

Structural Equation Modeling Analysis of the Interplay of Teachers' Quality of Feedback, Creative Self-Efficacy, Exposure to Literary Text, and Creative Writing Skills

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Abstract

Creative writing is widely recognized as a vital component of language development that fosters imagination, self-expression, and higher order thinking among learners, yet limited empirical evidence explains how cognitive, motivational, and instructional factors interact to influence creative writing skills among pre-service teachers. Anchored on Social Cognitive Theory, this study examined the interplay of teachers' quality of feedback, creative self-efficacy, exposure to literary text, and creative writing skills of pre-service teachers. Creative writing skills were assessed across five dimensions: use of figurative language, voice and tone, original idea generation, story elements (plot, character, and setting), and writing mechanics. The study employed a quantitative research design using validated survey questionnaires and rubric-based assessment of creative writing outputs. Data were collected from 130 pre-service teachers in the academic year 2025–2026, hence there were 130 creative writing outputs. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and descriptive statistics were utilized to determine predictive relationships and identify the best-fit model. Findings revealed that teachers' quality of feedback strongly predicts creative self-efficacy. In return, creative self-efficacy shows a very strong effect on exposure to literary text though it shows direct effect of creative self-efficacy on creative writing skills is weak. Participants' creative writing skills were consistently at a developing stage across all dimensions, reflecting a broader challenge in achieving both technical accuracy and creative depth. Moreover, creative self-efficacy played a significant role in strengthening the relationship between instructional support and writing outcomes, indicating that confidence enhances learners' ability to apply feedback and generate ideas effectively. The findings highlight the importance of integrating meaningful feedback, confidence-building strategies, and rich literary exposure, and the study recommends strengthening instructional practices that holistically develop creative writing competence among pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Creative Writing Skills, Exposure to Literary Text, Creative Self-Efficacy, Teachers' Quality of Feedback, Pre-Service Teachers

1. Introduction

Creative writing has become increasingly important in teacher education because 21st century learning emphasizes creativity, communication, and higher-order thinking. International frameworks recognize written creativity as an essential competency for future educators, positioning creative writing as both a pedagogical and creative skill (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). For pre-service teachers, creative writing is strengthened by meaningful exposure to literary texts, constructive teacher feedback, and strong creative self-efficacy, all of which shape their ability to write with originality, coherence, and expressive depth (Graham and Herbert, 2020; Lee and Kim, 2023; Teng and Zhang, 2021; Carless and Winstone, 2023). This study therefore examines how these variables interact in explaining the creative writing skills of pre-service teachers.

Creative writing is now viewed as a crucial competency for pre-service teachers because they are expected not only to write effectively but also to model creative and meaningful writing practices in future classrooms (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022; Sullivan and Lyster, 2024). Exposure to literary text is widely regarded as a foundation of writing proficiency because it enriches vocabulary, syntactic awareness, stylistic flexibility, and narrative structure (Graham and Herbert, 2020; Lee and Kim, 2023). At the same time, creative self-efficacy influences learners' willingness to take creative risks, persist in writing tasks, and refine their outputs, while teacher feedback guides revision, strengthens strategies, and supports learner autonomy (Teng and Zhang, 2021; Reyes and Castillo, 2023; Carless and Winstone, 2023; Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo, 2024). Despite these recognized roles, many teacher education programs still give greater emphasis to academic writing than creative writing, limiting opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop originality, expression, and style (Carless and Winstone, 2023; Sullivan and Lyster, 2024).

The literature highlights three major themes relevant to creative writing development. First, exposure to literary text provides linguistic and conceptual resources that enrich learners' creative expression. Diverse literary genres, cultural themes, and figurative expressions expand learners' literary repertoire and stimulate creative fluency (Graham and Herbert, 2020; Lee and Kim, 2023; Hodges et al. (2020); Cariñe (2023); Sutrisno et al (2024); Ferdossifard (2023); Kao (2022)). Second, creative self-efficacy functions as a motivational and psychological mechanism that shapes learners' confidence, resilience, and willingness to experiment in writing (Bandura, 1997; Tierney and Farmer, 2002; Mason (2024); Sehlström et al. (2023); Li (2023)). Third, the quality of teacher feedback helps learners revise meaningfully and develop writing more effectively, especially when feedback balances praise and critique, uses clear language, and provides exemplars or models (Bandura, 1997; Zhang and Hyland (2022); Rajapakse (2024); Yu and Liu (2021); Yang et al. (2025); Lipnevich et al (2023); Mu et al. (2025)). Collectively, these themes suggest that creative writing develops through the convergence of cognitive, affective, and instructional factors rather than through a single variable alone.

At the global level, creativity in written communication is increasingly emphasized in educational frameworks, especially in preparing future educators for complex and evolving learning environments (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). At the national and local levels, however, concerns remain regarding learners' reading and writing proficiency, underscoring the critical role of teacher preparation institutions in strengthening literacy instruction (Department of Education, 2022; OECD, 2023). Local studies indicate that pre-service teachers are often exposed only to prescribed textbooks and traditional literary selections, which restrict genre exploration and creative engagement (Dela Cruz and Villanueva (2021); Ramos (2023)). Other studies suggest that broader exposure to world literature, Filipino literature, and digital texts can improve both cultural relevance and creative expression (Santos and Bautista (2022)). Local realities such as curriculum constraints, limited resources, and traditional assessment practices further contextualize the need to examine these variables within Philippine teacher education (DepEd, 2022; Navarro, 2022).

This study is anchored on several complementary theories. Sociocultural Theory explains that learning develops through social interaction, scaffolding, and cultural mediation, making teacher feedback and literary exposure central to the development of writing (Vygotsky, 1978; Schmidt (1990)). Creative Self-Efficacy Theory emphasizes that belief in one's creative capacity supports persistence, risk-taking, and confidence in creative performance (Bandura, 1997; Tierney and Farmer, 2002). The Componential Theory of Creativity explains that creativity emerges from the interaction of domain-relevant skills, creative processes, and intrinsic motivation, which aligns with the roles of literary exposure, feedback, and self-efficacy in writing development (Amabile, 1996; Sternberg and Lubart (1999)). The Input Hypothesis and Social Cognitive Theory further support the view that meaningful exposure to rich language input and modeled writing practices contributes to writing growth (Krashen, 1985; Bandura, 1986). Schema Theory explains how repeated encounters with texts shape the mental frameworks needed for idea generation, organization, and stylistic choices in writing (Anderson, 1984). Text Structure Theory likewise supports the importance of coherent textual organization in composition (Meyer, 1985). Conceptually, the study assumes that teachers' quality of feedback enhances creative self-efficacy, which in turn influences exposure to literary text and creative writing skills, with self-efficacy serving as a mediating variable in the development of creative writing skills.

Although exposure to literary text, self-efficacy, and teacher feedback have each been recognized as relevant to writing development, the existing literature has often treated them as isolated variables rather than as interacting influences on creative writing skills. Research on literary text exposure has focused more on academic writing and reading comprehension than on its sustained effect on creative writing among pre-service teachers (Jin et al., 2025). Likewise, studies on self-efficacy have mainly examined general populations, with limited attention to pre-service teachers and to creative writing dimensions such as narrative construction, originality, and voice (Teng and Zhang, 2021; Jiang, 2025; Gillespie and Rouse et al., 2023). Moreover, few empirical studies have examined these variables concurrently within an integrated framework to determine their relative influence on creative writing skill of pre-service teachers (Navio-Inglés et al., (2025)). Local studies also suggest that pre-service teachers often experience limited literary exposure, low confidence, and feedback practices that may not fully support creative writing development (Navarro (2022); Tubal et al., (2025)). These gaps justify the need for a contextualized investigation of how teachers' quality of feedback, creative self-efficacy, and exposure to literary text jointly shape the creative writing skills of pre-service teachers.

This study aligns primarily with SDG 4: Quality Education, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2024; United Nations, 2024). By focusing on creative writing skills, literary exposure, and constructive instructional feedback, the study supports literacy development, communicative competence, and the improvement of relevant educational skills among future teachers. It also responds to calls for innovative, equitable, and skills-oriented educational systems that prepare learners and educators for contemporary demands (UNESCO, 2024; United Nations, 2024).

The study contributes primarily to educational sustainability and institutional sustainability by generating evidence that can strengthen teacher preparation, improve writing instruction, and support curriculum enhancement in tertiary education.

By examining how literary exposure, creative self-efficacy, and teacher feedback shape creative writing, the study offers a basis for designing more responsive and development-oriented teacher education programs. It also contributes to cultural sustainability by emphasizing the role of diverse literary texts, including local and global materials, in fostering culturally aware and imaginative writing. In this way, the study supports the preparation of future educators who can sustain quality, inclusive, and creative learning environments.

Given the persistent concerns over literacy performance, the limited creative writing opportunities in teacher education, and the fragmented treatment of key antecedents in prior studies, this research offers a timely and meaningful contribution to both local educational practice and broader scholarly understanding. By examining the interplay of teachers' quality of feedback, creative self-efficacy, exposure to literary text, and creative writing skills, the study seeks to generate contextualized evidence that can support stronger writing instruction and more holistic teacher development (DepEd 2022; OECD, 2023; Navarro (2022); Tubal et al., (2025)).

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the predictive contribution and relationship of exposure to literary text, creative self-efficacy, and teachers' quality of feedback to the creative writing skills of pre-service teachers. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to examine the variables in their natural setting without manipulation and to describe how they are associated with one another in a real educational context. The study focused on second year to fourth year pre-service teachers enrolled during the school year 2025–2026, allowing the researcher to generate insights into how these variables relate to and influence creative writing development. As Lee et al., (2021) noted, studying various genres helped students achieve greater success in choosing appropriate writing styles and narrating more sophisticated stories.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in one of the faith-based tertiary educational institutions in Cagayan de Oro City. This setting was chosen because it offered access to pre-service teachers who were already engaged in academic and practical language-related instruction, making the institution appropriate for examining creative writing skills and the variables associated with them. The locale also provided the contextual basis for exploring the experiences of pre-service teachers within an actual teacher education environment.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were 130 officially enrolled pre-service teachers from the second to fourth year levels in the school year 2025–2026. These participants were considered suitable because they had already gained adequate exposure to language instruction, academic writing, and related classroom tasks, which positioned them well for the examination of creative writing skills and their possible antecedents. At these levels, they were actively developing professional competencies while engaging in increasingly complex writing activities. Their participation also provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their creative writing abilities and contribute to a study that may help improve teacher education practices. The possible risks were minimal and were mainly limited to mild discomfort in reflecting on personal abilities, but participation remained voluntary, confidentiality was maintained, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used total enumeration sampling. All officially enrolled second year, third year, and fourth year pre-service teachers in the Teacher Education Program were included in the sample, allowing the whole target population to be represented. This approach was used to minimize sampling bias and to improve the generality and accuracy of the findings in reflecting the participants' creative writing skills, characteristics, and experiences. Because all eligible participants were included, the study was able to capture a fuller picture of the variables under investigation within the teacher education program. A total of 130 writing outputs were likewise gathered from the participants.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study employed a researcher-made instrument designed to answer the research questions concerning the participants' creative writing skills in English. Data collection relied mainly on a structured questionnaire with four sections: exposure to literary text, creative self-efficacy, teachers' quality of feedback, and creative writing skills. Sections 1 to 3 consisted of Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), while Section 4 consisted of a short writing activity used to assess the creative writing skills of the participants. The writing outputs were evaluated by two raters using a customized analytical scoring rubric to ensure quality and consistency. Section 1 covered exposure to literary text in terms of genre-based exposure, cultural and thematic breadth, and figurative language exposure, guided by studies on literature exposure and language development among pre-service teachers (Mon et al., 2025; Fitriana and Rokhuma, 2025).

Section 2 measured creative self-efficacy in terms of linguistic expression confidence, problem-solving in writing, and creative autonomy based on existing creative self-efficacy frameworks and teacher creativity (Chen, 2024). Section 3 focused on teachers' quality of feedback in terms of balance of praise and critique, clarity of language, and use of exemplars or models, in line with feedback-focused literature (Charalampous and Darra, 2024; Tukan and Mukarto, 2023). Section 4 evaluated creative writing skills particularly in the use of figurative language, voice and tone, original idea generation, and story elements including character, plot, and setting (Nguyen, 2023; Zhao and Chen, 2022). The instrument was subjected to validity and reliability procedures. A group of panel members reviewed the questionnaire to determine whether the items were clear, relevant, and suitable. A pilot test involving 30 pre-service teachers was also conducted to identify unclear items and areas that needed revision. After validity checking, reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with 0.70 considered the acceptable level, following Tavakol and Dennick (2011). To ensure the reliability of the creative writing assessment, an inter-rater reliability procedure was also implemented, with two qualified raters scoring the writing outputs based on a standardized rubric.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered from the second year to fourth year pre-service teachers through the administration of the researcher-developed questionnaire and the conduct of a creative writing task. The writing outputs were assessed through a rubric by independent raters. The data gathering process observed ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. These procedures ensured that respondents' participation was protected, and that data were gathered responsibly and systematically.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The study used descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to determine the level of exposure to literary text, creative self-efficacy, teachers' quality of feedback, and creative writing skills. To examine the relationships among the variables and determine the model that best fits the participants' creative writing skills, the study used structural equation modeling (SEM). This analytical approach allowed the researcher to assess the significant relationship of teachers' quality of feedback, creative self-efficacy, exposure to literary text, and creative writing skills of the pre-service teachers.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study rigorously followed ethical standards. These included securing informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, maintaining voluntary participation, and observing compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. These measures ensured the protection of the respondents throughout the conduct of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Levels of the Major Variables

3.1.1 Exposure to Literary Text

The results showed that the participants' exposure to literary text was generally moderate, with an overall mean of 3.35 and standard deviation of 1.03. Across the three dimensions, figurative language exposure obtained the highest mean at 3.43, followed by genre-based exposure at 3.37, while cultural and thematic breadth obtained the lowest mean at 3.26. This indicates that participants were moderately exposed to literary texts, but their exposure was uneven across dimensions. They appeared relatively more familiar with figurative devices and selected genres than with culturally and thematically diverse texts. This pattern suggests that the participants' literary engagement was functional but not sufficiently broad or deep to support richer creative expression. Their stronger recognition of figurative language compared with their weaker exposure to diverse cultural and thematic materials implies that recognition-oriented literary awareness was more developed than deeper interpretive and contextual engagement. This supports the view that limited engagement with diverse literary contexts constrains learners' ability to apply varied perspectives meaningfully in writing, as emphasized by Taye and Mengesha (2024), Lo and Shi (2024), and Calafato and Simmonds (2022).

3.1.2 Creative Self-Efficacy

The participants' creative self-efficacy was likewise found to be moderate, with an overall mean of 3.36 and standard deviation of 1.03. Among its dimensions, linguistic expression confidence obtained the highest mean at 3.44, followed by creative autonomy at 3.38, while problem-solving in writing had the lowest mean at 3.25. These results indicate that the participants had a fair degree of confidence in expressing ideas in writing, but they were less confident when facing more complex writing challenges and in independently managing the writing process. The findings indicate that the participants' self-belief was present but unevenly developed. They appeared more comfortable in basic written expression than in handling difficulties such as generating, organizing, and revising ideas under pressure. This means that while self-efficacy supported participation in writing tasks, it may not yet have been strong enough to sustain risk-taking, flexibility, and persistence in more demanding creative tasks. This interpretation is consistent with Liu et al. (2025), Ismail et al. (2023),

Tang et al. (2021), Akpur (2025), Alrabai (2023), and Schunk et al. (2021), all of whom stressed that stronger and more balanced self-efficacy is needed for higher-order and creative writing performance.

3.1.3 Teachers' Quality of Feedback

The level of teachers' quality of feedback was generally high, with an overall mean of 3.55 and standard deviation of 1.05. The dimensions balance of praise and critique and clarity of language both obtained the highest means at 3.63, while use of exemplars obtained the lowest mean at 3.38, interpreted as moderate. These results show that participants generally perceived their teachers' feedback as clear, balanced, supportive, and helpful, although the use and adaptation of exemplars appeared less consistently effective. This means that the teachers were perceived to be strong in delivering accessible and constructive comments, but less effective in helping learners fully use exemplars as models for improvement. The lower result for exemplars suggests that exposure to examples alone was not enough; learners also needed more explicit guidance in applying and personalizing them in their own writing. This interpretation aligns with Williams (2024), Liu et al. (2025), and To et al. (2022), who emphasized that effective feedback must operate across multiple dimensions and that exemplars are most beneficial when accompanied by direct instructional support.

3.1.4 Creative Writing Skills

The participants' creative writing skills were assessed at a developing level, with an overall mean of 1.97 and standard deviation of 0.23. Across the five dimensions, use of figurative language obtained the highest mean at 2.10, followed by original idea generation at 2.02, while writing mechanics and voice and tone had means of 1.92 and 1.91, respectively. The lowest mean was recorded for story elements at 1.89. These results indicate that the participants demonstrated emerging competence in creative writing, but their performance remained at a foundational stage across all areas. The findings show that while the participants possessed some isolated strengths, they still struggled to integrate creativity, structure, and accuracy into cohesive written outputs. Their relatively stronger performance in figurative language suggests emerging stylistic awareness, yet their lower scores in story elements, voice and tone, and mechanics reveal difficulty in sustaining narrative coherence, stylistic identity, and technical correctness. This supports the view that creative writing competence requires the integration of multiple abilities rather than the separate development of individual skills, as noted by Springer (2023), OECD (2024), Garduce and Baluyos (2023), and Crossley (2020).

3.2 Best-Fit Structural Model of Creative Writing Skills

Preliminary analyses showed that canonical correlation analysis did not produce a statistically significant association among the variable sets, and multiple regression analysis likewise showed no significant direct effect of the independent variables on creative writing skills. Because of these results, the study proceeded to Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Model 1 already demonstrated a good fit with $Cmin/df = 1.606$, $CFI = 0.973$, $SRMR = 0.063$, $RMSEA = 0.069$, and $PClose = 0.099$, indicating acceptable to excellent model fit. However, Model 2 showed better indices overall, with $Cmin/df = 1.541$, $CFI = 0.985$, $SRMR = 0.052$, $RMSEA = 0.065$, and $PClose = 0.211$, and was therefore identified as the best-fitting model. In Model 2, Exposure to Literary Text was strongly measured by genre-based exposure, cultural and thematic breadth, and figurative language exposure; Creative Self-Efficacy by linguistic expression confidence, problem-solving in writing, and creative autonomy; and Teachers' Quality of Feedback by balance of praise and critique and clarity of language. The model further showed significant direct effects from Teachers' Quality of Feedback to Creative Self-Efficacy ($\beta = 0.999$, $p < .001$), from Creative Self-Efficacy to Creative Writing Skills ($\beta = 0.030$, $p = .049$), and from Creative Self-Efficacy to Exposure to Literary Text ($\beta = 0.886$, $p < .001$). The results also indicated that some indicators were removed during refinement, specifically use of exemplars under teachers' quality of feedback and use of figurative language and writing mechanics under creative writing skills.

These findings indicate that creative writing skills were not explained by simple direct prediction from the independent variables alone, but rather by an interrelated structural process in which feedback first strengthened self-efficacy, and self-efficacy then influenced both literary engagement and writing performance. The strong effect of teachers' quality of feedback on creative self-efficacy highlights the role of supportive, clear, and balanced instructional feedback in building learners' confidence. The small but significant direct effect of creative self-efficacy on creative writing skills suggests that self-belief contributes to actual writing performance, though writing outcomes are still shaped by multiple interacting factors beyond confidence alone. The strong link between creative self-efficacy and exposure to literary text further shows that learners with stronger confidence are more likely to engage with varied literary materials. These interpretations are supported by Kline (2021), Schumacker and Lomax (2022), Byrne (2023), Hair et al. (2020), Kline (2023), Wisniewski et al. (2020), Zhan (2022), Teng and Zhang (2020), Tahir et al. (2025), and Hanauer and Liao (2021). Overall, the model extends prior literature by showing that the influence of instructional feedback on creative writing performance operates through a mediating psychological mechanism, namely creative self-efficacy, rather than through a purely direct pathway.

3.3 Synthesis of the Results

Taken together, the findings reveal an important contrast in the participants' profile. While their exposure to literary text and creative self-efficacy were moderate and their teachers' quality of feedback was high, their actual creative writing skills remained only at a developing level. This means that positive instructional conditions and moderate learner confidence did not automatically translate into stronger writing performance. The results instead point to a more complex writing development process in which literary exposure, confidence, and feedback interact, but still require sustained practice, deeper engagement, and more consistent opportunities for revision and application before higher levels of creative writing competence can be achieved.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

This study concluded that the participants had moderate levels of exposure to literary text and creative self-efficacy, a high level of teachers' quality of feedback, and a developing level of creative writing skills. It further established that Model 2 was the best-fitting model, showing that teachers' quality of feedback significantly influenced creative self-efficacy, which in turn significantly influenced exposure to literary text and creative writing skills. These findings confirm that the development of creative writing skills among pre-service teachers may be explained through the interrelated effects of instructional support, personal belief, and literary engagement, consistent with the theoretical assumptions of the study (Bandura, 1997; Amabile, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

Based on the findings, the study recommends that teacher education programs, curriculum designers, teachers, and school administrators strengthen the integration of varied literary texts, structured writing tasks, and effective feedback strategies in order to improve the creativity, language competence, and problem-solving skills of pre-service teachers. The findings may also be used to guide curriculum enhancement, encourage more reflective writing behaviors, strengthen confidence and autonomy in written expression, and support the development of courses and learning activities that promote both cognitive and affective growth in preparing future educators, while future researchers may use the study as a basis for replication, validation, or extension in relation to creative writing skills, quality of feedback, and self-efficacy in task completion.

The study was delimited to the interplay of teachers' quality of feedback, creative self-efficacy, exposure to literary text, and creative writing skills of pre-service teachers in one faith-based tertiary educational institution in Cagayan de Oro City, and it included only officially enrolled second year to fourth-year pre-service teachers during the school year 2025–2026. It focused specifically on the identified dimensions of the three independent variables and the creative writing skills indicators, which means that the findings are bounded by the locale, participant group, time frame, and variables covered in the study.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards and observed all relevant research ethics protocols. Participation of the respondents was voluntary, and informed consent was secured prior to data collection. Confidentiality and privacy of the participants' information were strictly protected throughout the study, and all data were used solely for academic and research purposes. The researchers declare that there was no conflict of interest in the conduct of the study. All individuals who contributed significantly to the completion of the research were properly acknowledged, and the authors assume full responsibility for the originality, integrity, and copyright ownership of the manuscript.

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