



Senny Suzanna
 Alwasila¹
 Indiana Ayu
 Alwasilah²

THE BENEFICIAL OF WRITING THEORY (A CASE STUDY TOWARDS INDONESIAN FICTION WRITERS)

Abstrak

Setiap penulis memiliki gagasan berbeda untuk memulai menulis dengan serius. Ada yang terpikir untuk menulis ketika menghadapi situasi yang berbeda dan baru dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, melihat keramaian pasar, atau bahkan menemukan sesuatu yang umum. Mereka mempunyai keunikan tersendiri dalam menyajikan sebuah cerita. Terkadang, cerita dengan latar utama rutinitas sehari-hari akan membuat pembacanya menangis dan tertawa. Beginilah cara seorang penulis yang baik harus merumuskan ceritanya.

Kata Kunci: Fiksi, Teori, Proses Kreatif

Abstract

Each writer has different notion to start writing seriously. Some would get the notion to write when they face a different and new situation on their daily life, seeing market's crowd, or even discovering something common. They have their own uniqueness on presenting a story. Sometimes, a story with daily routine as the main setting would makes the readers cry and laugh. This is how a good writer has to formulate the story

Key words: Fiction, Theory, Creative Process

INTRODUCTION

Writing serves as a crucial means of communication, enabling the transfer of ideas into tangible written form, thereby facilitating the sharing of thoughts, emotions, and persuasion. White and Arndt (2015) emphasize its unique role in articulating ideas. Unlike speaking, writing demands effort; McRoberts (1995) likens the distinction to that between snakes-and-ladders and chess, highlighting the variance in control, thought, and style.

Byrne (2003) underscores the conscious mental effort required in writing, extending beyond the mere production of graphic symbols to their arrangement into words and sentences. As a tool of communication, writing involves a sender (the writer), a message (the written product), and a receiver (the reader). The act of writing typically aims to inform, impart knowledge, or express ideas to others.

Unlike spoken language, writing must be self-explanatory, as readers may not be physically present. Byrne (2004) stresses the need for clarity and coherence to ensure understanding without additional assistance. Green and Morgan (2008) further advocate for anticipating and mitigating potential confusion, as readers lack the opportunity to seek clarification.

The quality of writing hinges on diverse sources of material, as McRoberts (1995) suggests, including interactions with people, exposure to quality television and radio programs, and constant engagement in conversation. These endeavors enrich the content and style of writing, contributing to effective communication.

Objectives of the Research

Considering the problems discussed above, the objectives of the research are formulated as follow:

- a. To identify sources of ideas from which fiction writers develop their works.
- b. To describe the length of preparation required before the writer can write and finish their works.
- c. To identify the problems experienced by writers.
- d. To elaborate whether the writers need talent to be fiction writer.
- e. To analyze whether the writer need theory of writing to write a fiction.

^{1,2} University of Pasundan
 email: senny-alwasilah@unpas.ac.id

f. To describe the intellectual sophistication needed for creativity.

Significances of the research

Many writers contend that talent or aesthetic sensibility is essential to succeed in creative writing. While the learning process plays a significant role, talent tends to exert a considerable influence on the writing process.

In crafting fiction, writers often rely on their imagination to shape the narrative. They acknowledge that this imaginative process can sometimes unfold spontaneously. However, beyond imagination, writers must cultivate a broad intellectual horizon, engage in extensive reading, and continuously update their knowledge to refine their craft. Through the current research, we aim to explore the genesis of ideas, the time invested in preparation for writing, encountered challenges, and the level of intellectual depth required by writers.

Design of the Research

The present study investigates the creative process of writing fictions and poems. The respondents are prolific writers. The study was conducted using a case study where I, as the researcher, constitute the major instrument of the research. The instrument used in this research is interview schedules. The respondent of the present research is: YS, NLA, and OS. The data of the research consist of: Published short stories, and poem written by the respondent: NLA's poem is *Dalam Kerete tak Berjurusan* (=In the Train Going Nowhere). Transcription of the inter-views.

How Writing Emerges

The creative process of writing fiction varies among writers. Previously, it was often believed that writers had to wait for ideas to come to them. Some even thought that simply sitting and smoking would lead to inspiration. However, with evolving thinking, writers now actively seek out ideas.

Many writers find inspiration by immersing themselves in their surroundings. Walking through streets, observing marketplaces, riverside scenes, or witnessing people's struggles can spark ideas. For example, one writer stumbled upon their creative process while idly passing time in a library. Engrossed in reading various materials, they eventually found themselves writing paragraphs and, ultimately, crafting fiction. Surprisingly, their debut fiction piece was published just five days after submission, propelling them into a career as a recognized fiction writer.

Another writer attributes their creative process to a lifetime of accumulated experiences. Growing up surrounded by mystery and fantasy, they were immersed in tales of passing trains, windswept hills, and mountain legends. These childhood encounters with mystery, coupled with a penchant for reading comics and newspapers, laid the foundation for their storytelling prowess. As they progressed to university, their inclination towards writing became more apparent.

From these diverse experiences, it's evident that writers are shaped by their unique journeys. Bickham (2003) suggests that brilliance in fiction writing doesn't necessarily require intellect; sensitivity and empathy are equally crucial. However, a common thread among successful writers is a voracious appetite for reading. While the methods of idea generation may vary, the consensus remains: without extensive reading, writers cannot fully develop and expand their creative horizons.

Do We Need the Theory of Writing?

Various writing theories proposed by experts have been documented in literature, prompting writers to question their necessity. Sumardjo (2010), himself a writer, asserts that literary creations predate formal writing theories. In essence, becoming familiar with writing theory does not inherently make one a more productive writer; rather, it may only guide them towards productivity.

Interviews with writers revealed divergent views on the utility of writing theories. Some admit to never having delved into such theories, fearing they might stifle their creative flow. Conversely, others argue that while reading writing theories may not directly enhance one's ability to express ideas, it provides a valuable framework for understanding and applying good writing practices.

Analogous to learning to swim, where direct experience is paramount, writers may find value in absorbing theoretical knowledge alongside their practical endeavors. Understanding various

writing styles and techniques, akin to mastering different swimming strokes, can broaden a writer's skillset.

There exists a spectrum of opinions among writers regarding the necessity of writing theories. However, aligning with Sumardjo (2010), it's plausible that novice writers may benefit from studying writing theories to establish a foundational understanding, whereas seasoned writers may rely more on their established insights and experiences.

Overview of the Methodology

Patton (2015) outlines three main forms of data collection in qualitative research: in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation, and analysis of written documents. Interviews yield direct quotations capturing individuals' experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Additionally, Goetz (1992:2) elucidates that ethnography is not merely a static approach but rather a dynamic process, a method of studying human life.

In this study, a qualitative method was employed, encompassing in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observations, and analysis of written works comprising three short stories and a poem authored by the participants. In alignment with Goetz's perspective, ethnography serves as a lens for comprehensively understanding human existence. Throughout the research, close interaction with participants provided insights into their daily lives, problems, and activities. This immersive approach enabled a nuanced exploration of their feelings, experiences, knowledge, and opinions, underscoring the essence of ethnographic study in capturing the multifaceted aspects of human existence.

METHOD

Research Design

The primary aim of this study was to elucidate the creative process involved in crafting short stories and poems. Interviews served as the primary method for data collection, enabling the researcher to gather rich insights. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Additionally, written works authored by the participants were analyzed to augment the dataset and ensure a comprehensive understanding of their creative output as published in mass media outlets.

The active participation of respondents played a pivotal role in this inquiry. Without their cooperation, conducting the study would have been challenging. Maxwell (2013) likens research design to a philosophy of life, emphasizing its significance in guiding decision-making processes. Just as individuals possess varying levels of awareness regarding their life philosophies, researchers benefit from a clear understanding of their research designs to make informed and coherent decisions throughout the inquiry.

Respondents

This qualitative study investigated a creative process in creative writing. In this case, the creative writing is limited to short stories and poetry. In doing the research I collected the data of three fiction writers namely NLA, by interviewing, observing, and analyzing her published writing products.

The interviews were conducted using tape recorders. As researchers, we endeavored to foster a close rapport with the respondents to maximize information collection. Spradley (2016) asserts that ethnography involves learning from people rather than merely studying them. We concur with Spradley's perspective, as our interactions with the respondents yielded invaluable insights and learnings.

Kamil (2007:51) posits that in descriptive studies, researchers predetermine the questions to be addressed and the categories into which observations will be sorted before collecting data. Similarly, Goetz (1992:4) elucidates that deductive researchers aim to discover data that align with a pre-existing theory explaining their observations. This assertion rings true in our study, as the questions we prepared aligned with the study's objective of exploring the processes by which individuals become writers of creative fiction and produce extensive bodies of work. The insights gleaned from the interviews provided answers to these questions.

Data Collection

1. Phases of Data Collection

The data was collected from February to October 2023. The data consist of transcriptions of interviews and transcriptions of product analysis.

2. Interview

Interview is a conversation between researchers and respondents. To ensure the correctness of the transcription, members were checked (Emilia, 2005). Usually, interview is a person-to-person encounter which is one giving information to another. In this case, the information given by the respondents is the information needed by the researcher as research data. Somehow, the information is respondent's schemata about the mater. Let us say, the researchers want to read respondent's mind.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Process Of Writing

Category 1: The Creative Process In Writing Fiction

Writing fiction is inspired by social life, social reality, and empirical. By watching someone's melancholic face, the writer suddenly thinks of the situations behind his sad face, the background of his family, and then the writer can create a fiction about melancholic life.

The idea to write can be shaped from the pattern of thinking. The writer can organize the ideas using academic and experiment patterns. The idea to write does not emerge to midnight meditating in the silent place but from the richness of thought and reading literature.

Emerging feeling of missing the mother, father, previous teachers, and anybody the writers' loves can create a short story. by thinking parents, and teachers the writer immediately thinks of the ways they teach the philosophy of life.

Any condition is supposed to generate the ideas to write will spark when the writer sees the situation that touches imagination. They cannot wait for the idea to emerge but they must continuously search it. They must set themselves to catch the idea anytime, any place, any condition where they are always ready to get ideas by reading a lot and seeing that real life situation. As writers they must observe carefully situations including a small thing that has never been observed by other people.

Category 2: The Intuition Which Is Encouraging To Write

For ordinary people, the falling leaves could not mean anything, but for certain writers, the falling leaves and the sound of the wind can mean different things. It can create imagination. An ordinary moment can be switched into something extravagant. When seeing an old man sitting in the station waiting for the train for instance, suddenly the writer catches a mystery behind his face, a long journey of his life. And it could be created to become a novel. The intuition differentiates the writer who has beauty of feeling from ordinary people.

Category 3: The Best Situation To Write

To write fiction there needs to be a certain time, in the middle of the night where nobody is bugging around. Listening to slow instrumental music and smoking encourages the flow of imagination.

Whether situation around is noisy, the writers have to keep writing. Even the sounds of young children playing have to be an inspiration to write. If they have the mood to write, the situations around is not supposed to affect the imagination at all. They can keep writing.

Category 4: Time Needed To Write Fiction

One to three hours is enough to write a five-page long fiction, but if the writers do not have the mood to write it can take a few days, months, or even years to finish it.

Category 5: Satisfaction After Writing Fiction

Satisfaction after finishing a product of writing is having expelled the ideas from mind. The short story has been made will be read and appreciated by many people when it is published and in return the publisher will send payment.

They get satisfaction when they finish one literature work. It is not because of the money they will get, but it is more like delivering a baby after long pregnancy. The happiness comes from the bottom of the heart. Having earned money also make them happy, although they all know how much will they get from one published work.

Category 6: The (Un)Importance Of Theory Writing

Reading theory of writing decreases the productivity of writing. Creativity is blocked by the rules. Reading a theory of writing make them dizzy. It is better the read articles about literature than reading tips on how to write. To learn the theory of writing is by reading the fiction written

by expert. In accordance with the respondent's statements, Sumardjo (1997) mentioned that: American author Faulker advised that the theory is only important for those who are just starting out, but less so for those who are older. Theory is just a guide in writing. In writing yourself do not need to remember the theory. Write like swimming." He also states that: "For those who are just starting to write, theory needs to be read as a handle. But it must be remembered that theory is a highway. This means it is a path that many people have walked before. Because the theory of writing comes from the writings themselves. Short story theory comes from studying previous short stories. New theories exist after the short story itself exists. So the first short stories were born not because of theory, but because of the writer's talents."

Category 7: The Role Of Talent In Writing Fiction

The fiction writer must have a talent because not all people at the same level of knowledge and education have encouragement to write fiction. Talent and process of learning play important role. The talent can be detected when they are surrounded by the condition which did not influence them to write, but they wonder why they want to write fiction. If then later they become writers, it is not only because they have talent but also learned, read literature theories and works, magazines and so on. That is a process of learning.

Category 8: The Obstacles And The Problems Is Writing Fiction And The Solutions

The noisy situation and bad feelings can distract the mood to write. Anger will make them stop writing. By going for a walk to silent places, they will be able to find the lost imagination. Happy feeling does not necessarily lead to a good piece of writing. Thinking of people struggling for money on the street will raise emotions and imagination.

Category 9: The process of editing

They do not know whether it is strength or weakness of writers who do not reread and edit their work. But happened to two respondents. In the line with the respondents' statements, Sumardjo (1997) clarifies that: Writing is a process of producing writing that contains ideas. Many do it spontaneously, but there are also those who repeatedly make corrections and rewrites.

Category 10: Intellectual Sophistication

It is a must for all writers to have intellectual sophistication since it will reflect in their product of writing. The quality of the fiction will be seen from the choice of diction, the narration, the conflict created, the smooth flow of the story and many more. To have such a talent, the writers must be well educated.

Discussion

The Process of Writing

From the interviews we have conducted, all of the writers' respondents mentioned that ideas to write fiction is supposed to be searched by them. Midnight meditating is not the right thing to find ideas. The writers must create conditions when they are always ready to get the ideas by, for example reading many sources not only literary product but also news, feature, articles, and other. Ordinary people are not sensitive enough to see the situations from different points of views. On the contrary, by using and creating imagination writers can see something usual from a different paradigm to write a story. For instance, watching falling leaves or listening the sound, writers can create a story. One of the respondents mentioned that: When we see someone who displays a figure of concern, we will imagine the background of his daily life, so that from seeing his face we intuitively have an imagination of a melancholy life. Such an atmosphere encourages us to write a sad life. All the respondents clarified that they need one to three hours to write one single story, even though sometimes one product can be produced in a month or even a year, and sometimes it is left unfinished. This happens because the writers think that this story is not interesting anymore to continue. The situation can also distract the mood to continue writing. YS clarified that: "Three hours is enough for me to write a short story, or if I'm productive in a day I can finish a one-hundred-page children's novel." While OS mentioned that: "A finished essay has no timeframe, so from dawn to six o'clock there is already one essay. One hour approx. NLA said: "Writing poetry takes an hour or two hours, some takes days, depending on the idea, level of difficulty and mood. There can be many factors."

Usually, writers need a silent situation and good feeling to write, notwithstanding when the mood write emerges any situation does not influence them. One of the respondents argued that:

A good atmosphere is just an individual case. I like to smoke while listening to slow music or instrumentals. Usually, it is the heart that drives the flow of our imagination so that it will produce new ideas or new sentences. A quiet atmosphere at midnight will allow us to write compared to the stifling air during the day. They get satisfaction after finishing the product of writing because they have expelled the ideas from minds, and if it is published, it will be read and appreciated by many people. Moreover, they will get money from publisher, although the appreciation from the publisher is not really a good deal. NLA suggested that: What is certain is that there is inner satisfaction, the material is not bad, but what about the writer's honorarium? In writing fiction, they need "a teacher" to be a good writer. Some of the respondents said that theory of writing can be a teacher but we can also distract creativity. For them, by reading a quality product they will learn more. OS thinks that he does not need theory of writing as he asserted that: "When I read the theory, I get dizzy. Even the popular one, for example, is Arswendo Armowiloto's work "Composing is easy", sorry, which in my opinion is bullshit, nonsense. Like that I do not believe it ". So far NLA thinks that she learns a theory from the product written by expert as she said that: "I learn from books written by literary figures". Having a talent to write her writer can products because not all people of the same level of education have such talent. Talent can be detected when ordinary people take the surrounding for granted while talented people can catch something unusual, significant, or extraordinary from it as it mentioned by NLA that:

I do not know why, since elementary school, I have loved writing. None of my siblings write, my environment is not an arts environment and likes to write, reading is not a family tradition. But I have my own motivation to read. Reading the wrapped newspaper in the stall. And I like reading short stories and poetry. It was only after junior high school that I read a lot of books because my brother majored in literature. Friends at that time were not always interested in reading literary elements. At times, friends do not like Putu Wijaya's work. Well, that talent will not develop if I don't practice. In line with that statement, Sumardjo (1997) suggest that:

Writers are just ordinary people, whether they are poets, playwrights or novelists. It must be admitted that talent exists, but only 10% while the other 90% is effort and the results of education. Anyone can become a writer as long as he is willing to train himself. An ex-convict Henry Charier who had never written in his life, one day was moved to write his life story, and the result of a book called 'Papion' which was a bestseller around the world.

CONCLUSION

In connection with the major research problems such as creative process in writing fiction, the (un) importance of writing theory, role of talent in writing fiction, problems faced by writers and intellectual sophistications, we conclude them all in five major issues as follows:

1. Ideas for creative writing can come from many different sources: It can be using full imagination, walking around to find unusual things, thinking deeply on past experiences, thinking what we want to do or to be, or remembering other people's experiences. After having the idea to write, the writers think about the conflict, settings, characters, plots, and many more, depending on the situation and mood to write.
2. Theory ranges from the most abstract to the most practical. The writer has their own theory of writing, but they are not necessarily able to state it explicitly. Theory of writing can help writers of fiction in many ways: it improves the horizon of thinking and knowledge in writing is not meant merely to read the source of theory, but also read the product of writing written by expert. For established writers, learning theory of writing in nonsense since they already have those kinds of knowledge in their head, but for notice writers it is strongly recommended to read the writing theory written expert.
3. Talent plays an important role in writing fiction. Talent can manifest a having such a beauty of feeling, thinking unusual thing that others do not even think about, and get easily catching something that happens in daily life which others even do not care of. Talent and the process of learning are like walking side by side. Those who have talent but hardly read sources and learn new things probably will be left behind. And those who learn a lot and improve themselves that talent is less important for them.

4. Most writers, even the expert, have so called problems in their writing-related activities. Most problems are related to the distraction of feeling. Feeling bad, anger, sad, disappointed, or even happy distract their desire to write.
5. Intellectual sophistication is needed for fiction writers since it will reflect in the product writing. Intellectual sophistication is meant in broadened sense of not merely having academic titles or degrees, Hamka for example, is that of those who do not have academic titles but are considered having high intellectual sophistication.
Some suggestions for further research and teaching learning are offered as follows:
 1. In doing this research, we missed some observation of the respondents since it was hard for me to conduct them directly. All the respondents were doing their writing-related activities in the night or dawn, which is not an appropriate time for me to observe the. For further research it is much better – if possible – to observe them in such a way to make the research result better.
 2. For novice writers, who feel that they do not have talent in writing fiction, do not hesitate to write more because the process of learning plays an important role in developing writer.
 3. For those who feel it hard generating ideas to write, find the solution by walking around. Try use the intuition to see the usual things from different or unusual paradigm.
 4. Theory of writing is supposed to be read by novice writers. Although it will not make them become a famous writer, it will lead them to ways of becoming a famous writer.
 5. The problems which distract the creative process in writing can be solved by going to silent places such as beaches, mountain, or lake to refresh the mind.
 6. Intellectual sophistication is needed for a writer, since it reflects in the product of writing. But we must underline this: that being intellectual does not merely mean having academic degrees, but also having broad knowledge and horizon of thinking.
 7. Teachers should create imagination-generating environment.
 8. Theory should be taught either deductively or inductively, depending on the student.
 9. Talent is not the only requirement for being a writer. Efforts more important than talent.
 10. Creativity of writing is more personalized than generalized. Teachers should know the student personally.
 11. General knowledge should be taught as part of writing curriculum.

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