



Why are English Literature Students in Indonesia Reluctant to Become Writers?

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Abstract

This study examines how English literature students in Indonesia refuse to become writers. This study employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. With an explanatory sequential approach, data were collected from 100 English literature undergraduates across five universities, representing diverse institutional types, through a 15-item Likert questionnaire analysed with SPSS 26 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Mann-Whitney, and Kruskal-Wallis tests). Three representative students (X, Y, Z) were interviewed using semi-structured questions, and data were thematically analysed. Results from the survey capture perceptions of motives (Mot1–Mot5), curriculum experiences (Cur1–Cur5), and professional views on authorship (Prof1–Prof5). In terms of academic progression, students came from the 4th to the 7th semester ($M = 5.82$, $SD = 1.04$), providing perspectives from those who were already familiar with the academic rhythm of the literature program. Across the motives dimension, the consistently high means ($M = 3.68$ – 4.27 , $SD = 0.45$ – 0.97) suggest that many students resonate with statements emphasizing linguistic growth and personal reasons for choosing the major. The curriculum items show similarly positive evaluations ($M = 4.08$ – 4.32 , $SD = 0.34$ – 0.47), with the exception of Cur5 ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.06$), where responses varied more widely, indicating diverse experiences regarding motivation for literary creation. The professional perception items ($M = 4.03$ – 4.33 , $SD = 0.55$ – 0.80) reflect a collective recognition of the realities and challenges associated with authorship as a career path. Results from the interviews expose that literature students hold positive opinions of their studies but elaborate little interest in becoming writers. They choose the major mainly for language skills, not creative goals. The curriculum supports academics, not authorship, and financial instability deters writing careers. The study concludes that English literature in Indonesia, based on the limited data that have been taken, without overgeneralization, faces a paradigmatic tension between academic formalism and artistic vitality. To address this, it requires redirection that integrates creative writing, publication mentorship, and intermedial collaboration to

reinstate productivity in literary works.

Keywords: *English Literature 1; Literary Works 2; Language 3; Creative Writing 4; Writers 5*

Introduction

Literary education in Indonesian universities has long been assumed to be a space that not only equips students with critical text analysis skills or aesthetic text appreciation, but also regenerates new writers who are able to contribute to national and global literary production. However, there is a tendency of the students to be reluctant to become writers. Ironically, this occurs in literature department, more specifically English literature. A number of alumni and active students indicate that pursuing a career as a creative writer remains low. This phenomenon provokes a fundamental question: why do literature students in Indonesia seem to be reluctant to enter this profession?

A crucial point to note is the pragmatic assumption spreading among English literature students: becoming a writer is not considered a profession that is on their list of expectations. This profession, in Indonesia, is financially unpromising (David et al., 2018; D. P. Sari, 2019). From what researcher has found in a pilot study (doing interview with 3 writers), the author receives a 10% royalty on each copy of the book sold. Given the low reading trend among Indonesians (Marmoah & Poerwanti, Suharno, 2022; Poedjiastutie, 2018), it can be concluded that this profession is very risky. Still in the pilot study, 17 out of 25 students still consider themselves to have a high interest in studying literary works or literary theory, but still, not many of them have the intention to become writers.

For Indonesian literature department, students like the literary material but cannot find their direction when they choose the profession. In contrast to English literature students, the researcher found turbulence; many English literature students did not know that in English literature they had to study English literary works, were not interested in studying English literary works, and even studying the critical theories. It can be stated, the profession of writer, even for the literature department, has become an issue. One could say that the path to earning a living as a writer is not easy and stable, but the problem is rooted here is how the literature department, especially English literature department, designates this disinterest.

Recent research shows that in the context of higher education; the importance of employability is increasingly pressuring students to choose safer paths that are considered to have clearer economic prospects (Blom et al., 2021; Bradley et al., 2022; Ho et al., 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020; Papp et al., 2023; Quinlan & Renninger, 2022). When literature students compare their career options, many conclude that the orientation of becoming a writer is less competitive than the orientation of working in other fields that are considered more financially reliable.

Furthermore, in relation to this, a big question also arises regarding the curriculum structure in literature departments, which indirectly contributes to the *ambiguity* (researcher call it *bias*) and professional identity of literature students.

From the results of observations and informal interviews, a number of respondents said that the courses they took contained more comprehensive literary text analysis, literary theory and textual criticism, literary history, and research methods than elective courses that explicitly supported creative production, such as creative writing workshops, literary publishing, or book industry management.

In fact, literary theory itself has been replaced by courses that are *borrowed* from other disciplines, such as philosophy becoming literary philosophy, sociology becomes literary sociology (English & Underwood, 2016; Lahire, 2015; Váňa, 2020), psychology becomes literary psychology (Brewer, 2017; Ogden, 2022; Roth, 2019), cultural issues become postcolonialism (Gallien, 2018; Schormová, 2018; Shome, 2016), or gender or feminism (Humm, 2021; Rosenberg, 2017). With little room for practical exploration of creative writing, students are limited in developing their identity as writers or literary figures, and are more accustomed to accepting themselves as language academics, literary text researchers, or proficient language speakers rather than as writers of literary works. This, of course, explains a condition that contributes to the low interest of literature students in becoming writers.

Furthermore, there is also a dimension of identity crisis that cannot be ignored. Some searches found that there is obstacles teaching literature (Bunga Febriani et al., 2022) and this is exacerbated by some traces which expose on how the students in English Literature, in Indonesia, struggle with their language competence (Novianti, 2016; Rahman, 2018; Sunardi et al., 2018) and it creates a sort of narrative: when students preferably decide to be in literature department, especially English Literature, their initial perception is often to become proficient in English, not to become a writer of literary works.

This is also due to the limited number of majors at universities in Indonesia related to English—English Education, English Literature, or English (Associate Degree in English, particularly for business). Therefore, the candidates (students) have no choice but to study English either by becoming an English teacher in the English Education major or by studying English in the English Literature major, although in the recent years, the nomenclature has been modified to be English Language and Literature.

Based on the researcher's experience, within the English Literature department itself, there is a separation of disciplines, usually divided into linguistics, cultural studies, American studies, or English literature. At Universitas Airlangga, Universitas Padjajaran, and Universitas Diponegoro, they divide it into linguistics, literature, and cultural studies, whilst at Universitas Negeri Surabaya, it is added translation. At Universitas Negeri Malang and Universitas Brawijaya, do not provide cultural studies.

At Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta, it comprises linguistics, literature, American studies, and translation, while Universitas Negeri Semarang, Universitas Indonesia, and Universitas Gadjah Mada have no official report of specialized division, it is only linguistics and literature. Apart from this, it must be clarified that linguistics discusses the English language from a scientific perspective, while American Studies

discusses American literature and culture, and English Literature discusses English literature. In other words, at the university level, prospective students who want to study English, other than becoming an English teacher, only have the option of studying English language or studying (English) literature and its *sheds*.

This statement is consistent with the finding that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are more likely to view their major as a language skill (Bloemert et al., 2019; Sunardi et al., 2018; Viana & Zyngier, 2020) rather than literary production and that their authorial identity is relatively weak (Juliaty, 2019; Sari et al., 2023; Sasmita & Setyowati, 2021). Thus, the low interest in becoming writers among Indonesian literature students is not only a matter of economics or curriculum, but also a matter of professional identity crisis: they do not see themselves in the framework of *writers*, but rather as language students or reviewers of other people's works.

Theoretically, this research fills a crucial gap in literary studies, which have so far been preoccupied and seemingly dominated by textual research, the implementation of critical theory, and the perspective of authorship. Otherwise, literary studies can target the issues of students' professional identity and professional careers that are relevant to professionalism. Indeed, studies on creative literacy and creative writing teaching in Indonesia have been conducted extensively (He, 2020; Lee, 2023; McCormack, 2023), and international literature has explored authorial identity in an academic context (Bourdieu, 2016; Mardiningrum, 2024).

However, few studies precisely connect structural factors (literature curriculum, career orientation), motivational factors (students' motives for entering the major, career perceptions), and identity (sense of being a writer) in the context of literature students in Indonesia. Therefore, this study offers novelty (state-of-the-art) in three areas: *first*, it raises the issue of writing career orientation, which has been under-researched in Indonesian literary studies; *second*, it combines a mixed-method approach to examine this phenomenon on a quantitative and narrative scale, which is rarely applied in literary research; *third*, it highlights the identity of writers as a construct that is influenced by the curriculum, economic perceptions, and professional identities of literature students, especially English literature students.

To scaffold the argumentation, the theories underlying this research include the theory of cultural capital and professional identity (Bourdieu, 2016), which emphasizes how literature students, despite being in a field of study with high symbolic value, are still limited in their access to the cultural capital of writers (publications, networks, or institutional support). Career motivation and career orientation theory—*Self-Determination Theory* (Deci et al., 1991; Deci et al., 1991; Mynard & Shelton-Strong, 2022; Nix et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2006, 2008) is the basis for analysing how intrinsic motivation (the desire to write) and external motivation (economic pressure, pragmatic career orientation) interact in the context of literature students. In addition, the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, 2011, 2020; Bosnjak et al., 2020; Sussman & Gifford, 2019) is used implicitly to see how

students' perceptions of opportunities to become writers, social norms in the literature campus environment, and the control they feel over the path to becoming a writer will influence their intention to write. With this framework, this study posits that the low interest of literature students in becoming writers is the result of a complex interaction between motivational, institutional, and socio-economic factors.

Method

This study employed a mixed-methods design, conjoining quantitative survey analysis with qualitative in-depth interviews to delve in the phenomenon under investigation. It is selected based on the epistemological assumption that neither quantitative nor qualitative data alone can adequately represent the complex socio-economical, pedagogical, and identity-based factors affecting literature students' *unwillingness* to become writers. The integration of numeric trends with narrative meaning allows for more comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon. Henceforth, this study used an explanatory sequential approach: the quantitative data provided a comprehensive overview of students' orientations, while the qualitative data intensified the understanding of their subjective and rational process.

Previously, the researcher did a simple interview with 3 writers to investigate challenges in the profession and a survey to 25 students to get in to perception toward career path. This bases the quantitative data which involved 100 undergraduate students in English Literature department, from 5 universities in Indonesia randomly. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure representation across various institutional types (public and private universities), genders, and academic years.

With purposive sampling, participants ranged from 5-semester to 7-semester students, reflecting different stages of engagement with literary studies. The survey questionnaire was developed through 15 close-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), grouped into three domains: (1) initial reasons for selecting literature as a major, (2) perceptions of the curriculum and relevant activities, and (3) future career consideration. Additionally, demographic variables (gender and semester of study) were included to facilitate cross-sectional analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 26, resulting descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and standard deviation), normality test using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Mann-Whitney to identify the correlation between gender and the result, and Kruskal-Wallis H test to identify the correlation between students' semester and the result.

For the qualitative data, 3 students (initials are faked, X, Y, & Z) were selected purposively as interview participants, as the representation of students who are reluctant to be a writer. In this phase, semi-structured interview protocols were employed to dive deeper in issues related to identity formation, institutional influence, and perceived obscurities in chasing a professional career as a writer. Each

interview lasted approximately 30–40 minutes and was conducted via Zoom. The interviews were conducted in bilingual, Bahasa Indonesia and English, according to participants' comfort level, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

These data were applied a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) by following six stages: 1) Familiarizing oneself with the data (reading and understanding the data), 2) Creating initial codes (marking relevant parts of the data), 3) Identifying initial themes (grouping codes into potential themes), 4) Reviewing themes (ensuring themes are consistent with the data and relevant), 5) Determining and Naming Themes (assigning clear labels), and 6) Writing Reports (compiling findings into a complete narrative).

To confirm trustworthiness, the researcher employed member checking, triangulation between quantitative and qualitative results, and peer debriefing with two senior lecturers in literary education. NVivo software reinforced the coding and retrieval process. The research followed ethical guidelines for social science research as outlined by the Ethical Code and Code of Conduct for Researchers (*Kode Etik dan Kode Perilaku Periset*—KEKPP), in which the ethical approval for the research was obtained. All participants provided informed consent, were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and were informed that their participation was voluntary. No personal identifying data were collected outside demographic categories.

Results

The results of this study are divided into two parts. The first part relates to the quantitative data presentation, taken from survey and the second part relates to the qualitative data presentation, taken from interview. First of all, the quantitative result presents the statistical findings attained from the analysis of survey data using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The analysis was piloted to deliver a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping literature students' reluctance to pursue a career as a writer of literary works. Descriptive statistics were first employed to recapitulate the participants' responses, outlining universal trends across some variables. Subsequently, a normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was implemented to determine whether the data were normally distributed, which then exposed the choice of non-parametric procedures for further analysis.

The Mann-Whitney U test was operated to observe whether there were significant distinctions in the perceptions between male and female students, while the Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed to recognize variations across students from different semesters. These analyses provide a quantitative overview of the patterns underlying literature students who take a conclusion not to be a writer within their respective programs, literature. Here is the descriptive statistics.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	100	1	1	2	1.62	.488	-1.784	.478
Mot1	100	1	4	5	4.27	.446	-.912	.478
Mot2	100	3	2	5	4.26	.733	1.690	.478
Mot3	100	3	2	5	3.72	.965	-.964	.478
Mot4	100	3	2	5	3.68	.827	-.526	.478
Mot5	100	3	2	5	4.27	.633	.595	.478
Cur1	100	1	4	5	4.22	.416	-.119	.478
Cur2	100	2	3	5	4.26	.463	-.541	.478
Cur3	100	1	4	5	4.32	.469	-1.415	.478
Cur4	100	2	3	5	4.08	.339	4.967	.478
Cur5	100	4	1	5	3.77	1.062	-.794	.478
Prof1	100	2	3	5	4.23	.548	-.220	.478
Prof2	100	3	2	5	4.12	.656	1.937	.478
Prof3	100	2	3	5	4.15	.592	-.232	.478
Prof4	100	2	3	5	4.33	.587	-.626	.478
Prof5	100	4	1	5	4.03	.797	3.913	.478
Semester	100	3	4	7	5.82	1.038	-.798	.478
Valid N (listwise)	100							

The Descriptive Statistics table presents responses from 100 participants and captures their demographic profile alongside perceptions of motives (Mot1–Mot5), curriculum experiences (Cur1–Cur5), and professional views on authorship (Prof1–Prof5). The sample comprised 38 male and 62 female students ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 0.49$), reflecting a predominantly female cohort. In terms of academic progression, students came from the 4th to the 7th semester ($M = 5.82$, $SD = 1.04$), providing perspectives from those who were already familiar with the academic rhythm of the literature program.

Across the motives dimension, the consistently high means ($M = 3.68$ – 4.27 , $SD = 0.45$ – 0.97) suggest that many students resonate with statements emphasizing linguistic growth and personal reasons for choosing the major. The curriculum items show similarly positive evaluations ($M = 4.08$ – 4.32 , $SD = 0.34$ – 0.47), with the exception of Cur5 ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.06$), where responses varied more widely, indicating diverse experiences regarding motivation for literary creation. The professional perception items ($M = 4.03$ – 4.33 , $SD = 0.55$ – 0.80) reflect a collective recognition of the realities and challenges associated with authorship as a career path. Taken together, the data present a coherent and thoughtful snapshot of students' academic and professional reflections, illustrating both shared understandings and individual nuances within the cohort. Apart of this, there is normality test that can be scrutinized in the table.

Table 2. *Normality Test*

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		Gndr	Mot1	Mot2	Mot3	Mot4	Mot5	Cur1	Cur2	Cur3	Cur4	Cur5	Prof1	Prof2	Prof3	Prof4	Prof5	Smst
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Mean	1.62	4.27	4.26	3.72	3.68	4.27	4.22	4.26	4.32	4.08	3.77	4.23	4.12	4.15	4.33	4.03	5.82
	Std. Deviation	.488	.446	.733	.965	.827	.633	.416	.463	.469	.339	1.062	.548	.656	.592	.587	.797	1.038
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.402	.457	.271	.194	.241	.305	.481	.443	.433	.493	.216	.373	.327	.340	.323	.365	.269
	Positive	.278	.457	.249	.192	.204	.305	.481	.443	.433	.493	.136	.373	.323	.340	.323	.285	.141
	Negative	-.402	-.273	-.271	-.194	-.241	-.255	-.299	-.277	-.247	-.387	-.216	-.277	-.327	-.290	-.263	-.365	-.269
Test Statistic		.402	.457	.271	.194	.241	.305	.481	.443	.433	.493	.216	.373	.327	.340	.323	.365	.269
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

The One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test evaluates the extent to which each variable conforms to a normal distribution. The results show that all variables, including demographic indicators (Gender & Semester) and attitudinal dimensions (Mot1–Mot5, Cur1–Cur5, Prof1–Prof5), produce Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) values of .000, which are well below the conventional significance threshold of $p < .05$. These findings indicate that the dataset is not normally distributed, thereby justifying the use of non-parametric statistical procedures for subsequent analyses. Furthermore, this research also describes a test toward gender statistically and it can be traced below here.

Table 3. *Mann–Whitney U for Gender*

Ranks				
	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SUM	male	38	55.97	2127.00
	female	62	47.15	2923.00
	Total	100		

Table 4. *Test Statistics^a*

Test Statistics ^a	
	SUM
Mann-Whitney U	970.000
Wilcoxon W	2923.000
Z	-1.492
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.136

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

The Mann–Whitney U test was applied to **determine whether gender differences influenced students' responses in the overall survey score (SUM)**. The results indicate that the difference between male and female respondents was not statistically significant, $U = 970.00$, $Z = -1.492$, $p = .136$ ($p > .05$). This suggests that gender does not meaningfully shape students' perceptions or attitudes measured in the survey, which includes motives, curriculum experiences, and professional views related to authorship. In other words, both male and female students responded to the survey items in comparable ways, reflecting similar perspectives across the measured constructs. Additionally, this research also elaborates a test toward the students' semester statistically and it can be tracked below here.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis Test → Semester

Ranks			
	Semester	N	Mean Rank
SUM	4	17	48.26
	5	13	42.00
	6	41	56.48
	7	29	47.17
	Total	100	

Table 6. Test Statistics^{a,b}

	SUM
Kruskal-Wallis H	3.405
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.333
a. Kruskal-Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Semester	

The Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to **examine whether students' survey scores (SUM) differed significantly across semester groups**. The result was not statistically significant, $H = 3.405$, $df = 3$, $p = .333$ ($p > .05$), indicating that semester level does not significantly influence students' overall responses. This finding suggests that students from different academic stages, whether earlier or later semesters, expressed similar perceptions regarding their motives, curriculum experiences, and professional views toward authorship. In essence, progression in semester does not appear to alter how students position themselves in relation to the constructs measured in the survey.

The overall findings of the survey indicate that literature students, despite expressing consistently positive attitudes toward their academic motivations, curriculum experiences, and institutional support, demonstrate relatively low interest in pursuing authorship as a professional pathway. Their motivations for choosing the literature major appear largely instrumental, centering on linguistic development rather than creative aspirations, and although the curriculum is viewed favourably, it is not perceived as strongly oriented toward fostering literary production or career preparation in writing.

Students also exhibit a realistic, and at times skeptical, understanding of the challenges associated with becoming a writer, particularly regarding financial stability and the demanding nature of the profession. These trends are consistent across gender and semester groups, as neither demographic variable significantly influences students' overall scores. The results suggest a stable pattern in which literature students value the academic and linguistic benefits of their program but are generally disinclined to target authorship as a primary career goal.

The quantitative data above explains that, essentially, regardless of whether they are female or male students, first-year or final-year students, the results still show that literature students, based on the survey results, tend not to choose to become writers or authors as their profession or career. Indeed, this cannot be used as a comprehensive reference, as if all English literature students in Indonesia do not want to become writers or authors, but of course this raises a serious question: how come literature students do not want to pursue a career as writers? Here, the researcher continued the exploration process at the interview stage. As a note, the taken students have different characteristics, however, it has no any impact on how the substance they represent.

Motivation

In the first question, the interview participants were asked about their motives or orientation when choosing English literature as their major. The researcher asked, "When you first chose to major in English literature, what was on your mind?" X replied, "Hmm... at first, I thought that studying English literature would be more about learning the language, such as grammar, speaking, and writing, rather than poetry, short stories, or novels." The researcher continued, "So you were a bit surprised when it turned out that there were many literature courses?" X replied, "Yes, to be honest, I was really surprised... I thought literature was just an addition, but it turned out to be a big part of it. Sometimes I find the language difficult, especially when talking about meaning or symbols, or theory, in novels or poetry. I often don't understand what they mean, but I try to understand."

The researcher continued, "So how do you feel when you face courses like that?" X replied, "I think I'm a bit frustrated. I prefer things that are clearer, theories that are more definite, maybe like linguistics. In linguistics, there are examples that can be applied with certainty. In literature, sometimes the lecturers talk in a very philosophical way, and the theories are difficult to understand. I can only nod, but I don't really understand." The researcher then continued with the question, "When it comes to your thesis, have you thought about what topic you want to take?" X responded, "Probably linguistics. I don't dare to take literature, I'm afraid I'll get even more confused."

Then, the researcher moved on to student Y, asking, "What about you? When you entered English Literature, what did you imagine beforehand?" Y replied, "I've always liked literature. I like reading poetry, novels, and short stories. So, when I found out there was an English Literature major, I felt it was a perfect fit." The researcher then continued with the question, "After university, has your perspective changed?" Y answered, "Not too much, just deeper. I used to just like reading stories, but now I understand how to analyse works and see hidden meanings. But I realize that I don't want to be a writer or a literary figure, I just like to enjoy [the works]."

The researcher responded, "Why is that?" Y replied, "Because I feel more suited to the academic world. I enjoy explaining [theories], researching and discussing literary works, not writing them. Besides, I think my writing is terrible. Maybe I want to be a literature lecturer, discussing literature more critically." The researcher continued, "So you see literature more as an intellectual path, right?" Y reacted, "That's right. For me, literature is a mirror of human and social issues. I want to stay in that field, but through research and teaching, not through creative work. I think ***'s research is really cool, I'm quite inspired."

Next, the researcher continued the interview with Z. The researcher asked, "When you first entered the English Literature department, what were your expectations?" Z replied, "Actually, I didn't have high expectations. I chose this major because my parents told me to, saying that the prospects were pretty good, considering that English is important and needed everywhere." The researcher

continued, "Then, after college, were you interested in literature courses?" Z replied, "Not really. I don't really like reading poetry or novels, especially when I'm asked to analyse their meaning. But I just went with it."

The researcher then continued, "But I heard you want to do a thesis on literature?" Z replied, "Yes, my friends say it's easier. Because with linguistics, you have to find data, transcripts, and the analysis is complicated. With literature, you just read novels, analyse them using theory, and you're done. So, I chose the easy option so I can graduate quickly." The researcher closed this session with the question, "So the main reason is efficiency, not interest?" Z concluded with the answer, "Yes, you could say that. I just want to finish my studies, not become a writer or lecturer."

Curriculum

Next, the interview questions revolved around the curriculum in the English literature department, which was indirectly correlated with the desire of English literature students to avoid becoming writers or authors. The researcher asked student X, "In your opinion, does the curriculum in this department encourage students to write literary works?" X replied, "In my opinion, not yet. Many courses focus on theory, text analysis, or even linguistics, which is easier to understand. When it comes to writing literature, there may be creative writing courses, but ... I think there are only a few." The researcher continued with the question, "So you feel that there is not enough encouragement to become a writer?" X responded, "Yes, I think so. The thing is, I myself have never really been asked to create literary works in class, and we don't even know the steps to becoming a writer."

How does the publishing system work, how do you create a good story, it seems like there are many shortcomings. At most, there are only one or two assignments, and even those are more about analysis, not writing poetry or short stories." The researcher continued, "If there were more opportunities for creative writing, would you be interested?" X concluded, "Maybe, but I'm not sure. However, if there was guidance, maybe some people would want to become writers. Sometimes lecturers just give us theory, then tell us to write something ourselves, but they don't give us any concrete examples. So, we're confused about where to start." The researcher then moved on to student Y and asked, "What do you think? Does the curriculum provide space to develop creative writing skills?" Y replied, "Hmm... partly yes, but it still needs to be improved."

There are several courses such as *Creative Writing*, but the portion is small, only 1 course and 2 credits, and even then, the lecturer is not a writer. There are more analysis and literary theory." The researcher continued, "Why do you think that is?" Y replied, "Perhaps because our campus is still academically oriented, students are asked to write research papers, not literary works. The goal is to produce lecturers or researchers, not writers. So, the emphasis is on theory, not works." Then, the researcher asked, "What about you, would you prefer more writing practice or is theory enough?" Y responded, "I want a balance. Because if literature students can't

write at all, something is wrong. Even though I myself am more interested in becoming a lecturer, I still want to have that creative ability." To the last participant, X, the researcher asked, "What do you think, Z, about the curriculum in this department? Does it encourage students to write literary works?" Z replied, "To be honest, not really. I actually feel that the courses are too heavy on theory. There is a lot of reading and text analysis, but no real practice in writing."

The researcher then continued, "So you feel that there is no direct encouragement to become a writer?" Z replied, "Yes, even lecturers rarely discuss the writing profession. If they do, it's only as an example in class. But there are no activities that can really get students involved in the writing process." The researcher asked one last question, "If there were activities such as writing competitions or literary clubs, do you think that would help?" Z concluded with the answer, "It could. But to be honest, personally, I'm not really interested either. I'm studying here to graduate, not to become a writer. But for friends who like to write, it's definitely very important."

Professionalism

Then, the researcher moved on to the last question related to the reasons why a career as a writer or author is not economically profitable. The researcher began the question with, "In your opinion, what is the profession of a writer or author like? Is it interesting to you?" X replied, "Maybe it's quite interesting, because I think it's cool to have your own work. But when it comes to finances, I don't think it's very promising. Unless you're like J.K. Rowling, if you were not, you could go bankrupt. Especially here in Indonesia, books can be counterfeited [laughs]." Then, the researcher asked, "Why do you think that?" X replied, "Well, because that's the reality, sir."

Many writers still have to work elsewhere, especially now that they have to build their brand on social media. Especially when you're just starting out, there's no guarantee that your work will be published." This prompted the researcher to dig deeper, "So you don't see this profession as your main career choice?" X responded, "Yes, for me it's better to just write as a hobby. For a main job, perhaps being a lecturer or translator is more certain." Then, the researcher asked, "If there was support from the university or a system that could guarantee the welfare of writers, would your view change?" X concluded with the answer, "It's possible."

However, so far, I haven't seen a clear career path for writers in Indonesia, and many writers even write according to market demand rather than their own desires. There may be great writers, but I think their career paths are very long, involving a lot of criticism and mental pressure, and I'm afraid I'm not ready for that. So, I think [my desire to become a writer] is still a long way off." Next, the researcher asked student Y a similar question, "How do you view the profession of writer from a career and financial perspective?" Y replied, "I really respect the profession, but I'm also realistic. Writing requires a high level of idealism, but the income is uncertain."

The researcher then continued, "So you feel it is still difficult to make it your main job?" Y responded, "That's right. In Indonesia, the appreciation for literary works is not as great as in other countries. I hear that writers only get a small royalty from their work. Even good works are not necessarily paid fairly." The researcher continued with a question, "Then how do you position yourself as a literature student in this situation?" Y explained, "I see it as an intellectual opportunity, not a financial one. If I can write later, that's a bonus. But my main goal is still to teach or research literature." The researcher asked a responsive question, "So your motivation is more about developing knowledge, not a commercial writing career?" Y stated emphatically, "Exactly. For me, being a writer is a calling, not a profession that can be measured in money."

On the other hand, the researcher continued the interview with student Z, asking the first question, "What do you think, Z, about the profession of writer or literary figure? Are you interested?" Z stated, "Hmm... personally, not really, sir. I'm not sure I could make a living from writing." The researcher tried to dig deeper, "Do you see it as an unstable profession [financially], is that it?" Z clarified, "Yes, that's right. Especially when you look at the current situation, many people prefer short content on social media to reading literary books. So, the market for literary works seems to be getting smaller." The researcher then tried to find the main point, "So you prefer a profession that has a guaranteed income?" Here, Z responded, "Yes. Of course. In this economy, I think many of my friends feel the same way. We need a job that can guarantee our livelihood first. As for writing, maybe later when I'm more established." Then the researcher asked, "So you still see writing as a secondary activity, not your main career?" Z concluded, "Yes, maybe just as a means of expression, not to make money, let alone as my dream profession."

From the above interview, it can be concluded that literature students see literature as something interesting, even though there are some difficulties in understanding its theories. However, when literature is turned into a job, such as a writer or author, they see it as something that is financially unstable. This indicates that literature students, especially English literature students, as interviewed by the researcher, reject becoming writers or authors. The first factor is that they misunderstand the literature major. Second, they feel that the curriculum does not encourage them to become writers. Third, they feel that being a writer or author is a job that is not very profitable or financially rewarding.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal an institutional paradox: English literature students appreciate the academic and linguistic benefits of their department, but are unable to translate that appreciation into an intention to become professional writers. Theoretically, this condition is not merely a matter of individual preference, but rather a structural phenomenon that places English literature programmes in a cultural field where symbolic capital and economic capital operate at different frequencies.

In Bourdieu's terms, English literature programmes produce a form of cultural capital, namely English language skills, both in terms of active and passive communication, plus the ability to interpret texts, but fail to convert this into economic capital that can guarantee a sustainable writing profession for their graduates. Perhaps these competencies help students in producing or obtaining jobs that require English, but in terms of literature, their competencies are not accommodated in the professions they should be: writers or authors. As a result, students' orientation is instrumental: they choose literature for language skills or academic status, not to pursue a writing career that does not seem to be liveable. This confirms the observation that the field of literature in many contexts (including the Indonesian context) is still vulnerable to economic precariousness, which affects students' professional aspirations (Bourdieu, 2016).

From a motivational perspective, these findings can be interpreted through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, which asserts that lasting motivation arises when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the case of English literature students, a curriculum that is largely skill-based, theoretical, and focused on analytical practice actually limits their experience of competence in creative production. This means that the courses offered emphasize analysis, while writing practice is still lacking. There is nothing wrong with a literature department wanting to emphasize understanding or critical analysis in the context of literature, assuming that graduates will become literary academics.

However, in reality, surveys show that few English literature students want to become literary academics, and instead see English language competence as crucial capital for finding more pragmatic or financially lucrative professions. If emphasizing theoretical understanding and analytical practice also fails to encourage students to become literary academics, then what about the lack of courses or programmes that encourage students to engage in literary productivity or become writers of literary works? This clearly explains the low interest in becoming a writer among English literature students.

When students rarely receive structured feedback in the process of writing literary texts, their sense of competence as *prospective writers* will not grow. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the academic orientation of the programme reduces opportunities for relatedness with the practical world of writing (editors, publishers, writing communities), so that basic motivational needs are not met. The insufficiency of these three needs leads to extrinsic or instrumental motivation, for example, choosing a major for language skills or quick graduation, which does not support the intention to become a writer.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can also be examined through the Theory of Planned Behaviour model, which shows that intention is the result of the interaction between attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991, 2020; Sussman & Gifford, 2019). In quantitative findings, a positive attitude towards

learning but a low intention to become a writer indicates that there is an obstacle in the form of norms and applied control. Social norms, such as family roles and job market demands, favour financially *stable* jobs, while perceived control (the ability to earn an income from writing, access to publishing networks) has a fairly low value. In other words, although some English literature students assess or appreciate literature as an interesting field of study, in reality, their socio-economic attitudes and low perceived control suppress their writing intentions to nothing. This means that idealism about literature loses out to the reality of the market, which relegates literature to a fictitious prospect that does not provide economic stability.

Furthermore, systemic criticism that emerged from interviews with English literature students also emphasized that there is a dilemma regarding the curriculum offered to them. From what was conveyed, there is an intention that the curriculum offered brings a historical orientation to theory and criticism of literary texts, which has reinforced the function of literature as a discipline of interpretation rather than a practice of creative production. In addition, in practice, many programmes still reproduce the traditional humanities model that prioritises textual reading, criticism, and literary history, without modulating the learning structure to foster production capabilities.

This includes embedding practice-based writing workshops, portfolio-oriented assessment (project-based system), and editorial or publishing practicums alongside theoretical courses; fostering sustained collaboration with writers, editors, and cultural industries as co-educators; and expanding experiential learning through literary festivals and publisher-based outings. Such curricular modulation provides them an access to translate critical knowledge into creative output, repositioning English Literature programmes, not merely as static sites, but as incubators of literary production that remain academically rigorous while socially and professionally relevant. Moreover, digital and AI advancement should trigger the initiative to innovate more in literary challenges.

The establishment of educational institutions, in this context the English literature department, has the fundamental objective of producing a generation in line with its vision. From the nomenclature of English literature, graduates should be quite proficient in English literature, and their *work* should not be far from the field of literature. The normalization of English literature graduates who have jobs that are not related to the field of literature only explains the failure of this department's product. Or, if English literature graduates do not want to become professionals in the field of English literature, is English literature no longer relevant to the needs of today's society?

Abolishing this department seems a radical conclusion, thus the researcher sees a gap, that this department should modify, transform, or even revolutionize the curriculum so that what is offered to students can be what they need after they graduate. This interpretation is in line with the critical argument that literary education needs to be reoriented so that it not only produces consumers of criticism but also producers of works, a repositioning that requires the integration of

theoretical pedagogy and creative practice (Mardiningrum, 2024; Rubin, 2024).

There is also the dimension of professional representation. The interviews show that students view the writing profession as a job with symbolic value but low economic value; this perception reinforces their practical decision to set aside writing. From Bourdieu's perspective, when the economic field does not provide adequate returns, agents (in this case, students) rationally choose other paths that accumulate more exchangeable economic or symbolic capital.

Therefore, the problem is not simply a generic *lack of interest*, but rather the reality of market structures, access to publishing networks, and institutional legitimacy that make writing seem unfeasible as a primary career. A *theory-centric* curriculum approach also has implications for pedagogical quality: evaluations that emphasize textual analysis tend to alienate students with practical or creative inclinations. Consequently, the potential of young writers is nurtured inconsistently; students with creative talent may feel that they are not being systematically trained to write, market their work, or build a portfolio. Other pedagogical research in the Indonesian context shows that repeated workshops, writing mentoring, and exposure to the publishing industry effectively increase confidence and creative text production skills, factors that have the potential to increase the reliability of writing intentions (McCormack, 2023).

As the researcher recommends, normatively, this demands a fundamental shift; English literature curricula must reconceptualize core competencies. Instead of viewing literature solely as an object of theoretical study, programmes should place literary production (creative writing, editorial processes, digital publishing) as measurable competencies accompanied by authentic assessments (portfolios, class publications, small residencies). Such interventions are in line with employability literature that demands a balance between hard (technical) and soft (creative entrepreneurship) skills in humanities education (Abelha et al., 2020).

Furthermore, bridging the campus with actors in the literary industry (publishers, magazine editors, or digital platforms) can reduce students perceived-behavioural control over writing career opportunities. In the realm of policy, for example, faculties also have a role to play in considering structural incentives: publication funds, creative scholarships, special career modules for writers, and academic recognition of creative publications equivalent to traditional research output. Without these incentive changes, the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital will remain difficult, and students will continue to internalize literature as an academic path rather than a profession.

Additionally, over the past decade, universities in the United Kingdom (and OECD—Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries) have seen a significant decline in the number of students choosing degrees in English Studies and English Literature. This phenomenon has coincided with stable or even increasing interest in more practical programmes such as Creative Writing. This decline has not only affected enrolment numbers, but also signifies a shift in values

and priorities in higher education, where the humanities in general have been devalued due to the systematic promotion of other fields, education policy, labour market perceptions, and paradigm shifts that place greater emphasis on practical skills (Costa, 2019).

With all due respects, ultimately, this critical approach is not merely a critique of the system, but offers a direction for transformation: (1) rebalancing the curriculum by adding workshops and publishing practices; (2) mentoring and industry immersion by providing real access to the publishing chain; (3) portfolio-based assessment that values the production process; (4) financial support policies for novice writers by reducing initial economic barriers. This transformation can foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness by strengthening the prerequisites for motivation that enable students to not only appreciate literature academically, but also choose writing as a feasible and meaningful career.

Conclusion

This study depicts a critical incoherence between the ideal purpose of English literature as a department and the pragmatic motives of the students. Despite expressing positive attitudes toward the program, the students infrequently desire to become writers. Their engagement with the discipline remains instrumental, oriented toward linguistic competence and English skills development rather than creative writing or authorship.

This trend reflects a structural *weakness* within the curriculum, which privileges theoretical analysis over creative practice or literary productivity. The misinterpretation of English literature as merely an extension of language study signifies a deeper institutional issue that the commodification of English as a skill for employability rather than a space of literary production. Accordingly, English literature risks reproducing technical proficiency without cultivating creative agency. The insight that writing lacks financial stability further reinforces students' refusal of being writers. It reveals how *neoliberal* values shape their academic choices and professional objectives.

To address this crisis, English literature must be reimagined beyond its analytical *fixation* which can be a *limitation* for the students. The curriculum should integrate creative writing, publication mentorship, and interdisciplinary collaboration to reinvent English literature as both an intellectual and *artistic* pursuit. The target is not only to produce competent and critical readers but also to nurture writers who are capable of contributing to critical discourse, as professional novelists or poets. Without such redirection, English literature will just stay to survive as a field of study but not as a mode of production for literary works.

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