

Exploring Freewriting Technique: A Survey of Students' Perception at English Education Department of State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out students' perception on the use of freewriting technique in writing at English Education Department UIN SUSKA Riau. This study was quantitative research with survey approach by giving out questionnaires. Population of the study was the fourth semester of English department students at UIN Suska Riau, the total students of the fourth semester was 110 students. The sample of this research was 26 students selected through purposive sampling. The instrument used in this research was questionnaire. The researcher gave 14 items of statement which was from three indicators (acceptance, understanding, and evaluation). Based on the result of the research, it was found that the students' perception on the freewriting was at positive category by the percentage 81%. In conclusion of the study, the students have positive perceptions toward freewriting technique.

Keywords: *Freewriting, Perceptions, Writing Technique.*

Introduction

Writing as the one of productive skills that should be mastered by English as Foreign Learner (EFL) students for written communication and academic purpose, such as; essay, articles, letters, papers, also in university purpose such as journal and thesis. Writing is referred to as a productive and expressive activity. Writing is referred to as a productive and expressive activity. According to Hadfield (1990), writing is different from speaking. Speaking can acquire it naturally as she/he grows up, but writing needs to be learned first since it could not be acquired naturally.

In addition, Harmer (1998, p.79), argues that "writing essentially needs to be learned because it was as a language skill. Writing is also used as reinforcement, language development and learning style". Writing need to be learned about the aspects or master first the aspects are like the grammar, vocabulary, organization, content, and mechanic. All of the aspects must be master by the students. If the students are less in grammar, the students will feel difficult to arrange the vocabulary becomes sentence. By mastering the aspects first to make a good written for the students

Considering the elements of writing, there are several problems in making good essay writing. Those obstacles are lack of material, lack of vocabulary, lack of the ability to

organize paragraph, lack of choosing topic and develop the idea. As a result, they get stuck in the process of writing. The students need a strategy to help them in the learning writing process. The strategy is needed to improve and develop students' idea in learning writing. Julie and Robert (2006) stated there are some techniques to help the students generate the ideas or specific details to develop the topic called brainstorming which divided into; free writing, listing, clustering, and questioning. All of these techniques demonstrated to help the students focus on their topic. Focusing on the topic is the key, because once the 2 students start thinking about the topics, it is easily for them to get the ideas. Those techniques help the student to generate the supporting ideas of their writing topic.

Freewriting is one of the techniques for fostering a group creativity to share ideas and thoughts spontaneously in order to reach solutions to a problem (Gogus, 2005). Freewriting aims to encourage people to arrest conventional, logical thinking and embrace spontaneity, originality, and imagination. The goal is to gain ideas as many as possible. Freewriting could help students to generate their idea and organize the details well. Free writing is a brainstorming practice in which you are free to write about whatever comes to mind about the topic you are working on. Its goal is to draw my attention to a certain aspect of your subject. The goal of freewriting is to generate as many ideas as possible. Elbow (1981) suggests that writers simply write for ten minutes continuously while staying on topic. The quality of the writing is unimportant because the goal of the freewriting technique is to simply put one's thoughts on paper, not to achieve a certain result.

Freewriting was developed by Peter Elbow, an American educator and writer, in the 1970s. Elbow was frustrated with the traditional approach to teaching writing, which emphasized grammar, syntax, and correctness over creativity and self-expression. He believed that this approach led to writer's block, anxiety, and a lack of fluency in writing. Elbow's solution was to create a writing technique that would allow students to write freely and spontaneously, without worrying about grammar, spelling, or coherence. He called this technique "freewriting," and it quickly gained popularity among writing instructors and students.

Freewriting, according to Elbow and Belanoff (2000), is described as writing down any ideas or thoughts that come to mind in a specific amount of time without pausing. Freewriting in the L1 was a popular approach for developing innovative English instruction during the neo progressive movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which began by rejecting teacher-centered traditional instruction that paid little attention to creativity (Fox & Suhor, 1986). Freewriting proponent Elbow (1998) said that students should not stop writing while freewriting because "the fundamental thing about freewriting is that it is no editing". Students can improve their writing fluency by producing content from their stream of consciousness without being sidetracked by 15 previously written text by following these principles to keep writing and not edit (Elbow, 1998). Some academics, such as Polio (2001), are concerned that emphasis on fluency may have a negative impact on writing quality; nevertheless, with freewriting, writing quality is not a concern. According to Elbow (1998), practicing free writing allows you to "separate the creative process from the rewriting process"

Hwang (2010) on his previous research found that the study indicates that a short period of practicing guided freewriting helped increase EFL college-level students English writing fluency and their confidence. Seohyun (2016) indicated that students in the freewriting

group made much more progress in English speaking, writing, listening, and reading than their peers. Chang (2020) found the students were more confidence during the writing activity. Besides should not concern with grammar and spelling. In this research, the writer focuses on freewriting technique. It is clearly that freewriting is one of helpful technique to generate ideas before writing.

In teaching-learning activities, students have their perceptions about subjects they learn. Their perceptions are formed by the stimuli that come from the environment. The perceptions the students have will influenced their behavior toward learning. Biggs (1992) as cited in Astutiningsih, states that perception deals with students' belief on learning that will influence students' approach in learning. Perception affected on how students' think, it also affects individual attitude. Campbell (2001), there are five elements of language teaching-learning activities implementation that build students' perceptions. Those are, 1) how the teacher teaches the students, 2) what the teacher wants students to learn, 3) how the students learn in class, 4) what students learn, and 5) the purpose of learning the language itself.

Perception is closely related to attitudes, perception is the process by which organize interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world (Linsa & Nornan, 1977). In other words, a person is confronted with a situation or stimuli. The person interprets something into something meaningful to them based on prior experiences. However, every individual interprets or perceivers can be different one on another or may be substantially different from reality. From the definitions, it can be concluded that perception is the ability of the overall process of stimuli to make response and become aware of something after seeing and understanding something.

According to Vygotsky (1978) perceptions of someone is always changing. It means that an individual behavior changes at any time through the process of behavior. For example, at first a student does not like English considering English is difficult and pretty hard to understand. However, the students find some activities that are interesting, and then their perception about English is changed. This perception influenced by those five elements.

Then, Robbins (2003) sates indicators of perceptions are: 1. Acceptance, the process of acceptance or reabsorption is indicator of perception in physiology stage; the five senses' role in processing external stimuli is the subject of this passage. This means that the information submitted by individuals to another will be absorbed or accepted by the five senses, both sight, hearing, smell, and tasting individually or together, 2. Understanding, it means as the results of analysis which is subjective or different for each individuals. 3. Evaluation is stimulus from the outside that has been grasped by the senses, and then evaluated by individuals. This evaluation is very subjective. It will be different perception of each person in environment. One individual assesses a stimulus as difficult and boring but other individuals judge the same stimuli as good and pleasant

In English Education Department of UIN SUSKA Riau, the second year students have to attend writing classes as required subjects. In the fourth semester, students are expected to be able to use linguistic conventions and English word patterns in preferred forms in English writing texts. Therefore, given the linguistic conventions, such as content and organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics, they had to be able to communicate their ideas in a written form.

The students got problems in organizing their ideas, in terms of cohesion, coherence and unity in writing. It seemed like it stemmed from the fact that before the actual writing took

place, they did not use the prewriting methods to convey their ideas. Three out of ten students agreed to use mapping before writing, while the others neutral whether to use or not. Due this reason the researcher intended to know the students' perception of freewriting techniques in developing their idea into a writing text.

Methodology

This study was quantitative research with survey approach. Survey research designs are procedures in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or the entire population of people in order to describe the population's attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics (Creswell, 2012). Population of the study was the fourth semester of English department students at UIN Suska Riau, the total students of the fourth semester was 110 students. The sample of this research was 26 students selected through purposive sampling. The instrument used in this research was questionnaire. The researcher gave 14 items of statement which was from three indicators (acceptance, understanding, and evaluation).

After the data has been collected, the next step is analyzing the data. This research presented as descriptive statistic data. Sugiyono (2012) stated that descriptive statistic use to analyze data by describing the data that has been collected without making a conclusion. The data was analyzed by using SPSS and then the researcher describes and interprets the results. After getting the percentage result, the next step is finding the category for the result of each items weather it means strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree by Horwitz and Cope (1986). Percentage is calculated by taking the frequency in the category divided by the total number of participants and multiplying by 100%.

Results and Discussion

The first part of the findings presents participants perceptions towards free writing. This discussion aims to find an interpretation of the findings of the research based on the research questions.

Table 1
Acceptance

No.	Statement	Percentage	Category
1	The students prefer the variety of topics in free writing activity	81%	Positive
2	Photos and images helped to visualize topics in free writing	68%	Positive
3	Free writing is a good practice in generating ideas.	84%	Positive
4	The students tried their best to write freely	80%	Positive
Average		78%	Positive

On the first statement, “The students prefer the variety of topics in free writing activity”, the role of free writing in processing the information has positive impression. About 81% students have positive perceptions toward free writing. The second statement, “photos and images helped to visualize topics in free writing”, about 68% students have positive perception on the use photo and images in gaining information to develop their writing.

The third statement, “Free writing is a good practice in generating ideas”, for about 84% students have positive perception toward free writing. The last statement, “The students tried their best to write freely” has 80% which categorizes as positive. This means the information about free writing has been absorbed by students.

Table 2
Understandings

No.	Statement	Percentage	Category
5	The sub topics of free writing helped students to write more	78%	Strongly Positive
6	The topic assigned in free writing is not difficult to write	85%	Positive
7	The students confident to complete free writing activity within ten minutes.	83%	Positive
8	The student enjoy in doing free writing activity	75%	Positive
Average		81%	Positive

As seen in Table IV.2, the average perception toward students’ understandings is 81% (Strongly Positive). The statement number 5, “The sub topics of free writing helped students to write more”, in total of 78% students agreed that free writing is one of the tools to generate more ideas before the actual writing takes place. Based on this statement the perception of students classified as strongly positive.

The next statement number 6, “The topic assigned in free writing is not difficult to write”, 85% of the students found the free writing activity helped them to develop their writing skills. Based on these statements results it can be considered that students have positive perceptions toward their understanding in using free writing as their technique in writing activity.

In the next statement, statement number 7, “The students feel free in doing free writing”, shown as positive with average 79% students agreed with this statement. The next statement, “The students feel enjoy in doing free writing activity”, 75% students giving out positive perception towards their enjoyment in doing free writing activity.

Table 3
Evaluation

No.	Statement	Percentage	Category
9	Free writing help to develop writing fluency	72%	Positive
10	The students feel free in doing free writing	78%	Positive
11	Free writing helped students in gaining more confidence.	81%	Positive
12	The students can write easily after engaged in free writing activity.	76%	Positive
13	The students wanted to engaged more in doing free writing	75%	Positive
14	The students wanted to do more free writing in their writing	76%	Positive
Average		77%	Positive

The next statement number 9, “free writing help to develop writing fluency”, 72% of the students found the free writing activity helped them to develop their writing skills. Based on these statements results it can be considered that students have positive perceptions toward the fluency in using free writing as their technique in writing activity.

In the next statement, statement number 10, “The students feel free in doing free writing”, shown as positive with average 78% students agreed with this statement. Next statement, “Free writing helped students in gaining more confidence”, this statement identified that 81% of students believe that free writing help them to gain confidence in writing. This means based on students’ own evaluation, most students have positive opinion towards free writing.

Statement number 12, “The students can write easily after engaged in free writing activity”, with the percentage 76% students agreed free writing made them easier in term of writing. The next statement, “The students wanted to engaged more in doing free writing activity”, with total of 75% of the students interested to put themselves in free writing activity. This statement means that the students have positive perception toward their evaluation in free writing.

Finally, the last statement, “The students wanted to do more free writing in their writing”, in total of 76%, as stated before, students agreed to practice more free writing in their daily. In term of evaluation, the total average perception toward free writing is 77% and classified as positive.

Table 4
Students' Perception about Freewriting Activity

No.	Items	SP	P	N	N	SN
1.	When I free write about a topic, there is not limitation in generating ideas.	46%	38%	0%	4%	12%
2.	The sub-topics of the free writing activity helped me to write more	38%	42%	0%	12%	8%
3.	Photos and images help me to visualize topics to free write	30%	23%	12%	27%	8%
4.	I think the free writing activity is a good practice for generating more ideas for writing	38%	54%	0%	4%	4%
5.	I think the free writing activity helps me to develop writing fluency	15%	57%	8%	12%	8%
6.	It is not difficult for me to write about assigned free writing topics	38%	54%	4%	4%	0%
7.	I am confident that I am able to complete the free writing activity within 10 minutes	30%	62%	0%	8%	0%
8.	I feel free when I do the free writing	30%	46%	12%	8%	4%
9.	I feel that I have more confidence in English writing in general after doing free writing	30%	50%	12%	8%	0%
10.	I think I can easily write more sentences after engaging the free writing activity.	24%	45%	23%	4%	4%
11.	I try my best to write when I do free writing activity	34%	58%	0%	4%	4%
12.	I look forward to doing the free writing more	12%	68%	8%	8%	4%
13.	I enjoy doing free writing activity for my writing assignment	18%	62%	4%	8%	8%
14.	I feel that I like writing more with free writing	30%	46%	8%	4%	12%

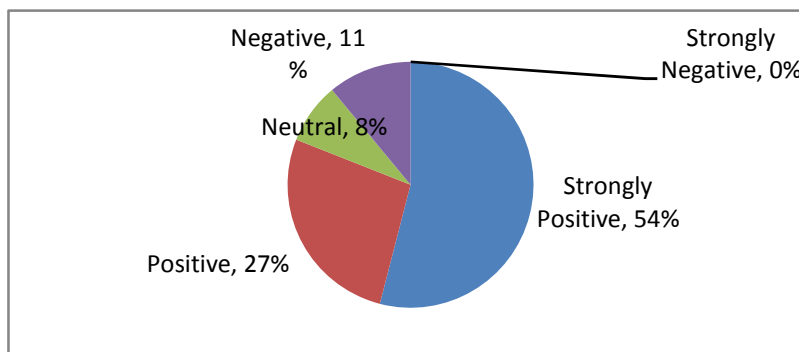
The overall students' perception on freewriting technique shown as follow:

Table 5
Students' Perception toward Freewriting Technique

Respondent	Score total	Category
S1	70	Strongly Positive
S2	59	Strongly Positive
S3	64	Strongly Positive
S4	58	Strongly Positive
S5	58	Strongly Positive
S6	58	Strongly Positive
S7	58	Strongly Positive
S8	70	Strongly Positive
S9	63	Strongly Positive
S10	59	Strongly Positive
S11	24	Negative
S12	58	Strongly Positive
S13	61	Strongly Positive
S14	54	Positive
S15	69	Strongly Positive
S16	54	Positive
S17	55	Positive
S18	24	Negative
S19	54	Positive
S20	53	Positive
S21	37	Negative
S22	62	Strongly Positive
S23	55	Positive
S24	41	Neutral
S25	54	Positive
S26	51	Neutral

From The table above, shown that about 81% students have positive perception toward free writing technique in their writing, about 8% of students decided to feel neutral of the use of free writing technique and about 11% students have negative perception toward free writing. The total result can be presented as in the following:

Figure 1 Students' Perception toward Freewriting Technique



Discussion

The result of this research in line with the research from Rohana, et all (2022) the application of Free Writing Techniques has a significant effect on Students' Ability in Writing Narrative Texts. Thus, according to Isni, Paizatul. (2018) this technique was significantly effective in teaching writing for the tenth graders of SMA NW Wanasaba in the school year 2016-2017. Considering the process and the results of this research, the present researcher suggested that the English teacher use free writing technique in teaching writing.

Then, Hwang, J. A. (2010) The results showed that practicing guided freewriting for eight weeks had a statistically significant influence on improving the students' writing fluency. Moreover, it was found that the increased writing fluency might have been transferred to other writing done in this EAP context, where students have more pressure to write due to feedback or grading. Next, Rahmawati, Dwi et al, (2023) did a research about Influence of Freewriting Technique towards Students' Writing Ability. The research shows that there is any positive and significant influence of using freewriting technique on the students' writing ability. The students who were taught using the Freewriting technique got a higher score than those who were taught using the individual writing. The average score of the experimental class was 68.61 and the average score of the control class was 57.14.

Conclusion

The data that were discussed, presented, and analyzed shown that the 81% of students in English Education Department on the 4th semester have positive perception toward freewriting, 11% of the students have negative perception toward freewriting and 8% students chose neutral. It could be concluded that free writing could help students to improve their writing. The research suggests that students generally have a positive perception of the freewriting technique in improving their writing skills. The findings support the use of freewriting as a pedagogical tool in writing classes, particularly in helping students generate ideas and develop fluency in writing. However, instructors should also be aware of the potential challenges and limitations of freewriting and provide guidance and support to students who may struggle with this technique.

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