

# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE INFLUENCE OF FREE WRITING HABITS IN THESIS WRITING

Syarifa Suraiya Rahmani<sup>1</sup>, Syafiq Zayyani Waliaratu<sup>2</sup>

University of Mataram, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> syarifasry15@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup> syafikazayyani22@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions regarding the impact of free writing habits on their thesis writing process. The study specifically focuses on the concept of free writing, an approach that promotes unrestricted expression and the exploration of spontaneous ideas. The participants include active students working on their theses at the University of Mataram, particularly those in the crucial phase of thesis development. The research employs descriptive qualitative research methods, including questionnaires and interviews. The study analyzes students' feedback on various aspects of free writing. Results indicate positive perceptions, with the majority agreeing that free writing aids idea generation, proposal development, and overall writing skills. Interviews further highlight the technique's effectiveness in overcoming writing challenges. The results highlight the importance of educators endorsing and promoting the development of students' free writing habits, fostering creativity, and enhancing their overall writing proficiency. Educators must encourage the adoption of such practices for an enriched academic experience.

**Keywords:** Students' Perception; Free Writing Habits; Thesis Writing

## INTRODUCTION

A thesis is a document created by university students to demonstrate their capacity to do independent research and present their findings in an understandable written language (Chandrasekhar, 2002). At the university level, particularly in Indonesia, students must complete a scientific research project as part of their academic program (Turmudi, 2020). As stated by Thomas and Brubaker (2000), the two purposes of writing a thesis are to provide students with experience doing and presenting research, as well as to use the results of research to add to world knowledge. A well-written thesis represents the result of years of research, analysis, and critical thought, presenting a student's understanding of their subject. It advances knowledge in a certain area and serves as a foundation for future research. A good thesis is essential in academic writing since it provides a clear aim for the essay and guides the course of research. It should be argued, supported by evidence, and provide a unique perspective or solution to a problem. Writing a thesis allows students to gain knowledge in their chosen topic while also improving their research and writing skills, which are essential for academic and professional success.

There are various techniques for writing a thesis, and it is critical to determine which one works best for each student. One idea pointed out in thesis writing is free writing, which is an approach similar to brainstorming but done in sentence and paragraph form without stopping (Elbow 1973). Free writing is very useful in the early phases of thesis writing, allowing students to produce ideas and gain a better knowledge of their research topic. It creates free expression and the spontaneous analysis of ideas, resulting in a more creative and interesting thesis. The habit of free writing has gained popularity in thesis writing because it encourages unlimited expression and spontaneous exploration of ideas. The relationship between free writing and

thesis writing is a topic of discussion, with the expectation that this technique will boost creativity and enrich the writing process. Key principles such as freedom of thought, idea development, and flexibility in expression are likely to have a substantial impact on how students build and present their thesis arguments. This study will focus on active thesis-writing students at the University of Mataram, with the goal of achieving a better understanding of how free writing habits influence concrete progress in academic writing.

The free writing technique allows students to write whatever comes to mind without concern about grammar, spelling, structure, or even basic sense. According to Elbow (1973), free writing is a technique for improving writing skills. It could also be an effective way to encourage students to start writing. The exercise helps students to begin writing without worrying about using appropriate phrases. The main purpose of free writing is to get words on paper. According to Bello (1997) practice is one way to improve writing skills.

In this study, the free writing technique takes the form of a particular activity. The primary objective is to get a comprehensive understanding of students' impressions of the influence of free writing habits in their thesis writing processes. According to Corbin et al. (2020), perception is an individual's perspective on activities that influence their lives and can be a determining factor in success, which also applies to students. It is stated that having a positive perspective about something or other people will benefit the individual as well. Perception may also refer to an individual's assessment of something (Amir et al., 2020). Apart from perceptions, people have self-created images, rational contracts, and concepts. Students' perceptions of the English Education Department at the University of Mataram (UNRAM) remain significant in the thesis writing process. Understanding students' perspectives is crucial for educators and students when developing successful strategies, methodologies, and techniques to solve difficulties that students have during the thesis writing process.

## METHOD

According to Corbin et al. (2020), perception is an individual's perspective on things that influence their lives and can be one of the determining elements for success, which also applies to students. It is suggested that having a positive perspective about something or other people will benefit the individual as well. Perception can also refer to an individual's interpretation of something (Amir et al., 2020). As the objective of this research is to analyze the students' perceptions of the influence of free writing habits in thesis writing, the writers will choose a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen's (1982), qualitative research is descriptive, with data collected in the form of words or images rather than numbers. Qualitative research is a method of investigating social phenomena in their natural setting to find a thorough understanding. According to Bradshaw et al. (2017), a qualitative descriptive design may be the most appropriate because it acknowledges the subjective nature of the problem and the various experiences participants have, and presents the findings in a manner that corresponds to or closely resembles the terminology used in the initial research question. As a result, this strategy was adopted, with a focus on analyzing students' perspectives and presenting the findings descriptively.

The subjects of this study were 20 students in the eighth semester of the English Education Department at the University of Mataram. Subsequently, the writers chose a representative sample of 20 students from the seventh semester based on their implementation of free writing. To acquire the relevant data, the writers used a combination of surveys and interviews. The questionnaire, which included nine assertions, was distributed via Google Forms and used a Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

This study uses a purposive sampling approach. The subjects of this study were 20 students in the eighth semester of the English Education Department at the University of Mataram. who

were working on their thesis and currently using the free writing technique. Data was collected via a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 10 open-ended questions that the students completed via Google Forms. In this descriptive qualitative study, data was collected using a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was analyzed using a Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, to Strongly Disagree. The interviews were analyzed qualitatively. Unnecessary information from interviews was removed. The findings from the interviews and questionnaires were combined to conclude.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

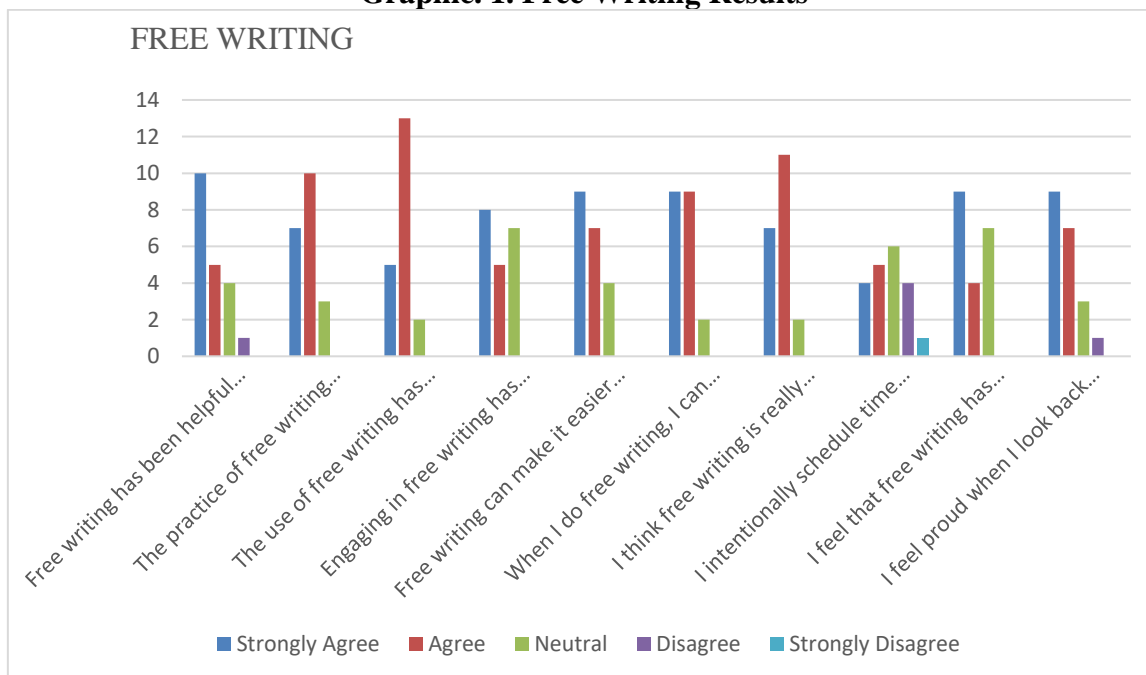
### Results

This research aimed to provide insight into 8th-semester students' perceptions of the influence of free writing habits on thesis writing at the University of Mataram. A total of 20 students participated in the study, filling out a questionnaire. In addition, selected students were interviewed to gather a better understanding of their personal opinions about the influence of free writing habits on thesis writing.

#### The results of the questionnaire

The writers generated a study and gathered thorough data from students who filled out questionnaires. To accomplish the research aims, the writers conducted a systematic and specific analysis. This can be defined as follows:

**Graphic. 1. Free Writing Results**



Each question relates to the student's response in the questionnaire form, which is expressed in words: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA), to find out about students' perceptions on the influence of free writing habits in thesis writing, as shown in the table below:

**Table 1. Free Writing Results**

No	Items	Students Responses
----	-------	--------------------

		SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Free writing has been helpful in generating ideas for my thesis topic.	50%	25%	20%	5%	0%
2.	The practice of free writing contributes positively to the development of my thesis proposal.	35%	50%	15%	0%	0%
3.	The use of free writing has improved my ability to express complex ideas in my thesis writing.	25%	65%	10%	0%	0%
4.	Engaging in free writing has helped me overcome writer's block during thesis writing.	40%	25%	35%	0%	0%
5.	Free writing can make it easier for me to write my research background.	45%	35%	20%	0%	0%
6.	When I do free writing, I can explore new angles and perspectives for my thesis.	45%	45%	10%	0%	0%
7.	I think free writing is really helpful for generating ideas for my thesis method.	35%	55%	10%	0%	0%
8.	I intentionally schedule time for free writing.	20%	25%	30%	20%	5%
9.	I feel that free writing has improved my overall writing skills.	45%	20%	35%	0%	0%
10.	I feel proud when I look back at what I wrote during free writing.	45%	35%	15%	5%	0%

The table above highlights the respondents' perspectives on free writing habits about thesis writing. Looking at the first item, it is clear that 50% of participants strongly agreed, while 25% agreed, showing that the majority (75%) accepted the benefits of free writing in creating thesis ideas. 20% gave a neutral opinion, showing that the majority of respondents are still unsure of this statement. Only 5% disagreed, showing that a small minority of participants thought freewriting was unhelpful for coming up with thesis topics. In the second item, 85% of respondents (35% strongly agree and 50% agree) agreed that free writing had a good impact on the development of their thesis proposal. A total of 15% took a neutral perception, showing a minority that may still be unsure in this situation. In the third item, the majority of students (90%) stated that free writing made it simpler to explain complicated ideas in their thesis. The majority (65%) expressed strong agreement, while 25% agreed. A small percentage (10%) were neutral, indicating that there was some doubt related to this statement.

On the fourth item, 65% of participants (40% strongly agreed and 25% agreed) stated that engaging in free writing helped them solve writer's block while writing their thesis. (35%) stayed neutral, showing a group of students who were unsure about the efficiency of free writing in resolving writer's block. For the fifth item, 80% of students (45% strongly agreed and 35% agreed) stated freewriting may help them write their research background. A small percentage (20%) were unsure, showing that some students were confused about the extent to which free writing can help with their research background writing. Only 5% disagreed, with none strongly disagreed. For the sixth item, 90% of students (45% strongly agreed and 45% agreed) agreed that free writing allowed them to explore new ideas and perspectives for their thesis. A small minority (10%) took a neutral approach, implying that some students are confused about the extent to which creative writing allows for the exploration of different ideas and perspectives. For the seventh question, 90% of students (35% strongly agreed and 55% agreed) agreed that free writing helped them generate ideas for their thesis methods. A small number (10%) took a neutral position, showing that some students may be unsure about the extent to which creative writing helps generate ideas for their thesis method. For the seventh item, students' responses were divided over multiple perspectives. A total of 45% (20% strongly agreed and 25% agreed)

admitted to setting aside time for free writing. A total of 30% stayed indifferent, showing that most students do not strongly agree or disagree, showing uncertainty or variations in planned scheduling. In contrast, 25% (20% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed) disagreed, showing that some students do not set out time for spontaneous writing. For the ninth item, 80% of students (45% strongly agreed and 20% agreed) said that free writing improved their overall writing abilities. A total of 35% stayed neutral, showing a group of students who could not strongly agree or disagree, reflecting uncertainty about the standard of growth. For the eleventh item, 80% of students (45% strongly agreed and 35% agreed) stated they felt proud after reviewing their free writing. Only a small percentage (15%) stayed indifferent, suggesting a variety of feelings about the pride they felt from spontaneous writing. A total of 5% disagreed, showing that just a small percentage of students did not feel proud while reflecting on their free writing. The questionnaire results showed that students had a generally positive opinion of the effectiveness of free writing in many elements of their thesis work.

### **The results of the interview**

The findings of five interviews with students currently working on their final projects, done with five questions, show their viewpoints on the role of the free writing habit in the thesis writing process. Some students described a variety of writing issues, from difficulty articulating ideas to facing common writing problems. However, based on the answers, the majority of students saw free writing as a potential solution to these issues. They regard this habit as allowing them to express themselves freely, facilitating creative idea generation, and eventually benefiting them in overcoming common writing challenges. Students referred to agreed on the effectiveness of free writing in creating ideas for thesis topics. Free writing involves generating thoughts without regard for grammar, spelling, logic, or organization. Students find out this technique not only as a tool for generating ideas but also as a way to generate an overall structure for the thesis, showing its ability to adapt as an outline in the early phases of writing. Students who adapt to the free writing technique find out an effective way to address the initial challenges they face when expressing and developing ideas. Although the majority of students had positive impressions of free writing, it is worth noting that some students had negative perceptions of it. However, the interview results show that free writing improves students' writing skills when faced with academic assignments like thesis writing. This positive perception shows that significant influence from the habit of using the free writing technique in writing, especially while writing a thesis. In these terms, it is possible to assume that the free writing technique has a beneficial impact and assists students with their writing process.

### **Discussion**

Based on the findings from questionnaires and interviews, the purpose of this study is to provide a thorough knowledge of the influence of students' free writing habits on their thesis writing process. Students' positive feedback on the free writing technique shows that it has had a substantial impact on their writing skills.

According to the questionnaire results, the majority of students believe that free writing is effective at creating ideas for thesis topics. Similarly, interview findings show that the free writing technique allows for freedom in the expression of ideas, enhances spontaneous idea generation, and can assist in dealing with common writing problems. This study assists the previous findings that the habit of free writing helps in the drafting of thesis proposals. Students realize this technique not only helps to generate starting ideas but furthermore adapts a deeper structure for the thesis, proving to be useful as a guiding tool in the early phases of the writing process.

According to the data analysis and interview findings, it is possible to conclude that the habit of free writing has a positive influence on the development of students' writing abilities when faced with academic assignments like thesis writing. The balance between free-thinking ability and sustaining a cohesive structure is important, as students comprehend the significant advantages gained through the continuous use of the free writing technique. Overall, this research shows that students' majority positive perception assists the term providing the habit of free writing has a large positive influence in the context of thesis writing.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of using the free writing method to create their theses. According to responses from 20 students, the majority believe that free writing helps them generate ideas for thesis topics and has a positive impact on thesis proposal writing. Interviews with five students working on their final projects revealed that, while having writing difficulties, they saw free writing as a useful approach. Students believe that free writing allows them to express themselves freely, assists in spontaneous idea production, and helps them overcome common writing difficulties. The findings of this research imply that the habit of free writing improves students' thesis writing abilities. In addition to aiding in the production of initial ideas, this technique also helps create a deeper structure for the thesis. Establishing a balance between original thinking and suggested structure is essential, and students believe in significant advantages through frequently employing the free writing method. In acceptance of the use of this strategy in academic contexts, the study proposes that educators offer students support and encouragement to develop free writing habits. It aims that by offering guidance and appropriate resources, students would be able to develop their creativity, improve their writing skills, and have a more positive experience when completing assignments, particularly theses.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the Almighty God, we offer our deepest thanks for guidance and blessings throughout this research journey. We also express our appreciation to the University of Mataram and its students who actively participated, contributing essential insights. Lastly, our gratitude goes to families and friends for their encouragement and understanding, making this research journey a fulfilling experience.

## REFERENCES

- Amir, M. F., Fediyanto, N., Rudyanto, H. E., Nur Afifah, D. S., & Tortop, H. S. (2020). Elementary students' perceptions of 3Dmetric: A cross-sectional study. *Heliyon*, 6(6), e04052. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04052>
- Bello, T. (1997, March). "Writing topics for adult ESL students." Paper presented at the 31st Annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Convention, Orlando, FL
- Bradshaw C, Atkinson S, Doody O. (2017) Employing a qualitative description approach in health care research. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research* 4: 1–8.
- Chandrasekhar, R. (2000). How to write a thesis: A working guide. The University of Western Australia. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5347\(17\)59223-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5347(17)59223-X)
- Corbin, C. M., Downer, J. T., Ruzek, E. A., Lowenstein, A. E., & Brown, J. L. (2020). Correlates of change in elementary students' perceptions of interactions with their teacher. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 69, 101144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2020.101144>.

- Doyle, L., McCabe, C., Keogh, B., Brady, A., & McCann, M. (2020a). An Overview of the Qualitative Descriptive Design within Nursing Research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(5), 174498711988023. NCBI. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987119880234>.
- Dwihandini, L. A., Marhaeni, A. N., & Suarnajaya, I. W. (2013). The Analysis of the Factors Affecting Undergraduate Students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis in the English Department of Mahasaraswati University. *Jurnal pendidikan dan pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia*, 2.
- Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without Teachers*, pp. 12–75. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Farizawati, F., Cendana, W., & Nuraiza, N. (2024). An Analysis of EFL Students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 62–75. [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-200-2\\_13](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-200-2_13)
- Nurrahmaniah, N. (2019). Peningkatan Prestasi Akademik Melalui Manajemen Waktu (Time Management) dan Minat Belajar. *Andragogi Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 1((1)), 149–176. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36671/andragogi.v1i1.52>
- Rahmania, A. H., & Mandasari, B. (2021). Students' Perception Towards The Use of Joox Application to Improve Students' Pronunciation. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 39–44. <https://jim.teknokrat.ac.id/index.php/english-language-teaching/article/view/758/292>.
- Sinaga, A. R., Togatorop, F., Marpaung, T. I., & Purba, R. (2022). The effect of free writing technique on students' writing ability. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains Sosial, Dan Agama*, 8(1), 352–361. <https://doi.org/10.53565/pssa.v8i1.495>
- Thomas, R. M. (Robert M. (2000). *Theses and dissertations : a guide to planning, research, and writing*. In *Universitas Indonesia Library*. <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail.jsp?id=20374570>
- Turmudi, D. (2020). English Scholarly Publishing Activities in the Industrial Revolution 4.0: What, Why, and How? *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 3(1), 52. <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v3i1.1890>