



**ENGLISH TEACHERS AND LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING AND
LEARNING SPECIAL PROGRAM IN THE ARTS (SPA) CREATIVE
WRITING: BASES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study examined the experiences of English teachers and learners involved in the Special Program in the Arts (SPA) – Creative Writing at Fort San Pedro National High School during the School Year 2025–2026. Using in-depth interviews, the study found that the experiences of learners in SPA - Creative Writing include enjoying the activity, learning how to write poems and stories, and attending events related to writing. For teachers, teaching of diverse learners and effect of creative writing on learners. The challenges faced by learners are struggles in writing, feelings of boredom and pressure, difficulty managing sleep schedule, and difficulty maintaining attention. For teachers, it includes limited materials and resources, learners' lack of love for reading, and low enrollment with flexible scheduling. The coping strategies of learners include engaging in self-directed learning, cultivating positive mindset in learning, managing time effectively, and maintaining focus. For teachers, it includes going back to the basics, being resourceful, and encouraging learners to read. Results were the bases of the proposed enhancement program.

Keywords: *English Teachers, Learners, Special Program in the Arts (SPA), Creative Writing, Enhancement Program*

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INTRODUCTION

The Special Program in the Arts (SPA) at Fort San Pedro National High School offers learners the chance to develop their skills in various art fields. One of its majors is Creative Writing, which helps learners express themselves and improve their writing skills. Compared to other SPA majors, Creative Writing has fewer learners. Many learners transfer to other schools or shift to other majors, which often causes class sizes to drop even in the middle of the school year. Fort San Pedro National High School (FSPNHS) is one of only three schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo City that offer Creative Writing under SPA, which makes it important to strengthen this program and ensure its sustainability. Supporting both students and teachers can help produce skilled writers, encourage participation in school publications, arts activities, and competitions, and keep the program strong.

The Special Program for the Arts (SPA) is designed to nurture students' artistic talents and creative capacities, including creative writing, within the Philippine curriculum. Such programs aim to develop learners' creativity as a mode of self-expression, cognitive growth, and communication (Department of Education, 2025).

Understanding the lived experiences of teachers and learners in teaching and learning creative writing is essential because creative writing promotes imagination, individuality, and engagement in learning (Barton, 2024). Research shows that creative writing fosters active participation, strengthens writing competence, and encourages expressive thinking (Cédric, 2025).

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Teachers' perspectives are critical in identifying pedagogical practices, challenges, and factors influencing curriculum implementation, which can inform professional development and resource allocation. Similarly, exploring learners' experiences provides insight into engagement, perceived value, and barriers to learning, ensuring that the SPA curriculum addresses actual learner needs (SPA curriculum policy document, 2025).

Despite its importance, teachers and learners often face challenges that hinder the effective teaching and learning of creative writing. Understanding these challenges is essential to improve instructional strategies, curriculum implementation, and learner engagement (Jansen & Ngema, 2024).

Teachers frequently encounter difficulties in translating curriculum guidelines into classroom practice. Many report a lack of pedagogical resources, training, and support, which limits their ability to implement creative, student-centered teaching strategies effectively (Jansen & Ngema, 2024). Additionally, teachers may struggle to balance curriculum expectations with fostering a learning environment that encourages creative risk-taking and authentic expression. These barriers can result in inconsistencies in instruction and limit students' opportunities to fully engage with creative writing tasks (Barton, 2024).

Learners, on the other hand, face both internal and external obstacles. Common issues include low motivation, lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in idea generation (Tello, 2025). Moreover, the absence of adequate feedback or individualized guidance can discourage students from exploring imaginative approaches to writing. These hindrances demonstrate that creative writing performance is shaped not only by instructional

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methods but also by learner attitudes, available resources, and classroom climate (Cédric, 2025).

Given these challenges, it is crucial to investigate the lived experiences of teachers and learners in SPA creative writing programs. Such research can identify pedagogical gaps, resource limitations, and student needs, providing insights for curriculum refinement and professional development (Department of Education, 2025; Jansen & Ngema, 2024).

By addressing these issues, schools can foster a more supportive environment for creative writing, enhance learner engagement, and ensure that the SPA fulfills its goal of developing students' artistic and academic competencies (Tello, 2025; Cédric, 2025).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter details the methodological framework of the study, including the research design, the selection of participants, the procedures for gathering data, the instruments utilized, and the strategies for data analysis. The primary objective of this research was to investigate the lived experiences and professional hurdles faced by English educators teaching SPA-Creative Writing at Fort San Pedro National High School. These insights served as the foundation for developing enhancement initiatives during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Research Methodology

This research utilized a descriptive approach within a qualitative framework, specifically employing in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool.

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The descriptive method is centered on the systematic characterization of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, avoiding any manipulation of variables. As noted by Elliott (2025), this strategy aims to offer a precise depiction of existing conditions, professional practices, or interpersonal dynamics within educational environments. By doing so, it allows researchers to identify emerging trends, consistent patterns, and practical implications. This methodology is especially beneficial for educational research intended to document and examine authentic events, behaviors, or viewpoints while maintaining the integrity of the original setting (Elliott, 2025).

The researcher and the participants were positioned at a comfortable distance from one another, providing an environment conducive to thoughtful reflection on a sequence of questions regarding specific topics. This arrangement was designed to facilitate a focused dialogue, allowing the interviewee to carefully consider their responses. The primary objective was to extract the essential perspectives and core insights of the participants within a specific social context, as revealed through their detailed answers to the research inquiries.

Research Design

This study adopted a phenomenological research design, which serves as both a philosophical framework and a practical methodology for conducting qualitative inquiry. The primary objective of phenomenology is to gain insight into how individuals perceive their surroundings and to identify how these personal perspectives might diverge from conventional or widely accepted beliefs. By prioritizing a person's subjective interpretation of their lived experiences, researchers can uncover the unique meaning individuals assign to their reality.

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This process is typically executed through intensive interviews designed to capture the specific impressions and viewpoints of the participants, making it a staple methodology in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

At its core, phenomenology centers on the investigation of the structures of consciousness from a first-person point of view. Rather than relying on established theories regarding causal relationships or being swayed by unverified assumptions, the central goal is to meticulously examine and describe phenomena exactly as they are consciously experienced (Biemel & Spiegelberg, 2024). This approach ensures that the researcher remains grounded in the authentic, raw accounts of the subjects, providing a rigorous and unclouded portrayal of their lived reality.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were three (3) teachers teaching Creative Writing and eight (8) learners officially enrolled in SPA – Creative Writing.

The teacher-participants were all permanent teachers of the school and teaching Creative Writing for at least one complete school year.

The learner-participants were all regular and officially enrolled in school during the School Year 2025-2026.

The study did not cover other SPA majors, teachers from other schools, or student performance in subjects outside Creative Writing.

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Research Instrument

The primary tool employed for data collection in this investigation was an original interview schedule developed by the researcher.

Within the framework of research methodology, an interview schedule serves as a formal, written compendium of pre-arranged questions—which may be structured, semi-structured, or open-ended—designed to direct the interviewer and ensure a uniform approach to gathering information. It acts as a standardized instrument for data acquisition, guaranteeing that every participant is presented with the same core topics and inquiries. This consistency is vital for facilitating a systematic comparison and a rigorous analysis of the resulting data. During the actual data collection process, whether conducted in person, over the phone, or through digital platforms, the researcher adheres to this schedule by posing the predetermined questions to each subject and systematically documenting their individual responses (Socio.health, 2024).

The interview schedule had three (3) major questions focusing on the experiences of English teachers who were teaching SPA - Creative Writing, the challenges they usually face in this program, and on how they cope with these challenges.

Provided the participants granted their consent, a voice recorder was also employed to assist in the data collection and documentation process.

Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure the research instrument was rigorous and effective, it underwent a comprehensive evaluation process before deployment. The initial draft of the interview

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schedule was submitted to the research adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School, followed by a formal review by a panel of expert jurors. These individuals were selected based on their specialized knowledge in research methodology, testing and assessment, and English language proficiency, and they were tasked with scrutinizing each question to facilitate necessary modifications.

The concept of validity is fundamental to this process, as it dictates how accurately and meaningfully the study's findings and conclusions reflect the intended subject matter. Essentially, validity confirms that the instrument is measuring the specific constructs it was designed to evaluate, thereby ensuring the results are a credible representation of reality. To establish content validity, the structure and content of the instrument must be meticulously aligned with the research variables and objectives. This typically involves an expert audit to confirm that every item is relevant, articulate, and representative of the underlying concepts. By harmonizing the instrument's content with the theoretical framework of the study, researchers can significantly improve the precision and practical value of the gathered data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Following the expert review, all feedback, including specific comments, corrections, and constructive suggestions, were carefully integrated into the interview schedule. This refinement process was guided by the validation criteria established by Good and Scates (1972), as referenced by Soqueña (2021), to ensure the tool met established academic standards.

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Data Gathering Procedures

To ensure the study's ethical and administrative compliance, the researcher secured formal authorization from a comprehensive range of officials, including the research adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and representatives from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent and the Office of the District Supervisors. Additionally, approval was obtained from the respective School Heads and the individual participants themselves. To facilitate a comfortable and natural dialogue, the researcher personally traveled to the schools, communities, or other venues selected by the participants for their convenience.

As part of the ethical protocol, the researcher requested that each participant sign a formal waiver or consent form, clearly outlining their voluntary involvement in the study. This step ensured that all parties were fully informed and that their rights were protected throughout the process.

During the actual data collection phase, the researcher utilized in-depth interviews as the primary method. To maintain the highest level of accuracy and ensure that the participants' insights were captured verbatim, a voice recorder was employed during these sessions. Once the full series of interviews was concluded, the researcher systematically consolidated and organized the recorded information for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis

The data for this study were gathered through a structured interview schedule and processed using thematic analysis, a qualitative methodology specifically designed to identify, interpret, and document recurring patterns within narrative information. This analytical

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approach allowed the researcher to extract significant insights from the participants' accounts regarding their experiences teaching SPA Creative Writing. Specifically, it provided a lens to explore the various obstacles these educators encounter and the specific strategies they employ to overcome such challenges.

According to Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis offers a versatile yet disciplined framework that enables researchers to uncover both surface-level and deeper, implicit meanings within participant stories. This makes it an ideal tool for educational research aimed at deciphering intricate social and organizational dynamics. Furthermore, Nowell et al. (2021) highlight that this method bolsters the transparency and credibility of qualitative findings by mandating a systematic approach to data coding and interpretation.

The actual analysis of the interview transcripts followed the rigorous six-phase process established by Braun and Clarke (2023). The initial phase involved familiarization, where the researcher repeatedly reviewed the transcripts in both the original local language and the English translations. This was followed by generating initial codes, which involved labeling significant data segments with descriptive tags like "shared phone" or "fear of judgment." In the third stage, these codes were organized into potential themes and sub-themes that represented overarching patterns across the dataset.

The final stages of the analysis focused on refinement and reporting. The researcher reviewed the themes to ensure they remained faithful to the original data, then moved to defining and naming them with academically precise terminology. Ultimately, these final themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative report, supported by direct participant

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quotes and integrated with the study's theoretical framework. This structured progression ensured that the interpretation of the data was both methodical and deeply rooted in the participants' authentic lived experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to explore the experiences of English teachers and learners in teaching and learning Special Program in the Arts (SPA)–Creative Writing at Fort San Pedro National High School during the School Year 2025–2026, as bases for an enhancement program.

The research method utilized in the study was qualitative using in-depth interview.

The study used phenomenology under qualitative research design.

The participants of the study were three English teachers handling SPA–Creative Writing and eight learners officially enrolled in the program at Fort San Pedro National High School, with a total of eleven participants.

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule. A voice recorder was also used for data gathering and documentation, depending on the participants' consent.

A panel of experts validated the interview schedule, and all comments and suggestions were considered in the final revision of the tool.

Permits from the research adviser, Graduate School Dean, Schools Division Superintendent, School Head, and individual participants were obtained to allow the

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researcher to conduct the study. The researcher personally went to the school or community locations convenient for the participants to conduct the interviews.

Using in-depth interview and voice recorder, the researcher was able to completely capture the participants' responses. After the series of interviews, all data were consolidated. The information gathered was analyzed using thematic analysis.

The following are the findings of the study:

Based on the results of the in-depth interview with the learners, it was found that learners enjoyed the creative writing activities, learned how to write poems and stories, and attended writing-related events.

Based on the interviews with the English teachers, it was found that teaching SPA–Creative Writing involved handling diverse learners and observing the positive effects of creative writing on students' skills and development.

It was also found that learners experienced struggles in writing, feelings of boredom and pressure, difficulty managing sleep schedules, and difficulty maintaining attention. The teachers revealed that the common challenges in teaching SPA–Creative Writing were limited materials and resources, learners' lack of love for reading, and low enrollment with flexible scheduling.

Learners coped with these challenges through self-directed learning, cultivating a positive mindset, managing time effectively, and maintaining focus.

Teachers managed the challenges by going back to the basics, being resourceful, and encouraging learners to read.

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Based on the findings, these experiences, challenges, and coping strategies served as the basis for the proposed enhancement program for SPA–Creative Writing.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and insights derived from the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

The school administration and SPA coordinators of Fort San Pedro National High School may strengthen support for the SPA–Creative Writing program by providing adequate instructional materials, writing resources, and opportunities for learners to participate in writing-related activities and competitions.

English teachers handling SPA–Creative Writing should continue using learner-centered and differentiated instructional strategies that address the diverse needs, interests, and writing abilities of students.

Teachers may also design engaging and interactive learning activities that lessen learners’ boredom and pressure while promoting sustained attention and motivation in creative writing tasks.

Learners should be encouraged to develop positive study habits, manage their time effectively, maintain healthy sleep routines, and engage in self-directed learning to improve their writing skills and academic performance.

The school may strengthen reading promotion initiatives, such as reading campaigns, book access programs, and literary clubs, to cultivate learners’ love for reading and support their creative writing development.

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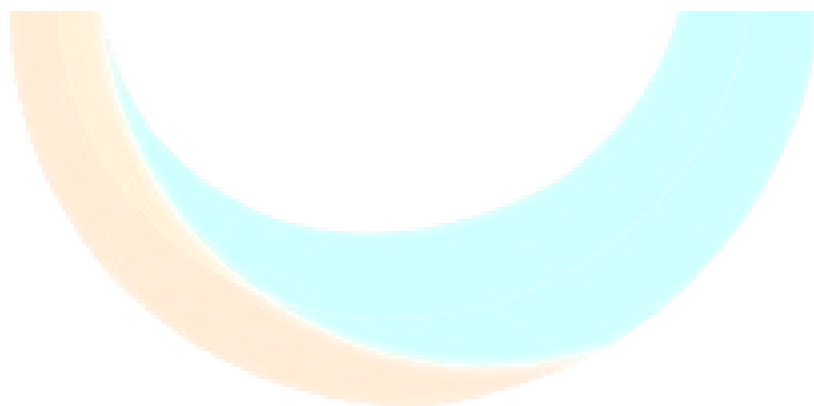


School heads and education stakeholders may address the issue of low enrollment in SPA–Creative Writing by intensifying advocacy, orientation, and information dissemination about the benefits of the program to learners and parents.

Professional development activities, seminars, and workshops may be provided to SPA teachers to further enhance their pedagogical skills, creativity, and resourcefulness in teaching creative writing.

The proposed enhancement program developed from this study may be considered for implementation to improve the teaching and learning experiences in SPA–Creative Writing.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies involving other SPA majors, schools, or variables to further enrich the understanding of creative writing instruction and program implementation.



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February 2026

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