



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EFFECTS OF PERCEPTION ON FREE WRITING TECHNIQUE AND CRITICAL THINKING TOWARDS STUDENTS ENGLISH DESCRIPTIVE TEXT WRITING SKILL (A Survey at Private Islamic Junior High Schools In South Tangerang)

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to describe the effects of perception on the use of free writing technique and critical thinking in learning activities—both simultaneously and individually—on students' English descriptive text writing skills. It also investigates the individual influence of students' perception toward teacher feedback and self-regulated learning on their writing skills. The study was conducted in private Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) in South Tangerang during the 2024/2025 academic year. The research method used was a survey, involving a sample of 90 respondents. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires and descriptive text writing tests in English. The results indicate that: (1) There is a significant simultaneous effect of students' perception of teacher feedback and self-regulated learning on their descriptive text writing skills (Sig = 0.000 < 0.05, F = 91.062); (2) There is a significant effect of students' perception of free writing technique on their descriptive text writing skills (Sig = 0.040 < 0.05, t = 2.854); (3) There is a significant effect of critical thinking on students' descriptive writing performance (Sig = 0.049 < 0.05, t = 2.478). These findings suggest a recommendation for English teachers to improve students' English descriptive writing skills at the junior high school level in South Tangerang by focusing on enhancing the quality of feedback and promoting self-regulated learning.

Keywords: Free Writing Technique, Critical Thinking, Descriptive Text Writing Skill.

PENGARUH PERSEPSI TERHADAP TEKNIK MENULIS BEBAS DAN BERPIKIR KRITIS TERHADAP KETERAMPILAN MENULIS TEKS DESKRIPTIF BERBAHASA INGGRIS SISWA (SURVEI DI MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH DI KOTA TANGERANG SELATAN)

Abstrak: Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan pengaruh persepsi atas terhadap teknik menulis bebas dan berpikir kritis dalam pembelajaran secara bersama-sama terhadap keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa, serta pengaruh individual persepsi atas umpan balik guru dan pengelolaan diri dalam pembelajaran terhadap keterampilan menulis siswa dalam teks deskriptif di Sekolah Madrasah Tsanawiyah Swasta di Kota Tangerang Selatan Tahun Ajaran 2024/2025. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah survei dengan sampel sebanyak 90 responden. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara penyebaran kuesioner dan tes kemampuan menulis teks desripsi dalam Bahasa Inggris. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) terdapat pengaruh persepsi atas umpan balik guru dan pengelolaan diri dalam pembelajaran secara bersama-sama terhadap keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa. Hal ini dibuktikan dengan ($Sig = 0.000 < 0.05$, $F_{hitung} = 91.062$), (2) terdapat pengaruh signifikan dari persepsi atas teknik menulis bebas terhadap keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa yang dibuktikan dengan ($Sig = 0.040 < 0.05$, $t_{hitung} = 2.854$), dan (3) terdapat pengaruh yang signifikan dari berpikir kritis dalam pembelajaran terhadap keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa dibuktikan dengan ($Sig = 0.049 < 0.05$, $t_{hitung} = 2.478$). Hasil ini menyarankan rekomendasi bagi guru Bahasa Inggris untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif Bahasa Inggris siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama di Kota Tangerang Selatan dengan memfokuskan pada peningkatan pemberian umpan balik dan pengelolaan diri dalam pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: Kecemasan Menulis, Pembelajaran Mandiri, Keterampilan Menulis Teks Deskriptif.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the teaching and learning of English grammar within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts have garnered increased scholarly attention. Arif, N. (2022) conducted a phenomenological study involving both instructors and students at a state university in Jambi, Indonesia, revealing a shared perception of the importance of grammar, particularly in developing writing skills. The study emphasized the necessity of treating grammar instruction as an independent subject rather than integrating it with other language skills. Additionally, the research introduced a framework for grammar instruction that incorporates artificial intelligence tools such as chatbots, aimed at enhancing student engagement and language acquisition. Complementing this, Noni et al. (2023) utilized a mixed-method approach to explore the causes and levels of speaking anxiety among high school students. Their findings identified common sources of anxiety, including fear of mistakes, low self-confidence, and negative peer evaluation. The study proposed strategies such as increased interaction with English media, communication with native speakers, and the cultivation of positive thinking as potential solutions.

Effective writing is regarded as a fundamental skill for EFL learners, serving as a medium through which ideas, thoughts, and emotions are communicated coherently. Yenesesh et al. (2023) argue that writing extends beyond the mechanical arrangement of words, emphasizing instead the importance of logical organization to convey intended meaning to specific audiences. A similar conclusion was drawn by Aulia (2024), whose systematic review identified the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) as a powerful instructional strategy. GBA provides a structured framework for students to engage with various text types, thereby enhancing their confidence and mastery in writing. Moreover, fostering students' ability to organize ideas and follow genre conventions plays a pivotal role in improving overall writing proficiency. Critical thinking has also been recognized as an essential component of successful writing. Rizki and Aisyah (2022) demonstrated that incorporating critical

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thinking into writing instruction significantly improves students' ability to develop arguments, support claims with evidence, and reflect on their reasoning processes.

The role of critical thinking in academic and real-world settings has been extensively examined. According to Facione (2011), critical thinking encompasses skills such as analysis, evaluation, and inference, all of which are essential not only in academic pursuits but also in everyday problem-solving. Berg et al. (2021) further elaborate that critical thinking is an intricate cognitive activity involving deliberate evaluation of one's own thought processes to arrive at rational conclusions. It fosters intellectual rigor and sound judgment, which are indispensable in both educational and professional domains. A study by Monash University (2022) underlines the dynamic and active nature of critical thinking. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing personal biases, evaluating arguments critically, and synthesizing diverse viewpoints to arrive at well-informed judgments. Collectively, these findings suggest that cultivating critical thinking skills can significantly enhance students' academic performance, particularly in areas requiring structured reasoning and argumentation, such as writing.

In the context of writing instruction, the use of pre-writing techniques such as clustering and free writing has demonstrated substantial benefits. Clustering free writing is a hybrid method combining visualization and unstructured idea generation. This technique enables students to organize thoughts around a central theme, thereby encouraging creativity and helping overcome writer's block. Visualizing related concepts can reveal underlying patterns and strengthen the coherence of written arguments. The technique aligns with cognitive theories of writing, suggesting that externalizing ideas through mapping fosters deeper processing and idea development. Despite the recognized benefits of such techniques, there is limited empirical evidence on how they influence specific genres of writing, such as descriptive texts, particularly in EFL junior high school settings.

Although existing literature underscores the interconnection between free writing techniques, critical thinking, and general writing skills, there remains a noticeable gap in research concerning their combined impact on students' descriptive writing performance. Furthermore, no existing studies have examined the integration of interactive learning platforms like Word wall within cooperative learning frameworks and their influence on elementary students' critical thinking in writing. Addressing this gap, the current study seeks to explore the effects of students' perceptions of free writing techniques and critical thinking on their ability to write English descriptive texts. Conducted among private junior high schools in South Tangerang, this research aims to contribute empirical evidence on how these pedagogical approaches shape writing proficiency in a specific genre, offering practical insights for EFL educators and curriculum developers.

This research focuses on addressing persistent challenges faced by junior high school students in writing descriptive texts in English. Many students struggle to generate ideas, structure their content, and maintain coherence in their writing. To respond to these issues, this study investigates the effectiveness of the clustering free writing technique and the implementation of critical thinking skills as strategies to support the writing process. The research limits its analysis to these two key approaches and seeks to evaluate their influence both individually and in combination. Moreover, the study explores students' perceptions toward these techniques and how their understanding and acceptance of them affect writing performance.

The scope of this study is confined to eighth-grade students in two selected Islamic junior high schools in South Tangerang, Indonesia. The research is structured around three primary variables: students' perception of the clustering free writing technique, their level of critical thinking, and their performance in writing descriptive texts in English. The study excludes other writing genres and does not consider additional psychological or cognitive factors beyond the two mentioned variables. The data collection process relies on a combination of questionnaires and writing performance



assessments, targeting a specific academic year. This limited yet focused scope allows the research to offer more precise insights applicable to similar educational environments.

Based on the background of the study, three central research problems are formulated. First, it seeks to determine whether students' perception of the clustering technique, combined with their critical thinking skills, significantly affects their ability to write descriptive texts. Second, the research examines the separate influence of students' perception of the technique. Third, it explores the individual impact of critical thinking skills on writing outcomes. These research problems are directly aligned with the study's objectives, which are to analyze both the combined and independent effects of the two variables in improving students' descriptive writing skills in English. By doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cognitive and instructional strategies can be optimized in writing instruction.

Writing is a multifaceted and recursive process rather than a linear activity, encompassing stages such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing that often occur non-sequentially. Rather than following a rigid pattern, skilled writers engage in a dynamic interplay between idea generation and textual refinement. This process demands significant cognitive flexibility and strategic self-regulation (Lo Sardo et al., 2023). Beyond its cognitive aspects, writing is also a deeply social endeavor. It is shaped by context, audience expectations, and communicative goals, and is influenced by both environmental and ideological dimensions—a perspective emphasized in the theory of ecocomposition (Wikipedia, 2023a). As such, writing is not merely an individual cognitive act, but a socially and environmentally embedded one.

Writing skill is defined as the ability to communicate ideas, thoughts, and information effectively through coherent and structured text. This skill incorporates multiple components, including vocabulary, grammar, organization, and coherence, as well as the ability to adapt tone and style to suit the audience and purpose. It involves both lower-level processes, such as mechanics and grammatical accuracy, and higher-level processes like text organization and nuanced language use (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Furthermore, proficient writers employ metacognitive strategies to monitor and refine their writing, enhancing both clarity and effectiveness (Ransdell & Reiter, 2021). In modern educational settings, writing is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional process that integrates cognitive, linguistic, and strategic elements.

Writing holds a crucial role in the development of linguistic competence, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. It not only reinforces grammatical structures and vocabulary, but also fosters greater awareness of language use and coherence (Sa'adah, 2020). Through writing activities, learners cultivate critical and creative thinking skills, as they are often required to evaluate and synthesize information, especially in structured writing tasks (Abdiganiyeva, 2025; Pratama & Hastuti, 2024). Additionally, writing encourages self-expression and emotional articulation, supporting learners' personal and reflective growth (Ramagya School, 2024). As a tool for both academic achievement and personal development, writing serves as a foundational skill in the holistic education of EFL learners.

Despite its importance, writing in English presents significant challenges for EFL learners. Common linguistic barriers include limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, and problems with organizing ideas coherently. These often hinder students' ability to express themselves effectively (Harmawan et al., 2023). Moreover, psychological factors such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making errors negatively affect writing performance (Febriani, 2023). EFL students also struggle with understanding academic conventions, including citation styles, coherence, and maintaining an academic tone (Lesmana & Ariffin, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive instructional approach that integrates both linguistic training and academic literacy.

Assessment plays a pivotal role in developing writing skills. Recent studies advocate for the integration of student self-assessment alongside teacher feedback, emphasizing its benefits for enhancing metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy. In Indonesia, the use of formative assessments has shown promising results in secondary education, leading to improved grammar,

vocabulary, and overall writing quality. Technological advancements have further transformed writing assessment. AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT, when used in conjunction with traditional feedback, significantly improve argumentative writing skills (Han et al., 2023). Additionally, writing assessment literacy is found to influence students' self-efficacy and motivation while reducing anxiety (Cao et al., 2025). These findings underscore the value of combining technological tools and reflective strategies in contemporary writing instruction.

The Clustering Free Writing Technique is a prewriting strategy designed to facilitate students' idea generation and organization by allowing them to brainstorm in a non-linear manner. This approach resembles mind mapping, encouraging free association and creative thinking during the writing process. It aligns with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize active learner engagement with content and knowledge construction through interaction with ideas (Bray & Gosselin, 2020). By providing a visual and verbal framework, clustering enables students to connect disparate concepts, fostering a deeper understanding and richer content development.

Recent empirical studies highlight the effectiveness of clustering in enhancing writing skills. Tuncer and Demirtaş (2021) demonstrated that students employing clustering techniques exhibited increased creativity and improved coherence in their written compositions. This technique aids writers in visualizing the relationships among ideas, which supports the production of more organized and logically consistent texts. Additionally, clustering serves as a tool to alleviate writer's block by presenting thoughts visually, thereby reducing cognitive overload and encouraging more fluent writing (Aydm & Elçi, 2021).

The psychological foundation of clustering is supported by Paivio's (2020) Dual Coding Theory, which posits that information processed through both verbal and visual channels enhances comprehension and memory retention. Clustering capitalizes on this by engaging students visually with concept maps while simultaneously encouraging verbal articulation of ideas. This dual engagement helps students better organize their thoughts and retrieve information more efficiently during the writing process, ultimately leading to higher quality written products.

The integration of clustering within writing pedagogy not only promotes idea development but also empowers students to overcome common barriers associated with writing. By externalizing and mapping their ideas, students can identify gaps and connections that may not be immediately apparent through linear note-taking. This visual organization supports cognitive processing and reduces anxiety related to writing tasks, thus facilitating a more confident and productive writing experience (Bray & Gosselin, 2020; Aydm & Elçi, 2021).

The Clustering Free Writing Technique is a valuable pedagogical tool grounded in constructivist and cognitive theories that enhance the writing process. Its capacity to stimulate creativity, improve coherence, and mitigate writer's block has been empirically validated. Given its dual visual-verbal mechanism, clustering represents an effective strategy to support students in producing well-organized and coherent written work, making it an important component of writing instruction and assessment.

RESEARCH METHOD

In the Method section of a research article, authors should provide detailed information about how the study was conducted, encompassing various components. Firstly, they should describe the research design or approach employed, whether experimental, observational, correlational, qualitative, or quantitative. Secondly, authors need to provide details about the participants involved, including demographics, recruitment methods, and any inclusion/exclusion criteria. Thirdly, the specific procedures followed during the study, including interventions, measurements, assessments, or

treatments administered to participants, should be outlined. Additionally, authors should describe any materials, instruments, tools, or measures used for data collection or variable assessment.

They should then explain the data collection process, including timing, location, and duration, as well as procedures ensuring data quality, reliability, and validity. Subsequently, authors must detail the statistical or analytical methods used for data analysis, such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, qualitative coding, or thematic analysis. Finally, ethical considerations, including Institutional Review Board approval, informed consent procedures, confidentiality measures, and potential conflicts of interest, should be addressed.

Although numerous studies have investigated the role of feedback and SRL in enhancing students' writing skills, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific interplay between writing apprehension and self-regulated learning, particularly at the junior high school level. Existing research has primarily focused on higher education contexts, leaving limited exploration in secondary education, especially among EFL learners in Indonesia. To address this gap, the present study investigates the effects of perception on free writing technique and critical thinking on students' writing skills in junior high schools in South Tangerang. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Are there any effects of perception on free writing technique combined with critical thinking on the writing skills of junior high school students in South Tangerang?
2. Is there any effect of perception on free writing technique on the writing skills of junior high school students in South Tangerang?
3. Is there any effect of critical thinking on the writing skills of junior high school students in South Tangerang?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the impact of Free Writing Technique (X1) and Critical Thinking (X2) on students' proficiency in writing English descriptive texts (Y). Correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, with a coefficient of 0.782, confirmed as statistically significant using SPSS 22. Regression analysis further demonstrated that both Free Writing Technique and Critical Thinking positively influence students' descriptive writing skills, as reflected in the regression equation $Y = 49.999 + 0.385X1 + 0.317X2$. The intercept of 49.999 suggests that without adequate application of these techniques, achieving proficiency in writing descriptive texts in English remains challenging. The linearity and significance of these relationships were validated through SPSS, with the regression coefficients indicating a meaningful positive effect.

Focusing specifically on the Free Writing Technique, the hypothesis testing results showed a significant effect on students' ability to write descriptive texts in English (Sig = 0.040 < 0.05, t = 2.854). This finding emphasizes the pivotal role of teacher feedback in fostering students' writing skills. Feedback that goes beyond numerical scores—incorporating motivational support, constructive criticism, and positive reinforcement—encourages students to engage actively with writing tasks. Such supportive feedback not only enhances students' technical writing abilities but also nurtures their critical thinking by motivating continuous improvement and academic dedication.

Similarly, Critical Thinking was found to significantly influence students' writing proficiency (Sig = 0.049 < 0.05, t = 2.478). Critical Thinking, closely associated with Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), entails the learner's ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning process. Students exhibiting higher levels of critical thinking tend to demonstrate greater independence and responsibility in developing their writing skills. This autonomy fosters deeper engagement with writing tasks, leading to better outcomes in English descriptive text composition. The study highlights the importance of cultivating critical thinking as a fundamental skill for academic success.

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The research also underscores the interplay between teacher feedback and critical thinking in enhancing writing skills. Effective feedback acts as a catalyst for students to develop critical thinking, thereby encouraging self-directed learning and responsibility. This dynamic relationship creates an enriched learning environment where students feel supported and motivated, which ultimately translates into improved writing proficiency. Educators are therefore encouraged to implement feedback strategies that promote critical thinking and self-regulation to maximize students' academic achievements.

The study establishes that both Free Writing Technique and Critical Thinking significantly contribute to students' ability to write descriptive texts in English. By integrating meaningful teacher feedback and fostering critical thinking skills, educators can substantially improve students' writing competencies. These findings have important implications for teaching methodologies, emphasizing the need for holistic and interactive approaches in English writing instruction. Future research could further explore how these variables interact across different learning contexts and student populations to optimize educational outcomes.

Table 1
 Recapitulation of Calculation Result of Significance Testing of Regression Coefficient of the Effect of X1 and X2 Variables toward Y Variable

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4205.758	2	8791.103	91.062	.000 ^b
	Residual	2936.116	87	33.748		
	Total	2940.322	89			

a. Dependent Variable: Decriptive Writing Text

b. Predictors: (Constant), Critical Thinking, Free Writing Technique

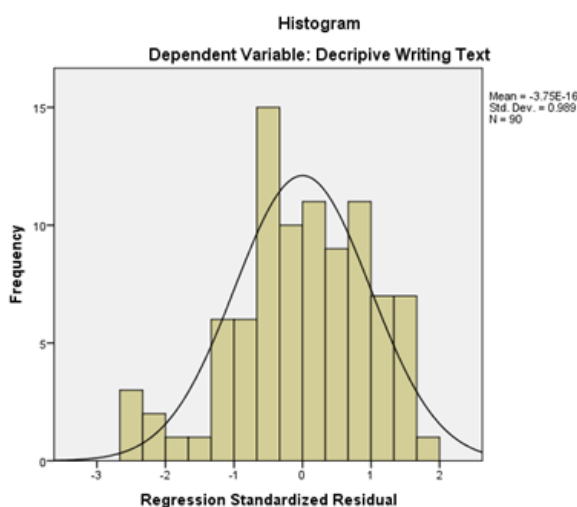


Figure 1

Histogram of Normality Standard Deviation

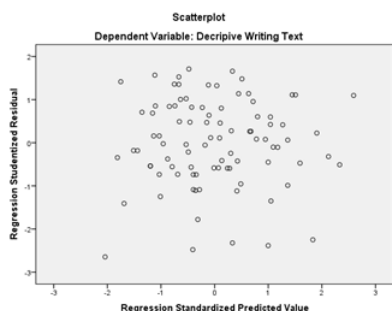


Figure 2
Histogram of Heteroscedasticity Test

CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the combined and individual effects of the Free Writing Technique and Critical Thinking instruction on English descriptive text writing skills among Private Islamic Junior High School students in South Tangerang. The analysis revealed a statistically significant joint impact of these two factors, as evidenced by a Sig value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and an F value of 91.062. This finding underscores the synergistic influence of both pedagogical strategies when integrated into the writing curriculum, suggesting that their concurrent application can substantially enhance students' writing proficiency.

Further analysis demonstrated that the Free Writing Technique independently contributed significantly to students' descriptive writing abilities, with a Sig value of 0.040 ($p < 0.05$) and a t-value of 2.854. This indicates that engaging students in unstructured, spontaneous writing activities promotes fluency and creativity, which are critical components of effective descriptive writing. Similarly, Critical Thinking instruction showed a meaningful individual effect, supported by a Sig value of 0.049 ($p < 0.05$) and a t-value of 2.478, highlighting the role of analytical reasoning and reflective judgment in improving writing quality.

The pedagogical implications derived from these findings suggest that English language instruction, particularly writing education at the junior high school level, should emphasize a balanced approach that integrates both affective and cognitive domains. Fostering students' positive perceptions of free writing alongside the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills can lead to more substantive and coherent writing outcomes. Consequently, teacher training programs must focus on equipping educators with strategies to implement free writing as an engaging prewriting tool, while simultaneously embedding critical thinking exercises throughout the writing process to promote depth and clarity.

Based on the study's conclusions, several practical recommendations are proposed. Teachers are encouraged to design classroom activities that blend free writing with tasks that stimulate critical analysis and reflection, complemented by constructive feedback addressing both linguistic accuracy and content evaluation. Students should be motivated to embrace free writing as a means to overcome writer's block and enhance creativity, alongside developing critical thinking through text analysis and evaluative exercises. Furthermore, parents can play a supportive role by fostering a positive writing environment at home, encouraging open dialogue, and providing reflective prompts to strengthen their children's writing skills.

School administrators are urged to institutionalize these findings by promoting professional development initiatives and curricular programs that integrate creative writing and critical thinking. This includes facilitating teacher workshops, encouraging interdisciplinary reflective writing practices, and providing extracurricular platforms such as writing clubs and school publications. Such a holistic

approach aims to create an intellectually stimulating environment that nurtures students' confidence and competence in English descriptive text writing, ultimately contributing to improved academic achievement.

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