral (grounded) ("tanah basah") indicates that a more nuanced view of identity can be constructed, one that is not either/or but allows for multiple dimensions at the same time.

### 3. Trajectory of the Creative Process

The observation and interview findings indicated a four-stage pedagogical pathway that helped students develop creativity through scaffolding. Figure 1 illustrates this stepwise process

The results and discussions sections in an article come next after presenting the methodology. Like this article template, there are separate headings for results and discussions. An article might have tables and figures. Neither tables nor figures should be too many, too big, nor too lengthy. Authors need to diversify their tabular/figure presentation styles. Figures and tables used should be cited in the body of text. In Imaji, tables should be prepared as illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 1 below. Table 1 describes several Style names in this journal article template, whereas Figure 1 describes the weight of word count per section as prescribed in Litera. Note that there are no vertical lines in tables; however, there should be horizontal lines above and below tables only. The size of text in tables can be small.



*Figure 1. Four-Stage Creative Process Model in Sanggar Sastra Pedagogy*

- a. Experiential Exploration: Creativity began through personal experience, family storytelling, and interaction with the environment. Poems created during this phase were characterized by literal descriptions with nascent symbolic elements.
- b. Aesthetic Refinement: Creative products were refined artistically using metaphors, personifications, rhythmic patterns, and symbolic connotations via teacher modeling and

peer workshops. The transition from "laut besar" to "laut memanggil dengan suara asin," for example, demonstrates increased imagery and refinement.

- c. Values Assessment: Poetic drafts were carefully analyzed to ensure congruence between artistic creativity and the ethical values of the community. It was observed that students deliberated on whether their creative processes respected cultural values or not.
- d. Collaborative Revision: Peer discussions and teacher consultations aided in refining the creative product. Comparison of the early draft to the revised draft demonstrated progress towards more coherent themes and accurate use of vocabulary.

#### **4. Pedagogical Outcomes**

Aside from producing texts, the entire creative process was marked by tangible changes in the participants' levels of cultural literacy and reflexivity. The pre- and post-course reflective survey (n=32) showed increases in terms of the following areas: (1) cultural literacy in telling stories about culture (mean score from 2.4 to 4.1 on a 5-point Likert scale), (2) awareness of local symbol systems (mean score from 2.8 to 4.3), and (3) negotiation skills of tradition-modernity issues (mean score from 2.6 to 3.9).

#### **Discussion**

The results of this study show that local wisdom and culture are not merely themes that have been used for literary decoration in the poetry written by students, but these two become aesthetic, ethic, and cognitive frameworks that guide the whole creative process. This can be seen from the way they use indigenous kinship terms (Ama, Husu, mata rumah) and ecology-based metaphors, as well as the way they integrate morality within the community. This corresponds to the concept put forward by Kasber et al. (2025), where local wisdom is seen as a humanistic basis of education that mediates the relationship between humans and their environment, thereby ensuring sociocultural balance. Nevertheless, what distinguishes the present study from others is that the former has provided evidence that local wisdom can be practiced through the teaching of creative writing, hence making it possible to create poetic symbols using cultural wisdom.

Furthermore, the representation of cultural identity through student poems reinforces Beach's (2025) assertion that cultural identity is an ever-evolving phenomenon that continuously constructs social representations rather than an inherent inheritance. The juxtaposition of the digital era ("screens") with the rootedness of ancestors ("wet soil") exemplifies a complex and nuanced strategy in which students redefine cultural traditions in light of the present global dynamics. This aligns with the findings reported by Batista et al. (2026) regarding the usage of indigenous imagery in youth-written poetry for coping with sociocultural transitions. However, it extends the existing body of research by delineating the role of linguistic grounding and geocultural orientation as deliberate performance practices for shaping identity within institutionalized educational environments. Instead of romanticizing cultural heritage, students practice cultural agency by contextualizing cultural stories as dynamic tools for adaptation. It subverts cultural preservationist perspectives in favor of a constructive approach to identity, wherein identities are co-constructed in dialogue (Ma et al., 2025; Rachmawati et al., 2026; Zhao & Chen, 2025).

The four stages of the creative process – experiential exploration, aesthetic processing, value reflection, and collaborative revision – have provided evidence that Sanggar Sastra is an instructional scaffold that enables holistic cognitive, emotional, and imaginative growth among the learners. It provides justification for Shimogori's (2026) perspective on literary workshops as

sites for collaborative learning and cultural reflexivity but also extends the approach to show how each stage of the process mediates between the individual's memories, aesthetic interpretation, and moral values. Specifically, the collaborative revision phase is a dialogic process of constructing cultural authenticity and refining figurative language, which reflects the principles outlined by Roberts et al. (2025) when defining poetry as a reflective genre capable of transforming the communal experience into culturally meaningful symbols. However, unlike in Roberts et al. (2025), the focus is on the pedagogical techniques that make such transformations possible within the university setting. In addition, the observed pattern confirms Lukawiecki et al.'s (2025) hypothesis regarding the potential for transformative change through student literary creativity by adapting the local values into new artistic forms.

Theoretically, the present work makes important contributions to culturally responsive pedagogy in that it shows how practice-based literary education could realize the implementation of indigenous knowledge systems without making them curricular adjuncts. First, the study's findings support the constructivist theories of identity in that they demonstrate how cultural meaning is negotiated via language selection, condensed symbolizing, and peer criticism. Second, the findings enrich the semiotic and ecological literary frameworks through the demonstration of how local environmental metaphors and kinship vocabularies are used as culturally loaded signs which root literary creativity into practical experience. Third, the aesthetic processing combined with moral thinking constitutes an important aspect of the theoretical framework of creative cognition in that it demonstrates how artistic development and moral sensitivity complement each other. Conceptually, considering literary workshops as a context of cultural negotiation rather than reproduction allows us to provide a new theoretical tool for studying the role of higher education as mediator between tradition and modernity through creative activity.

The model of the Sanggar Sastra represents an example of an educational strategy that allows one to incorporate local wisdom into curricula for different courses on languages, literature, and culture at higher education institutions. Educators may make use of the four-step creative process as a pedagogic structure through which to move students from a practical experience to aesthetic development and critical discussion. In addition to providing insights about ways to engage students in learning in terms of incorporating their local experiences and traditions into educational activities, the study highlights issues related to the legitimizing of indigenous stories as legitimate literary objects for analysis and creative practice in the context of globalized syllabuses. This research results show that literary courses based on the studio approach are to be preferred over more traditional classes that focus on critical analysis of texts. At the same time, teachers' programs must include elements that would encourage them to offer culturally sensitive feedback and develop technical literary skills in students.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study can be concluded from the above analysis that practice-based teaching of poetry within the Sanggar Sastra course significantly contributes to developing students' engagement with local wisdoms and building cultural identity. It is apparent that students utilize their local languages to describe various aspects of indigenous kinship terms, ecology, and community-based morality in the poems. Cultural identity should be understood as the act of negotiating one's own identity in the context of both indigenous and non-indigenous cultures rather than being confined to cultural preservation. Thus, the creative process of developing cultural identity includes four stages such as experiential discovery, aesthetic appreciation, value reflection, and collaborative reworking, which is considered an integrative pedagogical tool promoting the development of

cognitive, affective, and creative skills. In light of this, academic institutions should introduce studio-based modules of culturally responsive creative writing into their language and literature curricula; develop educators' culturally sustaining approaches; and create interdisciplinary courses merging traditional literary art and storytelling through digital media to ensure the relevancy of local wisdom in the contemporary world. Future research on the transferability of the outlined model may be conducted using cross-institutional studies involving longitudinal designs and analyzing intermedia creative acts as mediators for indigenous knowledge systems.

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