

THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE WRITING COURSE AMONG STUDENTS OF THE ISLAMIC LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE STUDY PROGRAM AT UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG

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Receive : 03 May 2026
Accepted : 01 Jun 2026
Published: 05 Jun 2026
DOI : 10.30829/jupi.v10i2.29510

Abstract

This study analyzes the role of the Creative Writing course in improving the writing competence of students in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Using a phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected eighth-semester students who have successfully published novels through the course. Thematic analysis revealed four main themes: the transformation of writing competence through a recursive process (Alves, 2008), collaborative learning through peer feedback sessions and roundtable discussions, challenges in plot development, character consistency, and time management that are overcome through adaptive strategies, and comprehensive institutional support in the form of weekly targets, gradual guidance, and free ISBN facilities as enablers of success. This study concludes that this course is effective in building productive literacy competence of prospective librarians, and recommends strengthening the intensity of practice and expanding similar programs in other library study programs.

Keywords: Creative Writing, Writing Competence, Islamic Library Science, Productive Literacy, Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are a fundamental competency that students must master in the digital information age. Writing is not merely a technical skill, but also a medium for expressing ideas, developing critical thinking, and constructing knowledge. (Andriana et al., 2025) In Islamic universities, writing skills even have an additional dimension as a means of *da'wah bil qalam* (Islamic preaching through writing), which since the time of the Prophet Muhammad has been an important method of disseminating Islamic values. (Sari & Wulandari, 2024)

For library students, this competency has dual relevance: providing both academic and professional knowledge, as modern librarians are required not only to manage information but also to be active literacy promoters and content producers. (Rahmi, 2025) In the era of artificial intelligence, human creative writing skills are increasingly strategically valuable because large language models have been shown to produce homogenous writing and tend to reduce diversity of expression. (Sen et al., 2023) Other research also confirms that while AI can increase writing

productivity, the creative experience and satisfaction of human writers actually decline when relying on such technology. (Moon et al., 2025)

This situation emphasizes the urgency of developing authentic writing competencies through structured learning. The implementation of Creative Writing courses in library study programs, especially those based on Islam, has rarely been explored in depth. This gap is crucial to fill, given that 21st-century librarians require strong writing competencies not only to support their academic careers but also as agents of public literacy capable of producing meaningful content. (Mei et al., 2025)

This study aims to analyze in depth the role of Creative Writing courses in improving the writing competencies of students in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. This study explores the stages of the writing process based on Alves' theory, identifies factors for successful novel publication, and uncovers the challenges and adaptive strategies developed by students. (Alves, 2008)

Although the success of students in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung in publishing novels through Creative Writing courses is a significant achievement, this phenomenon has never been studied in depth. Based on a search of the institutional repository of the Faculty of Adab, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, of the 243 scientific works deposited in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program, not a single study has specifically examined the phenomenon of mass publication of ISBN-registered works by library students or its relationship to the creative writing learning process. (Adab, n.d.)

In fact, the ability to produce publishable written works is a strategic competency for aspiring librarians as literacy agents and content producers in today's digital era. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on product-based creative writing learning in the context of Islamic library education. Practically, these findings can serve as a reference for other library study programs wishing to develop similar curricula, as well as for lecturers in improving learning effectiveness. (Addin et al., 2023)

This study uses Anabela Reis Alves' theoretical framework of the stages of the writing process as the primary basis for analysis. Alves argues that process writing is more effective than traditional product writing models because it helps writers focus on the process of creating text through interconnected, recursive stages: generating ideas, planning and outlining, note-taking, writing a first draft, revising, replanning, redrafting, and editing and preparing the work for publication. Alves (2008) argues that the most crucial aspect of this theory is its recursive nature, allowing writers to move back and forth between stages as needed, rather than following a linear sequence from beginning to end. (Rachel Morgan et al., 2023) A similar approach is also recognized in cognitive studies of writing, which model the writing process as a dynamic interaction between planning, idea translation, and revision, rather than a sequential sequence. (C'edric Hubert & Nathalie Bonnardel, 2025)

This characteristic reflects the reality of the creative process, where effective writers do not follow a single formula but instead adapt their process to their individual styles and needs. This understanding is important because it implies that writing learning programs need to accommodate a diversity of styles and not impose a predetermined order. (Rachel Morgan & Jeremy Schraffenberger, 2025) Similarly, writing practices that integrate creative activities have been shown to significantly improve students' writing composition and expressive abilities. (Wu et al., 2025)

Collaborative learning has been shown to be a catalyst for quality in creative writing programs. Research by Mustofa and Sugara found that effective interpersonal communication, including the practice of sharing and providing feedback, significantly increased satisfaction and motivation in the learning environment. (Mustofa et al., 2023) In an institutional context, research by Kesuma, Yunita, and Meilani confirms that a structured yet flexible system can produce optimal competency and productivity improvements. (Kesuma, 2024)

Littleton and Mercer emphasized that environments that support active exploration and collaboration consistently produce better development than conventional methods. In the context of Indonesian education, improving the literacy competency of young people through innovative learning programs has also become a pressing national agenda. (Lee et al., 2023)

In the context of library study programs, developing writing competency has strategic professional relevance. Modern librarians are no longer simply collection managers, but active literacy facilitators and content producers. Supporting the research and publication needs of academic librarians is also increasingly recognized as a crucial part of professional development in higher education libraries. (Gamache et al., 2025) The information, media, and data literacy competencies possessed by librarians also need to be continuously developed in line with the increasingly complex demands of academic library services. (Pinto et al., 2024)

Good writing skills are a key asset in carrying out this function, whether in producing literacy guides, library promotional content, or works that expand access to information for the public. In the Islamic context, the dimension of *da'wah bil qalam* (Islamic preaching) reinforces the urgency of this competency for students who will one day act as agents of literacy based on Islamic values. (Suf Kasman & Nirwan Wahyudi, 2024)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. This design was chosen because the research objective was to deeply understand students' subjective experiences in the Creative Writing course, including the meanings constructed from those experiences. (Creswell & Inoue, 2025) A phenomenological approach allows for in-depth exploration of perceptions, feelings, and strategies that cannot be captured through quantitative methods. (Alaslan et al., 2023)

The study was conducted in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program, Faculty of Adab, UIN Raden Intan Lampung in April 2026. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were: active eighth-semester students of the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program, who had taken and completed the Creative Writing course, who had completed and published a novel manuscript, and who were willing to participate voluntarily. Based on these criteria, six informants were selected, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

No.	Name of Informant	NPM	Date of Interview
1	MPA	2261020080	14 April 2026
2	MZH	2261020032	14 April 2026
3	ANA	2261020056	16 April 2026
4	RE	2261020074	16 April 2026

No.	Name of Informant	NPM	Date of Interview
5	DUF	2261020071	16 April 2026
6	RN	2261020044	16 April 2026

Source: Primary research data, 2026

The main instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the four stages of the writing process by Anabela Reis Alves, including pre-writing and planning, drafting, discussions with peers and lecturers, and revision. (Alves, 2008). Before use, the guide was consulted with the supervisor to ensure its suitability (face validity). Instrument development also adhered to qualitative research design principles that emphasize in-depth exploration of the subjects' experiences. (Putri & Murhayati, 2022). Instrument validity was also strengthened by considering epistemological constructs common in the interpretive qualitative research tradition. (Undari Sulung & Mohamad Muspawi, 2024). Interviews were conducted face-to-face for 30-55 minutes per informant, recorded with consent, and then transcribed verbatim. Data were also supplemented with field notes. (Nyoto et al., 2025).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six steps: data familiarization, initial coding, theme discovery, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing. (Lim, 2025) The choice of this qualitative evaluation method also considers the principle that depth of analysis is prioritized over statistical generalization. (Nyoto & Derry Nugraha 2025)

The credibility of the findings was maintained through source triangulation, comparing answers between participants, and member checking, which involved clarifying answers with participants when necessary. All participants were provided with an explanation of the purpose of the study and their rights, including the right to withdraw without consequence. Informed consent was obtained verbally before the interviews began. (Undari Sulung, 2024)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis of interview data from the six participants yielded four main themes. This section presents the data objectively, accompanied by verbatim quotations, before being interpreted in the Discussion section.

Theme 1: Competency Transformation Through Planning

Five of the six participants created outlines before beginning their novels. One participant, Zakky, chose an approach without a strict outline and still successfully completed his novel. Sources of inspiration varied: four participants drew themes from personal experiences and their surroundings, one from reading Wattpad and printed novels, and one developed a pre-conceptualized storyline.

All participants reported that the course provided meaningful guidance in the planning stage. Marsella stated that before taking the course, she had no understanding of how to construct an outline. Similarly, Rosi revealed that the course opened her mind, from initially not knowing what to write to finally being able to produce her own work. Dwi also experienced a similar change, from initially not knowing where to start to now having a clear guide for planning her writing.

Theme 2: Drafting and Its Challenges

Table 2. Characteristics of Novels Produced by the Six Participants

No.	Partisipant	Genre/Theme	Source of Idea	Duration	Revise	Page
1	Marsella	Friendship, Slice of Life	High School Experience	3 months	5x	175
2	Zakky	Personal Experience	Personal Life	3 months	3x	100
3	Aulia	Romansah, Travel	Storyline Construction	3 months	5x	243
4	Richa	Romance, Hidden Feelings	Surrounding Environment	3 months	5x	93
5	Dwi	Fiction Inspired by Reading	Wattpad & Print Novels	2 months	4x	138
6	Rosi	Personal Experience	Daily Life	3 months	7x	107

Source: Primary research data, 2026

The most frequently reported challenge was the difficulty of developing an engaging and consistent plot, experienced by five of the six participants. Building strong and believable characters was a barrier for four participants, while difficulty finding appropriate diction and vocabulary was reported by two participants. (Hamdani & Abid, 2025)

Zakky: "It was quite confusing at first. I had difficulty choosing standard words and constructing sentences that were easy to read. The biggest challenge was putting the ideas in my head into coherent writing."

Aulia: "When writing the first draft, I focused more on expressing the ideas and storyline without worrying too much about perfect language or structure. The important thing was to get the ideas out first, then refine them later."

Aulia's approach of postponing language corrections to prioritize the expression of ideas in the early stages reflects an intuitive awareness of the drafting principle in Anabela Reis Alves' theory: at this stage, fluency in expressing ideas is more important than perfection of form. (Alves, 2008)

Theme 3: Collaborative Learning and Peer Feedback

All participants rated the discussion sessions and peer feedback as the most beneficial components of the entire course. Two main functions were identified: improving the quality of writing and strengthening emotional motivation.

Table 3. Discussion Functions Based on Participant Reports

Function of Discussion	Reporting Participants	n (dari 6)
Improve the quality of the plot and characters	Marsella, Richa, Aulia, Rosi	4 (66,7%)
Provide motivation and moral support	Zakky, Dwi, Rosi	3 (50,0%)
Provide new ideas and perspectives	Aulia, Richa, Dwi, Rosi	4 (66,7%)
Provide solutions to creative deadlocks	Aulia, Richa, Rosi	3 (50,0%)

Source: Primary research data, 2026

Marsella: "I really enjoy sharing sessions with my friends. There, we give each other feedback on whether the story is interesting or not, and whether the characters are believable. That's much more beneficial than just reading theory."

Zakky: "Discussions with friends are more about encouraging each other to keep up and finish the novel quickly. We encourage each other, so we don't feel alone in the process."

The lecturer's role in the discussion sessions is also considered significant. In the roundtable sessions, the lecturer provides substantive feedback covering story structure, character development, and language effectiveness.

Aulia: "The lecturer usually provides quite in-depth input on story structure, idea development, and language usage. He also points out areas that need improvement and gives clear suggestions, so we don't feel confused about where to start."

Theme 4: Revisions and Emotional Responses

The number of revisions varied between three and seven times (see Table 2). Rosi revised the most (7 times, 107 pages), while Zakky revised the fewest (3 times, 100 pages). Storyline was the most frequently revised section, reported by all participants; followed by character development, reported by four participants.

Emotional responses to revisions fell into two patterns. Zakky, Aulia, and Richa had a positive-adaptive pattern, accepting revisions as part of improving their work. Marsella, Dwi, and Rosi experienced a negative-overcoming pattern, initially disappointed or frustrated but ultimately able to complete the revision.

Aulia: "I'm actually happy when something needs revising. Because it's a sign that something can be improved. Revision is part of the process, it doesn't mean failure."

Rosi: "I feel lazy, but I also want the results to be good. So I force myself to keep revising, even though there are moments when I want to give up."

From a pedagogical perspective, four of the six participants cited a weekly target of at least 10 pages as the most effective component in maintaining productivity. Five participants appreciated the sharing and reading sessions in front of the class as the most inspiring activities.

Marsella: "The weekly target is what keeps me from relaxing. It creates positive pressure that pushes me to remain productive and not procrastinate."

From a technical perspective, all participants cited the free ISBN facility as the most significant support. Five participants also appreciated the guidance provided during the publishing process and the direction to the printers.

Dwi: "Getting a free ISBN and being directed to a pre-selected publisher, so we don't have to search for it ourselves, really lightens our load."

Zakky: "What we really appreciated was the lecturers' guidance during the publishing process, including the free ISBN and being directed to the right printers. So we don't have to search for it ourselves; everything is taken care of together."

The first finding indicates that the Creative Writing course significantly transformed students' competencies, from lacking structured writing guidance to being able to complete and publish a novel. This transformation did not occur linearly, but rather through a structured scaffolding mechanism where the lecturer provided a framework, targets, and mentoring, gradually empowering students to become independent. (Jeffrey Kessler, 2023)

The process pattern found is fully consistent with Anabela Reis Alves' theory, where all participants went through the stages of idea generation, outlining, drafting, peer discussion, and revision, albeit in varying order and intensity. (Alves, 2008) This variation confirms the recursive nature of Alves Zakky's theory, which adopted an organic approach without a formal outline, still achieving success with the fewest number of revisions (three), proving that there is no single correct writing formula; what is essential is the writer's ability to consciously manage the process.

These findings underscore the central role of collaborative learning. Peer feedback, in this study, was shown to have two primary, mutually reinforcing functions: improving writing quality and strengthening motivation. (Zhang, 2025) This dual function is consistent with Parangu's finding that reciprocal service-based communities not only improve output quality but also reduce the dropout rate in long-term projects. (Parangu et al., 2023) Similar findings were also found in a study of creative writing communities, which showed that the practice of sharing and discussion among community members consistently improved writing quality and commitment. (Friedrichsen, 2025)

What distinguishes these findings from previous literature is the prominence of the social accountability dimension in the context of Indonesian students. Zakky explicitly refers to sharing sessions as an arena for "encouraging each other to keep up," a social accountability mechanism that encourages consistent productivity. This dimension is less prominent in similar research in Western contexts, suggesting that in Indonesia's collectivist context, the motivational aspects of peer communities may be stronger than the technical aspects. (Yang et al., 2025) This perspective aligns with thinking in creative writing education, which emphasizes that a supportive learning environment is the primary foundation for the creation of authentic work. (Lee et al., 2023)

The lecturer's role as a facilitator of constructive discussions also proved crucial. Unlike the lecturer-as-sole-authority model, the roundtable practice positioned the lecturer as both critical reader and mentor—an approach consistent with best practices in creative writing education. (Cédric Hubert, Nathalie Bonnardel, 2025) Aulia noted that the lecturer's specific and concrete feedback, indicating areas for improvement and providing clear suggestions, prevented her from feeling overwhelmed at every stage.

The third finding revealed an interesting paradox: although all participants faced significant challenges, all were successful in completing and publishing their work. This suggests that this course not only develops technical writing skills but also builds resilience and metacognitive capacity—students' ability to recognize and manage their own creative obstacles.

The fourth finding confirmed and expanded Mustofa's argument that comprehensive institutional support is a determining factor in the success of the learning program. Mustofa et al., (2021) Interestingly, this study found that the effectiveness of this support operates through two distinct pathways: pedagogical (a weekly target system and step-by-step guidance) and psychological (removing administrative-financial barriers through a free ISBN facility).

The weekly target system of at least 10 pages works through an external accountability mechanism that encourages self-regulation in students who previously tended to procrastinate, forcing them to create a regular writing routine. Marsella calls this "positive pressure," a framing that suggests students are able to interpret these external productivity constraints constructively. This finding is consistent with the literature on self-regulation in learning, which shows that structured deadlines and public accountability significantly increase productivity on long-term projects. (Gamache et al., 2025)

Overall, the findings of this study have important curricular implications for library study programs. First, the model implemented at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, which integrates writing process theory, community-based learning, and technical publication support into one course, can serve as a viable prototype for other institutions to adapt. Second, the Creative Writing course should be positioned not as an optional enrichment option, but as a core component of the curriculum that shapes the productive literacy competencies of prospective librarians. Third, the course design needs to explicitly integrate metacognitive training, such as strategies for dealing with writer's block and embracing revision as growth, not just writing technique.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Creative Writing course in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung plays a vital role in developing students' productive literacy competencies as future librarians. This course is effective not only because it teaches writing techniques, but also because it integrates four mutually reinforcing elements: scaffolding based on Alves' (2008) recursive process theory; collaborative learning that simultaneously builds social accountability and writing quality; development of metacognitive capacity to address creative obstacles; and institutional support that removes psychological and administrative barriers to publication.

The success of all participants in completing and publishing novels, despite their diverse backgrounds, styles, and challenges, demonstrates the robustness of this learning model, enabling it to accommodate diverse learning styles while guiding all students toward concrete and meaningful outcomes.

SUGGESTION

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made. For the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program, it is recommended to maintain and even increase the intensity of writing practice in the Creative Writing course, for example by increasing the number of peer feedback sessions and revision workshops. This course should be made a mandatory course with an adequate credit load, given its high relevance to developing the productive literacy competencies of prospective librarians.

Lecturers are advised to continue developing product-oriented learning models that integrate the recursive process of writing, collaboration, and actual publication. Metacognitive training, such as strategies for overcoming writer's block and managing emotions during revision, also needs to be strengthened. Students in other Library Science Study Programs are encouraged to maximize the opportunities offered by the Creative Writing course as a means to hone the productive literacy competencies so essential in the digital age.

Other universities, particularly library study programs, are advised to adopt a similar model, tailored to their respective contexts, including the free ISBN facility and a weekly target system as productivity drivers. Furthermore, further research can be conducted using a quantitative approach to statistically measure the extent of writing competency improvement, or by involving a larger sample size across cohorts.

THANK YOU-NOTE

The researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to Allah SWT, who has provided health, strength, and ease in completing this research. She also thanks her parents and family for their constant prayers, moral support, and encouragement. She also thanks Aghesna Rahmatika Kesuma, M.Si., her supervisor, who patiently guided, provided input, and supported this research process, and to Mr. Muhamad Bisri Mustofa, M.Kom.I, her supervisor and lecturer in charge of the Creative Writing course, who created an inspiring learning environment and supported the publication of student work.

Her sincere appreciation is also extended to all research informants, namely Marsella Putri Astuti, M. Zakky Hafiz, Aulia Nur Arsica, Richa Ermalia, Dwi Utari Fajariah, and Rosi Nurfadila, who shared their experiences openly and honestly. She also thanks her colleagues in the Islamic Library and Information Science Study Program, class of 2022, who have been a part of this academic journey. Hopefully this research is useful and brings blessings.

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