

USING A FREE WRITING ACTIVITY TO INCREASE STUDENTS' WRITING FLUENCY



Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language  
at Srinakharinwirot University

July, 2017

USING A FREE WRITING ACTIVITY TO INCREASE STUDENTS' WRITING FLUENCY

A THESIS

BY

PANISARA KHUMWATTANA

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AN ABSTRACT

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The objectives of this study were to explore the effects of free writing in developing students' writing fluency and to investigate the students' opinions toward the free writing activity. The participants were 46 tenth graders at Debsirinromkiao School. The study was a quasi-experimental design with a quantitative data analysis. The instruments used in this study include: instructions for free writing assignments, pre and post writing tests, and a questionnaire. The pre and post writing tests were given at the beginning and at the end of the semester respectively. The aim was to measure the students' writing fluency by comparing the total words mean score of the pre-test and post-test. During the experiment, the participants were assigned the free writing assignments as extra homework for ten weeks (once a week). At the end of the semester, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire which includes three themes: usefulness, acceptance and affect. The results of the comparison of the average mean scores between the pre-test and post-test showed that students' writing fluency had developed after using the free writing activity at the level of .05. The students also had positive opinions toward the free writing activity. They enjoyed the free writing activity and would like to join the activity in the future.

**Keywords:** Writing fluency, Free Writing Activity, Students' Opinions

การใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระเพื่อเพิ่มความคล่อง  
ในการเขียนของนักเรียน



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา  
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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลการใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระเพื่อพัฒนาความคล่องในการเขียนของนักเรียน และเพื่อสำรวจความคิดเห็นของนักเรียนที่มีต่อกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือนักเรียนระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 โรงเรียนเทพศิรินทร์ร่วมเกล้า จำนวน 46 คน งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาในรูปแบบวิจัยกึ่งทดลองเชิงปริมาณ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ประกอบด้วย คำแนะนำกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ แบบทดสอบการเขียนก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียน และแบบสอบถามแบบทดสอบการเขียนก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียนซึ่งนำมาใช้ทดสอบในตอนเริ่มต้นและตอนสิ้นสุดภาคเรียนตามลำดับ โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวัดความคล่องในการเขียนของนักเรียนซึ่งเปรียบเทียบจากค่าเฉลี่ยจำนวนคำจากแบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียน ตลอดจนการทดลอง กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้รับมอบหมายให้เขียนงานเขียนอิสระซึ่งเป็นภาระงานที่นอกเหนือจากงานในชั้นเรียนจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 10 ชิ้น (สัปดาห์ละ 1 ชิ้น) เมื่อสิ้นสุดการทดลองกลุ่มตัวอย่างทำแบบสอบถามวัดความคิดเห็น ประกอบด้วย 3 หัวข้อ ได้แก่ ประโยชน์ การยอมรับ และความชอบ ผลจากการเปรียบเทียบค่าเฉลี่ยแบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียนแสดงให้เห็นว่า ความคล่องในการเขียนของนักเรียนมีการพัฒนาที่ดีขึ้นหลังจากใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 และนักเรียนมีความคิดเห็นเชิงบวกต่อการใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ ทั้งนี้นักเรียนเพลิดเพลินกับกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระและอยากทำกิจกรรมในครั้งต่อไป

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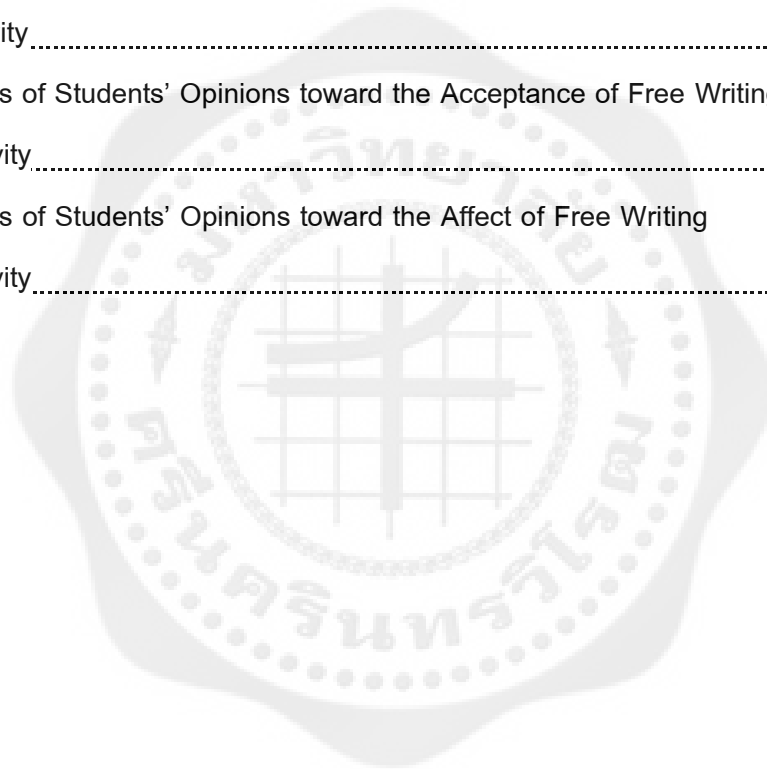
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

English has become the most common second language and most widely learned as a foreign language (Alsagoff, McKay, Hu, & Rehandya, 2012). Its increasing widespread use has resulted in the fact that there are now more non-native speakers than native ones (Sirega, 2010). In Thailand, English has been regarded as the most significant foreign language. English is generally taught in four skills which are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, writing is considered the most difficult skill for language learners to acquire because writers need to take in several elements including content, ideas, organization, vocabulary, linguistic knowledge, and mechanics (Salma, 2015; Rao, 2007; Nunan, 1991).

In the EFL context, writing is considered even more difficult for Thai learners. It is a complex and challenging process (Kulsirisawad, 2012; Alsamadani, 2010). The writing process calls for a wide range of cognitive and linguistic strategies. EFL learners must consider several aspects such as linguistics, cognitive challenges, sociolinguistics competencies, and language structures (Barkaoui, 2007; Myles, 2002). According to Brown (2000), "written products are the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that requires specialized skills, skills that not every speaker develops naturally" (p.335). Hence, EFL learners need to practice to create effective writing products (Talebinezhad & Negari, 2009).

As supported by Chatranonth (2007), Thai students have poor writing ability. Thai students' writing performance ranks the last of ASEAN countries. The result of the Test of Written English (TWE) from TOEFL score data summary in 1996 was a case in point. The average score is 3.20 (out of 6) which is lower than the average of TOEFL score. This evidence prompts the necessity for improving Thai students' writing performance. This notion is further supported by Pawapatcharaudom (2007) who comments that writing skill is the most problematic skill for Thai students. They face many writing problems such as grammar correction, well-organized essay, suitable content, and the process of producing writing. "Many students compose English assignments by writing in Thai first and then translating into English" (Pawapatcharaudom, 2007, p.54). For the reason, it may worsen the quality of the written assignment.

In addition, students still fear to make errors and do not know what to write (Riya, 2016). This notion is further supported by Knapp (2009), who found that the classroom where she focuses on the accuracy, students sit frozen and grip their pen because they are too worried and concerned about the correctly formed sentences. In contrast, the classroom which she focuses on writing fluency, students can write freely. They do not fear to make errors. As supported by Bruton and Kirby (1987), who reveal that writing fluency can promote the writers to feel free without fear and get more confidence in writing. Therefore, students should be convinced that writing can be imperfect and it is a recursive process as they occur. Without writing, the learning process is incomplete (Thep-Ackrapong, 2005). Hence, writing is a language skill that needs particular attention and the English writing ability of Thai students needs to be developed further for effective communication (Chatranonth, 2007).

To improve the students' writing skill, teaching techniques such as creative writing, cooperative writing, controlled writing, self-writing, display writing, free writing have been employed by language teachers (Harmer, 2007; Brown, 2000). According to Taylor (1992), free writing is one effective technique that helps English language learners develop their writing skill and building up their writing fluency at the same time. (The discussion on "accuracy and "fluency" will be presented in details in the following chapter.)

Free writing has been widely used in a language classroom. Many research studies present its positive results (Tuan, 2010; Jones & East, 2009; Frances, 2014). Tuan (2010) did a study on enhancing EFL learners' writing skill via journal writing and found that 85 Vietnamese college students' writing motivation increased and it established a close rapport between teachers and students. Jones and East (2009) did a similar study but in a primary school context. He found that 15 primary students had the potential to increase writing confidence and control over language. They could produce more words. Similar findings were found in the study of Frances (2014). She found that students' writing fluency was increased through free-writing activities. The average number of lines of free writing had increased from 8.20 to 12.02 within 11 weeks of the experiment. She also found that students' confidence had increased and they enjoyed the activity. The evidence illustrates the benefits of free writing which can develop writing competency.

In Thai educational context, the study of free writing on writing fluency is quite rare (Chuenchaichon, 2014). Most of the studies focused on writing assessment, writing feedback, writing errors, and writing discourse analysis (Kulsirisawad, 2012; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Kansopon, 2012; Hamidun, Hashim, & Othman, 2012; Buripakdi, 2012). Hence, more research in free writing is very much needed in order to fill

the gap of English writing development which can be useful for English language teaching in Thailand.

With regard to the context of this study, the participants were tenth graders. They were taking English Reading and Writing course. However, their writing skill was quite poor. As seen at the first period of class, students were asked to write a free paragraph. Most students were able to write only three to four sentences. Because of their limited writing experience in the ninth grade, they seldom had a chance to practice writing. Consequently, the tenth grade students urgently needed to develop their writing skills. Hence, this present study aimed at using free writing activity to help students develop their students' writing fluency.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To explore the effects of free writing in developing students' writing fluency
2. To investigate the students' opinions toward free writing activity

### **Research Questions**

1. Does the students' writing fluency increase after using free writing activity?
2. How do the students experience the free writing activity?

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

1. Students' writing fluency has increased after using free writing activity.
2. Students have positive opinions toward free writing activity.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the effects of free writing activity on students' writing fluency. If the result of the study shows that tenth grade students can increase their writing fluency after using free writing activity, it could be useful for writing teachers to consider this activity as an alternative teaching technique in helping their students build up their writing fluency, i.e. produce longer texts. Moreover, in Thai educational context, using free writing activity to increase high school students' writing fluency has not yet been studied. Hence, this study aims to fill gaps in the research. Furthermore, getting students' opinions toward free writing activity will help teachers match their teaching technique with the students' preferences.

## **Scope of the Study**

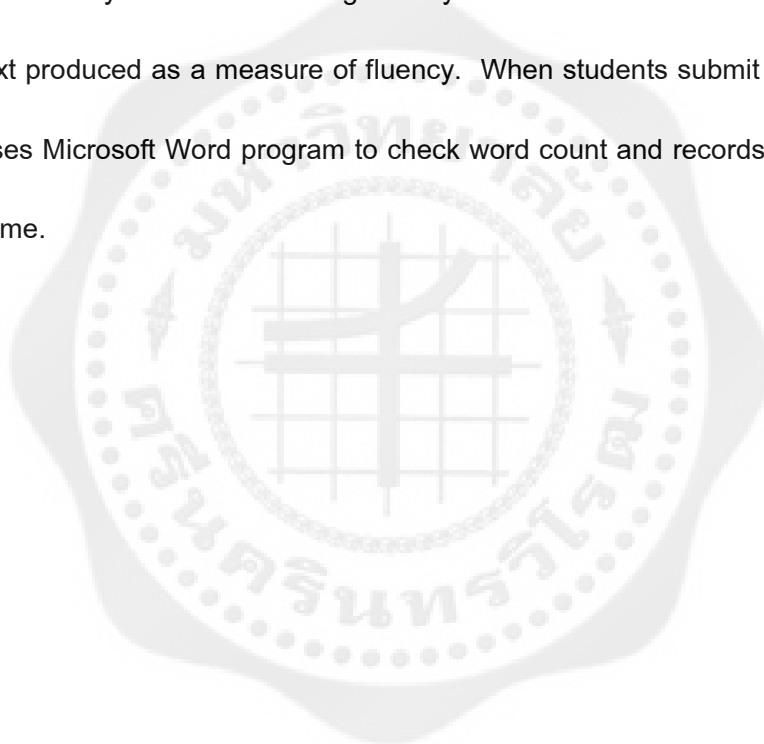
This study focused on using free writing activity to increase students' writing fluency. The data were obtained from 46 tenth grade students who currently studied at Debsirinromklao School. The participants were selected by a convenient sampling procedure from the intact class to participate in the quasi-experimental research in the second semester of academic year 2016.

## **Definition of Terms**

1. Free writing activity refers to a writing activity that students choose their own writing topic. Myers (1983) states that "free writing is the self-discovery way which students fill a page in order to find out what they know, what they do not know and what they want

to write” (p. 28). Teachers do not correct the grammatical accuracy but give feedback on the meaningful content. In this research, free writing was assigned as weekly extra homework. Every student needed to submit their assignments before 8 p.m. on Mondays for ten weeks.

2. Writing fluency refers to the development of the number of words in free writing from the second week to the last week of the study. According to Latif (2013), text quantity or word count is a way to measure writing fluency. The researcher focuses mainly on the quantity of text produced as a measure of fluency. When students submit their free writing, researcher uses Microsoft Word program to check word count and records the number of words each time.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter presents a review of related literature which includes an overview of writing, free writing, and related studies.

#### **Writing: Accuracy VS. Fluency**

In the context of English language teaching, Srivastava (2014) states that two factors that determine the success of student writers are the ability to write fluently and correctly. However, Zainul (2013) claims that one main problem in teaching English is the difficulty to choose fluency or accuracy. It is hard to compromise the two approaches because each has both strengths and weaknesses.

Writing accuracy refers to the ability to produce grammatically correct texts. Students apply grammatical rules appropriately (Frاندzel, 2016; Srivastava, 2014). When students are assigned to compose writing, they need to use accurate grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation (Writing Development Centre, 2016). The mastery of grammatical correctness is significant. Chin (2000) indicates that grammatical knowledge is a guideline in effective writing. According to Hemmens (2011), students should have a firm knowledge in grammars and how to get the written texts right and accurate because grammatical accuracy affects students' writing ability effectively. In contrast, poor grammar in writing impacts on communication because grammatical errors may change the sentence meaning (Thomas, 1983).

With regard to writing fluency, Srivastava (2014) states that fluency refers to a level of proficiency in communication and it is “the ability to produce written and spoken sentences with ease, efficiency, without pauses or a breakdown of communication” (p.55). Writing fluency focuses on exercises that give students a chance to use the language naturally and freely. Errors are not considered at this stage. Teachers aim to help students to continue with the flow and not to worry about making mistakes (Richards, 2006). In language learning, the ability to compose a written text fluently plays a significant role in writing production (Housen, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2012). This notion is further supported by Bruton and Kirby (1987), who describe that written fluency is a powerful construct which encourages writers to develop a range of strategies, forms, procedures, and process as thinkers and constructors of knowledge. Fluency will foster writer’s comfortable feeling with writing to the extent that they can write quickly without anxiety.

Regarding the teaching of writing skills, several educators point out the balancing between accuracy and fluency in teaching. In a language classroom, Belchamber (2007) suggests that teachers should decide between accuracy or fluency. It is dependent on the lesson or on the type of lesson at hand. If getting an accurate grammatical production is the aim, accuracy should be focused on. However, if the aim is to produce language fluency, fluency should be the key. This notion is further supported by Brumfit (1984), who states that the distinction between accuracy and fluency calls for the difference of methodology. It is not easy to combine both at the same time. Moreover, the distinction between writing accuracy and fluency affects the writing assessment.

Both accuracy and fluency are essential measures in the assessment of students’ proficiency (Fulcher, 2003). However, in a school where tests and grades matter, the

writing assessment is often emphasized on accuracy rather than fluency (Zainul, 2013), because grammatical knowledge is widely accepted as a key component in writing skill (Neumann, 2014). According to Hyland (2009), grammatical accuracy is the best measure of good writing. However several researchers do not agree, Salma (2015), Rao (2007), and Nunan (1991) state that several factors are required to assess the writing quality. It does not depend entirely on grammatical accuracy, but content, ideas, organization, vocabulary, linguistic knowledge, and mechanics also come into play. In addition, perfect language with poor ideas is not enough (Listyani, 2016). Hence, a writing class where teachers focus solely on accuracy may not be ideal. As Truscott (1996) says, grammar correction in non-native writing classes should be avoided at all cost. It is not helpful because it does not improve student's writing ability. When teachers focus on grammatical correction, students feel stressed because people often feel discouraged when they are told that they are wrong. As Tobias, Recusani and Marcondes (2010) explain, learning is most successful when students are relaxed and enjoy their English class. According to Truscott (1996), focusing on grammatical correction is harmful and ineffective. The continuous grammatical correction can raise a learner's level of anxiety, and it obstructs learning (Krashen, 1982). Semke (1984) studied the effect of the red pen and found that students did not accomplish more when they were forced to correct their grammatical mistakes. Such notion is also supported by Leki (1991), who reveals that some students are annoyed, distracted, and discouraged when they face the continuous grammatical corrections.

In the EFL context, many writing teachers put a heavy emphasis on grammatical accuracy. As Sermsongswad and Tantipongsanuruk (2013) report, the dominance of accuracy is caused by the teachers' learning background. Many teachers still teach

students through the grammar translation approach (the same method that they had been taught in school). Therefore, they are likely to pay attention to students' grammatical errors and not on content (Cotter, 2013).

With regard to the research studies on writing, most studies focus on writing accuracy rather than writing fluency. As Chuenchaichon (2014) reports, the overviews of 48 writing research studies within ten years (2004 – 2013) emphasize on accuracy such as writing assessment, writing feedback, writing errors, and writing discourse analysis (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Kansopon, 2012; Hamidun, Hashim, & Othman, 2012; Buripakdi, 2012).

For instance, Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013) conducted a study on Thai EFL students' writing errors in different text types. In their study, 40 sophomore English major students were participants. Each participant composed three writing paragraphs. Their writing compositions were analyzed by using error analysis. They found that the first language interference errors fell into 16 categories: verb tense, word choice, sentence structure, article, preposition, modal/auxiliary, singular/plural form, fragment, verb form, pronoun, run-on sentence, infinitive/gerund, transition, subject-verb agreement, parallel structure, and comparison structure, respectively. The number of frequent errors made in each type of written tasks was apparently different which were narration, description, and comparison/contrast. It could be concluded that to enhance students' grammatical and lexical accuracy, a second language (L2) writing teacher should take into consideration L1 interference categories in different rhetorical modes.

Ferris and Roberts (2001) did a study on grammatical feedback in L2 writing classes. In their study, 67 university ESL students with differing abilities were participants.

They were divided into different groups and were taught by different teachers. All of them were asked to write an in-class, 50-min diagnostic essay during the first week of class. Next, all essays were divided into three treatment groups in terms of feedback correction. Group A was in the code group which teachers underlined and coded the errors in five categories. Group B was in the no codes group which teachers checked the same five categories and underlined but not coded. Group C was the control group which teachers read but did not give feedback on their works. After that, the researchers met the teachers to mark a sample of the participants' essays using five error categories; verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, wrong word, and sentence structure. The teachers turned the essays back and the participants were asked to spend 20 min self-editing their works. The researchers met the teachers again to mark the changes made by the participants as correct or no change. The findings showed that both groups who received feedback had improvement rather than no-feedback group on self-editing task. However, there was no significant difference between the coded and no coded groups.

In a similar vein, Nassaji (2011) conducted a study on students' written grammatical errors. In his study, the participants were 31 college students from two intermediate adult ESL classrooms. They studied five days a week, receiving 20 hours of instruction each week. Articles and prepositions were selected as the linguistic targets in this study. The participants were assigned to write journal writings over a three-week period. Next, the teacher checked their writings and gave feedback in three sessions which were non-negotiated direct reformulation, feedback with limited negotiation and feedback with negotiation. After that, the effects of feedback were measured by means of learner-specific error identification test after treatment. The findings showed that negotiated

feedback played a significant role in addressing written errors. In addition, the different effects of feedback types were mainly obvious for article errors rather than prepositions errors.

In Thai educational context, studies on writing fluency are rare. However, modern society is in need of people who not only use language well but communicate it fluently (Zhenhui, 1999). If teachers focus on grammatical accuracy alone, there is no guarantee that students will be able to communicate or use language in their real life (Sasson, 2007). Furthermore, writing fluency can promote students' confidence. In Nilsson's study (2012), freshmen students were divided into two groups. The first group was accuracy-based task following a traditional English book. Another group was fluency-based task in which the participants practiced their writing skills by keeping a journal. All of them were assessed using an assessment test, a questionnaire and a writing test. She found that the fluency-based task group was more motivated to learn while the accuracy group was demotivated.

With regard to the beginners or novice writers, fluency should be focused more than accuracy (Ellis, 2003). Many foreign language classrooms are comprised of novice language learners who do not know what to write. Although most students have the desire to write, they are crippled by silence and fear (Nation, 1996). Such notion is supported by Knapp (2009) who argues that the novice writer will never learn to write well and fluently if there is no freedom to write. For beginning writers, there should be writing activities that build up fluency through non-graded writing where the focus is on meaning-making, not on production of correct form (Heilenman, 1991; Bonzo, 2008). The notion is further supported by Bruton and Kirby (1987) who state that writing fluency will promote the novice writers to continue to develop a range of strategies, form, procedures, and processes as they grow as

thinkers of knowledge. The basic concept is that the fluency focuses on writers' feeling comfortable with writing "to the extent that they are able to write quickly without fear" (Bruton & Kirby, 1987, p.92).

In addition, Krashen (1987) indicates that non-native writers should be developed in ways similar to native learners in the contexts where the negotiation of meaning is considered, the language exposure is real, extensive, and anxiety free. As Srivastava (2014) explains, when fluency is emphasized, it reflects a concept of how a child acquires his first language. For instance, a child starts speaking fluently at the age of three or four. He is able to express things relating to his knowledge without knowing the rule of grammar. In this regard, Krashen (1987) similarly supports that the writing process of non-native students must begin with abundant chances to create ideas for building up writing fluency.

Therefore, in a writing classroom, the teacher's role is to help students know how to get started, and guide students as to how students could improve their writing. Students should be given opportunities to write freely. Teachers should inform their students that writing is a process that can be imperfect (Knapp, 2009), but can be measured in terms of length and rate (Wolfe-Quintero, et al., 1998). According to Ellis (1998), fluency is certainly not a measure of accuracy, but a measure of the number of words or structure units that a writer can produce.

In brief, accuracy and fluency are two key components in language learning which have long been a controversial issue in the classroom context (Dzugaeva & Djumabaev, 2016). However, it is not a good idea for beginning writers to focus too much on accuracy (Srivastava, 2014). Novice writers should learn to write without fear and anxiety (Bruton & Kirby, 1987). As Truscott (1996) points out, grammatical accuracy causes students'

anxiety. In a writing classroom, students should be developed like native writers, i.e. trying to focus on meaning first rather than on the grammatical rules (Krashen, 1987).

## **Free Writing**

### **1) What is Free Writing?**

A free writing activity has been used as a way to develop fluency in writing (Frances, 2014). There are different explanations to what free writing means. According to Elbow and Belanoff (2000), freewriting is defined as writing ideas or thoughts that come to mind without stopping. Dehghanpisheh (1979), Briere (1966), and Erasmus (1960) explain that free writing is a teaching technique that places an emphasis on frequent and fluent writing which supports students to organize language and content without grammatical and rhetorical control. According to Gomez (1994), free writing is a writing activity that encourages students to write about interesting topics and offers them the luxury of choosing their own topics. The teacher's role is the supporter who does not give corrective or grammatical feedback on the students' free writing. They will provide personal responses to ideas or contents of the writing. Students have opportunities to elaborate on their own topics and do not have to worry about the grammatical accuracy. Likewise, Jacobs (1986) states that free writing or called "quickwriting" has three main features which are concentrating on content, not worrying about forms, and writing without stopping.

To sum up, free writing is a writing activity which focuses on fluency. As supported by Desalvo (1990) who comments that a free writing activity supports fluency development which is related to the term "flow." Students can write about topics that they

want to elaborate. They get more freedom when they write. Teachers play a role as supporters who do not comment on the grammatical accuracy; however, they focus on the content and the message that what students want to convey.

## **2) Free Writing in Practice**

With regard to the use of the free writing activity in a classroom, Fontaine (1991) states that it involves three elements; the degree of freedom, privacy, and limited time given. According to the degree of freedom, De-Avila, Duncan, and Navarrete (1987) mention that students should have an opportunity to write freely. Sometimes, the written product should be private, i.e. allowing students to write at home in their privacy. Moreover, writing time given should be adequate depends on the writers want (Fontaine, 1991). Teachers adjust the activity depends on what context it is used in. Marsella and Hilgers (1991) state that free writing activity is effective because it is flexible. It can be used at any levels. A free writing activity is self-expressive writing. It helps the writers reach their deep emotions which are inside individual minds and encourages the writers to reveal their ideas and thoughts. It has positive effects on individual's psychological health (Pennebaker, 1991).

Another way to use free writing is to integrate with other skills. Free writing is used as a pre-reading task before reading because it can trigger students' background knowledge. Students' background knowledge is an essential component to support the efficient comprehension (Lent, 2012). This notion is further supported by Rumelhart (1980) who explains that the relationship between the background knowledge and texts can refer to schema theory. Schema theory has a significant role in learning as a data structure for

representing the concepts stored in the memory. The prior knowledge supports the readers to get efficient comprehension on the text they read. Hence, free writing is integrated as a lead in activity of the lesson and to recall students' background knowledge. In addition, Masrour and Hoseini (2013) found that free writing could support students' innovative schema and help integrate reading and writing skills.

### **3) The Benefits of Free Writing**

Lee (1999) argues that free writing provides valuable functions in various teaching and learning contexts both in L1 and L2 writing. There are three main benefits of using free writing in a language classroom (Hwang, 2010).

First, free writing can build up writing confidence. Free writing is considered a technique for a writing class because it is a powerful way to promote the writer's confidence. It supports writers to compose the writing in their own styles, so they have an opportunity to freely create their writing (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989; Lee, 1999). As supported by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and Elbow (1998), when the writers have freedom to express what they are interested, the anxiety will decrease but the confidence will increase. Anxiety is one of the factors that affects the writing confidence. Anxiety often occurs when the students are requested to produce writing. Free writing is suggested as a method to decrease the anxiety because not only the anxiety is eliminated but the writing confidence will also increase (Kara, 2013).

Second, free writing increases writing fluency. Free writing has been long thought of as a good technique to improve writing fluency since it lets students write freely and concentrate on content not on form (Frances, 2014; Jacob, 1986). As supported by

Elbow (1998), "the main thing about free writing is non-editing" (p.6). To keep writing and not editing is the rules that increase students' writing fluency. When free writing was emphasized in classroom, fluency is considered before accuracy. Students can focus on what they are interested and let their writing flow (MacGowan-Gilhooly, 1991). As supported by Lee (1999), the practice of free writing is beneficial in a writing classroom because it helps enhance students' writing fluency. They write down whatever that comes to their mind and focuses on the content. Furthermore, it creates a congenial classroom environment (Casanave, 2004).

Third, free writing promotes the writers to develop ideas. Free writing supports the writers to write the topic that they are interested without worrying about grammatical accuracy. It may affect students' creativity. As Kerka (1996) and Moffet (1968) reveal that free writing helps promote students' creativity. Using free writing will help avoid situation in which students often find themselves deficient of ideas. In contrast, a free writing supports students to build up and develop their ideas for writing. As Elbow (1998) emphasizes, free writing makes the writers take the time to work through the ideas floating in head and write them down. It lets writers free from the burden of correctness. In addition, free writing is a process of generating a lot of information by writing non-stop. The writers have an opportunity to play with the ideas and they feel relaxed to develop the ideas in their minds (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Elbow, 1998).

In brief, many educators and researchers explain why free writing should be used in a language classroom. Free writing can decrease the level of stress and anxiety which are the general problems for beginners. Writers who get more freedom to write are likely to let their ideas flow. Furthermore, when the ideas flow without concerning of the

grammatical correctness, writing fluency and confidence will increase (MacGown-Gilhooly, 1991).

### **Related Studies**

Free writing has been widely used in a language classroom. Many research studies present its results.

Frances (2014) did a study on increase in writing fluency through free writing journals. In her study, 46 college students in two writing classes at Kobe Shoin Women's University were studied. The students in the first class were in the highest group of English, but no one was English majors. The students in the second class were in the highest proficiency English class; all the students were English majors. All students were given a journal writing which the topic of which was decided by the teacher for 11 weeks. In each writing class, they were encouraged to make a quick mind mapping of ideas before starting their journal writings. Next, they were allowed to use their dictionaries and asked the teacher for suggestions to complete their journal writings. At the end of the experiment, she found that students' writing fluency was increased steadily through free-writing activities. She also found that students' confidence had increased and they enjoyed the writing activity.

Fhonna (2014) did a study on the difficulty faced by students in producing free-writing: a study at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena. In her study, the participants were 18 students in the third year at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena, Indonesia. Each participant was assigned to write a free writing assignment which contained at least 150 words. The

teacher collected all assignments and found out the category of errors that appeared most frequently. The questionnaire was used to obtain data about the reasons for the students' difficulties in producing free writing based on their experience. She found a variety of errors occurred in the students' free writing and they were related to errors in the grammatical conventions.

Hwang (2010) did a case study on the influence of free writing on writing fluency and confidence of EFL college-level students. In his study, the participants were eight female freshmen college-level students with Thai as the native language. The participants were required to accomplish their free writing in class in the limited time for 90 minutes long in a class where they met five days a week during the eight-week program. All participants had a diagnostic pre-test at the beginning of the course, which involved writing an essay for 30 minutes on a topic that they chose from a list. At the end of the course, they were asked to take the post-test with the same topics and of the same length as the pre-test. Both the pre and post-tests were compared in terms of fluency (words per minute). He found that practicing free writing for eight weeks had a statically significant at the .05 level on students' writing fluency. All participants' writing fluency increased with a mean difference of 3.87 words per minute.

Tuan (2010) did a study on enhancing EFL learners' writing skill via journal writing. In his study, the participants were 85 second-year students who had the same writing proficiency level from two writing classes at the University of Social and Humanities in Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam. They were divided into two groups. The first group was the experimental group which was assigned the journals writing activity as an extra homework assignment. Another group was the control group which was required to accomplish the

journal writing activity in each period in their writing class. All of them participated in the activity for 13 weeks. The pre-test and post-test in the form of essay writing were employed as instruments to measure the students' writing fluency. A questionnaire was used to collect the reflections upon journal writing. He found that the difference in the average number of words written by the experimental group and the control group between pre-test and post-test were 18.84 and 7.90 respectively. It showed that the journal writing supported students' writing fluency. Furthermore, students' writing motivation increased and it established a close rapport between the teachers and students.

Jones and East (2009) did a study on empowering primary writers through daily journal writing. In their study, 15 first-grade students at a primary school in Florida, U.S.A were participants. They were assigned to write daily journal writing and received feedback from the teacher. The teacher analyzed the journal writing by computing three categories: correctly spelled words, total words, and correct use of punctuation. Three specific dates were chosen for data analysis: August 14, January 14, and May 25. They found that the journal writing supported students' writing proficiency. All three categories –correctly spelled words, total words, and correct use of punctuation – demonstrated steady growth over time in students' journal writing. The practice of daily journal writing had the potential to increase students' writing confidence and controlled over written language.

Huang and Chen (2005) did a study on a comparison of three types of writing assessment for EFL vocational high school students in Taiwan. In their study, 82 third-year students from two vocational high schools in Chiya, Taiwan were participants. All the participants were evaluated by three writing tasks which were free writing, guided writing, and 20 multiple-choice questions during the English class. With regard to the free writing

task, the participants were only given a main topic without any suggestions or ideas to guide them. On the other hand, the guided writing task included a picture and some suggestions for writing. Both the topics of the free writing and guided writing tasks were about daily life. As for the multiple-choice writing test, five types of items were included: grammar, topic sentence selection, sentence insertion, sentence deletion, and sentence rearrangement. Data were collected from three assessment tasks, two sets of questionnaires, and an interview data. They found that the students' performances on the three writing tasks were different. Students scored highest on the multiple-choice test (63.96%), second highest on the guided writing (57.68%), and lowest on free writing (51.10%). Most of the students felt most anxious when they did the free writing task. Their mind went blank when they started to work on the free writing because they did not know what to write. In contrast, students got the highest score in the multiple-choice questions because they could guess even if they did not understand the question.

Lee (1999) did a study on the use of free writing activities in an ESL process writing classroom. In his study, eight foreign students of English as a second language from three ESL process writing classrooms at a Canadian university were participants. All the participants studied in the writing classroom six hours a week. The researcher collected data by using multiple data methods which were classroom observation, interview, and document collection. The first method was classroom observation. The participants were assigned the free writing tasks which were divided into three steps. The first step was pre-free writing activity included two sub-activities, topic selection and brainstorming. The next step was free writing activity in which the students were assigned to write their assignments. The last step was post-freewriting activity which the teacher gave feedback.

During the class, the researcher recorded the observation and took notes how students reacted when they joined all free writing activities and received feedback. The second method was interview. They were interviewed about their perceptions toward the free writing classroom activity. Third, all documents in the writing class such as the students' logs with the teachers' comments, handouts, introducing topics, and pictures were collected. The result showed each activity played a role in the benefits of free writing.

Thomas (1989) did a study on the effects of free writing on high school students' attitudes toward writing. In his study, the tenth grade high school students from two writing classrooms were participants. The participants in the first classroom were the experimental group which engaged in free writing. The participants in another classroom were in the control group which did not engage in free writing. A pre-test was used at the beginning and a post-test was used at the end of the experiment to measure the attitudes towards students' writing. The questionnaire was used to gather the data in terms of preference for writing, perception of writing and process of writing. The treatment consisted of up to 50 minutes of free writing for six weeks. The control group spent up to 50 minutes on regular compositions for six weeks. He found that writing attitude scale for students showed no significant difference in change of attitude between the experimental and control group. The differences in the average mean scores written by the experimental group and the control group between pre-test and post-test were 9.43 and 2.47 respectively. The difference was not statically significant. The results of the study did not support the hypothesis that free writing can be instrumental in improving students' attitudes toward writing.

In summary, we can see that there are still some controversies toward the effects of free writing activities from different contexts. Further studies are very much needed since the findings showed the controversial results. In addition, almost all of the studies were conducted in the ESL contexts with a focus on a primary or university level. Hence, the study will be conducted in a secondary school EFL context to fill gap in previous research.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the previous chapters, the researcher presented the background of the study, the study objectives, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, the definition of terms and the literature reviews. In this chapter, the researcher provides the methodological design of the study which includes research design, participants of the study, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

This research was a quantitative research aiming to investigate the effect of using free writing activity to increase students' writing fluency. In the study, the total words mean scores of the pre-test and post-test were compared to examine the students' writing fluency.

The study was conducted in the EFL secondary school context. It aimed at investigating the increasing of students' writing fluency and students' opinions after using free writing activity. The number of words that students wrote in the pre-test and post-test were compared and statistically analyzed by using the matched pair T-test. In addition, students' opinions toward free writing activity were gathered from the questionnaire and then analyzed through SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to obtain descriptive statistic, mean and standard deviations. This research has two research questions which were 1) Does the students' writing fluency increase after using free writing activity? and 2) How do the students experience the free writing activity?

## **Participants of the Study**

The participants were 46 tenth grade students at Debsirinromkiao School in the second semester of 2016. The selection of the participants was conducted via a convenience sampling method. All of them had the same or almost the same degree of English knowledge. All participants passed the Foundation English which they studied in the seventh to ninth grade. Furthermore, most of them were more responsible for their own learning.

## **Research Instruments**

The following instruments were used in this study.

### **1) The Instructions for Free Writing Assignments**

The instructions for free writing assignments were used as an instrument in guiding the students to understand the whole process of free writing activity and assignments. It was presented at the first week of the experiment included nine directions as shown below:

1. You can choose any topic you wish to write about. It can be about your daily life, things that you are interested in or stories that you would like to share with the teacher.

2. In this activity, grammatical accuracy will not be evaluated. The main concern is the content.

3. Do not copy from other sources. Copying and plagiarism will not be tolerated.

4. Every assignment is read and given feedback by the teacher.

5. You will be asked to write free writing assignments as extra homework for ten weeks from November 2016 to January 2017.

6. You have to submit a free writing assignment weekly. It will be an extra writing homework starting from November 2016 to January 2017.

7. You are encouraged to type your work. Please use *Time New Roman* font size 12 with double space.

8. Submit your work by emailing it to the teacher at [supperkwang@gmail.com](mailto:supperkwang@gmail.com)

9. If you have problems accessing the Internet, you can hand in your hand written journal in class on Monday.

It should be noted that the instructions for free writing assignments were translated into Thai to ensure the participants' clear understanding (See Appendix B).

## **2) Pre-test and Post-test**

The pre-test and post-test were the instruments used to measure the students' writing fluency. The pre-test was the first writing test given to the students at the first week of the semester. The topic is "*My Exciting Experience.*" The post-test was the final writing test given to the students at the end of the semester. The post-test topic was "*My Impressive Journey.*" To examine the content validity of the test, three experts were asked to examine the topic of the pre-test and post-test through the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The time constraint for the pre-test and post-test was 50 minutes. The students did the test in class and were not allowed to talk to their friends, use a dictionary, a mobile phone, and a textbook. The number of words in the pre and the post-test writings

were counted by Microsoft Word program and statistically compared by matched pair T-test to find out the means scores and standard deviation to detect the students' writing fluency.

### 3) Questionnaire

A 30-item using Likert's 5 rating scales questionnaire, adopted from Kulsirisawad (2016), was used to evaluate the students' opinions toward free writing activity. The participants answered the questionnaire which was in the form of statements answered on a 5-point scale with 1: representing strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neither disagree nor agree; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree.

The 30-item questionnaire includes three themes: usefulness (items 1-10), acceptance (items 11-23), and affect (items 24-30). The original questionnaire was constructed in English and then translated into Thai (See Appendix G).

The content validity and the correctness of language use of each item of the questionnaire were examined by three experts of English at SWU Faculty of Humanities. The index of item-objective congruence (IOC) was used in evaluation. The experts rated individual items on the degree to which they did or did not measure specific objectives by giving the item a rating of 1 (for clearly measuring), -1 (clearly not measuring), or 0 (degree to which it measures the content area is unclear) for each objectives (Turner, Mulvenon, Thomas, & Balkin, 2002). Next, the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) formula was used to evaluate the content validity. The item which a value of .50 or higher is considered acceptable as seen below:

$$IOC = \frac{\sum R}{N}$$

$\Sigma R$  means the total score for each item given by all the experts.

$N$  means the number of experts reviewing the item validity.

Table 1

IOC Ratings (The Ratings of Each Item by the Three Specialists)

Items No.	Expert 1 Rating	Expert 2 Rating	Expert 2 Rating	Total	IOC	Remarks
1	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
2	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
3	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
4	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
5	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
6	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
7	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accepted
8	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accepted
9	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accepted
10	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
11	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accepted
12	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
13	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
14	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
15	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
16	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
17	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
18	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted

Table 1 (continued)

Items No.	Expert 1 Rating	Expert 2 Rating	Expert 2 Rating	Total	IOC	Remarks
19	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
20	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
21	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
22	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
23	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
24	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
25	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
26	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
27	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted
28	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accepted
29	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accepted
30	1	1	1	3	1	Accepted

Average IOC 30 items = 0.93

The 30-item using Likert's 5 rating scale questionnaire was piloted on a sample drawn from the same population as the main study to increase the reliability, validity, and practicality of the questionnaire. The respondents were a group of 30 tenth grade students to find out the reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability. The value of 0.7 is an acceptable reliability coefficient (Nunnally, 1978; Devellis, 2003). From the Cronbach's alpha analysis, the reliability for this questionnaire was 0.765. Hence, it was acceptable. Then the revised questionnaire was used to obtain data for the study.

## Data Collection

At the first week of the semester, the instructions for free writing assignments were presented to the students to ensure that students would understand and follow the guidelines. Next, the pre-test writing was distributed to the participants. They were given 50 minutes in class to complete the test. The researcher collected all 46 writing pre-tests and counted the number of words in each paper using Microsoft Word program. During the semester, the participants were assigned to write freely on a topic that they were interested in. The free writing was the extra homework that they had to do once a week. Students submitted a weekly free writing electronically before 8 p.m. on Mondays for ten weeks which started at the second week and ended at the eleventh week. The teacher focused on the content but not on the grammatical accuracy. Ten points were given when they submit the assignments on time. The researcher received 46 free writing assignments per week and then counted the number of words by using Microsoft Word program, recorded the data and printed out each participant's free writing assignment to write feedback and give the assignment back.

At the end of the semester, the participants were asked to do the post-test writing for 50 minutes and complete the 30-item questionnaire which is in the form of rating scales with 1: representing strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neither disagree nor agree; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree.

The quantitative data was collected in response to two main research questions (1) Does the students' writing fluency increase after using free writing activity?, (2) How do the students experience the free writing activity?

To answer the first research question, the pre writing test was administered in the first week of the semester. Next, the participants were assigned the free writing as an extra weekly homework for ten weeks. At the end of the semester, the post writing test writing was administrated. The number of words in the pre and post-test writing were recorded and compared statistically to find out the students' writing fluency.

To answer the second research question, the data were collected from the 30-item questionnaire which was distributed to the participants after the experiment to find out the students' experience toward the writing activity.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to investigate whether the students' writing fluency has increased after the use of free writing activity throughout the semester (12 weeks), the data were analyzed as follows:

1. The 46 pre-test and 46 post-test were analyzed by using SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to obtain descriptive statistics; mean and standard deviations. The average mean scores and standard deviations of the pre-test and post-test were calculated and then compared using the Match paired t-test.

2. The 30-item questionnaire was analyzed by using SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to obtain descriptive statistic; mean scores and standard deviations.

In the next chapter, the findings of the research will be presented according to the research questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented according to the two research questions.

**Research Question 1:** *Does the students' writing fluency increase after using free writing activity?*

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics as analyzed by SPSS program. This Table provides the answer for the first research question about whether students' writing fluency increased after using free writing activity.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	46	104.59	41.99
Post-test	46	128.48	48.70

As shown in Table 2, the average mean score of the pre-test was 104.59 (S.D.= 41.99) and the post-test was 128.48 (S.D. = 48.70). It can be seen that, the average mean score of the students had increased.

Figure 1 shows the average mean scores from the students. The score of their post-test was relatively higher than those of their pre-test. This suggests that free writing activity could positively increase the tenth grade students' writing fluency.

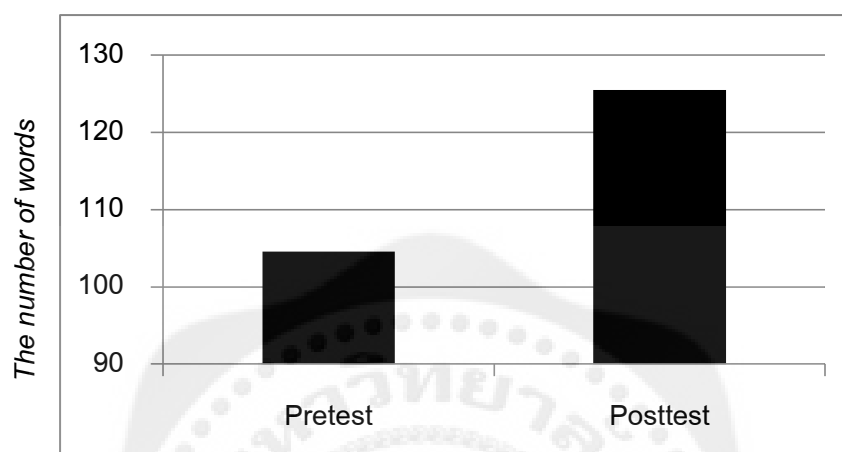


Figure 1 The Average Mean Scores on the Pre-test and Post-test

The average mean score of pre-test and post-test were compared using the paired *t*-test. Below is the Table of the comparison of paired differences via T-test.

Table 3

The Comparison of Paired Differences via T-test

Test	Paired Differences			df.	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
			Lower			Upper
Post-test – Pre-test	20.89	38.19	9.55	32.23	45	.00

The analysis conducted in Table 3 aimed to examine the effectiveness of before-and-after using the free writing activity to increase students' writing fluency. The findings showed that students' writing fluency was significantly improved after using free writing. The result showed that there was a significant between the average mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test at the  $p$  value of .00.

**Research Question 2:** *How do the students experience the free writing activity?*

At the end of the semester, all participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was replicated from Kulsirisawad (2016). The students' experiences toward free writing activity are presented in Table 4 to 7.

Table 4

Findings of Students' Opinions toward Free Writing Activity

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std.	Level of response
<b>Section I : Usefulness</b>			
1. Free writing helped me talk about my experiences.	4.39	.98	Strongly agree
2. Free writing helped me to express my ideas and opinions.	4.22	.99	Strongly agree
3. Free writing stimulated my critical thinking skills.	4.02	.98	Agree
4. Free writing offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills.	4.28	.93	Strongly agree
5. Frequent free writing has increased my writing fluency.	4.22	.94	Strongly agree

Table 4 (continued)

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std.	Level of response
6. Free writing motivated me to write more.	3.93	.83	Agree
7. Free writing helped me produce longer text.	3.83	.90	Agree
8. At the end of the course, free writing activity helped me become more confident about my writing.	3.98	.91	Agree
9. Free writing provides the avenue for students who are uncomfortable to voice their opinion in person.	4.20	1.00	Agree
10. I do not think free writing has benefited my writing skills.	3.85	1.33	Disagree
<b>Section II: Acceptance</b>			
11. I do not like free writing activity because the teacher did not correct my grammatical mistakes.	4.07	1.24	Disagree
12. I can see no values in the free writing activity.	4.17	1.16	Disagree
13. I think it is a good idea to use free writing to practice writing skills in English.	4.26	.74	Strongly agree
14. I enjoyed participating in the free writing activity because it made me learn in a relaxing way.	4.04	.84	Agree
15. Free writing should be encouraged continued in future writing classes.	4.00	.97	Agree
16. Free writing activity was too time-consuming.	3.65	1.20	Disagree
17. I did not know what to write in a free writing.	3.61	1.00	Disagree
18. Without an English writing class, I will still write a free writing in the future.	3.76	.99	Agree

Table 4 (continued)

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std.	Level of response
19. I did not have enough time to write in my free writing.	3.74	1.10	Disagree
20. Free writing is convenient because I can write anywhere and anytime.	3.98	.98	Agree
21. Free writing is a waste of time.	4.02	1.22	Disagree
22. I could let my ideas flow when I wrote free writing.	4.02	.93	Agree
23. Overall, free writing was a valuable and worthwhile experience.	4.00	.92	Agree
<b>Section III: Affect</b>			
24. I can be more creative when I write my own free writing.	4.00	.79	Agree
25. I feel no pressure when I write my own free writing.	4.26	.83	Strongly agree
26. I felt more motivated when I wrote a free writing than when I was assigned a writing topic.	4.15	1.07	Agree
27. In general, I feel that my English fluency has improved since I began writing.	4.04	.92	Agree
28. I think I have improved my writing skill since I started free writing.	4.13	.91	Agree
29. When I write a free writing, I do not worry about making grammatical mistakes.	4.20	1.00	Agree
30. I enjoyed the free writing activity.	4.22	.87	Strongly agree
Totals	4.04	1.00	Agree

(Kulsirisawad, 2016)

The findings show how the students experienced the free writing activity. Overall, the participants had positive experiences in every aspect of the free writing activity. As shown in Table 4, the opinions of the students toward free writing activity was at a “agree” level with a mean score of 4.04 and the standard deviation of 1.00. The highest mean score was item 1 (*Free writing helped me talk about my experience*) which was 4.30 and the standard deviation was .98. The next was item 4 (*Free writing offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills*) which had the mean score of 4.28 and the standard deviation of .93. The next highest mean scores were item 13 and item 25 (*I think it is a good idea to use free writing to practice writing skills in English and I feel no pressure when I write my own free writing respectively*). They both had a mean score of 4.26 with the S.D. of 0.74 and 0.83 respectively. The results supported the hypothesis that students had the positive views toward free writing activity.

Table 5

Findings of Students’ Opinions toward the Usefulness of Free Writing Activity

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std.	Level of response
1. Free writing helped me talk about my experiences.	4.39	.98	Strongly agree
2. Free writing helped me to express my ideas and opinions.	4.22	.99	Strongly agree
3. Free writing stimulated my critical thinking skills.	4.02	.98	Agree

Table 5 (continued)

Questionnaire Items	Mean	Std.	Level of response
4. Free writing offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills.	4.28	.93	Strongly agree
5. Frequent free writing has increased my writing fluency.	4.22	.94	Strongly agree
6. Free writing motivated me to write more.	3.93	.83	Agree
7. Free writing helped me produce longer text.	3.83	.90	Agree
8. At the end of the course, free writing activity helped me become more confident about my writing.	3.98	.91	Agree
9. Free writing provides the avenue for students who are uncomfortable to voice their opinion in person.	4.20	1.00	Agree
10. I do not think free writing has benefited my writing skills.	3.85	1.33	Disagree
Total	4.09	.99	Agree

With regard to the result of students' views toward the usefulness of free writing activity, the opinions of the students were at a "agree" level with a mean score of 4.09 and the standard deviation was .99. In other words, they perceived the free writing activity as beneficial for them as a writer. It supported them to express their experience, produce

longer text, and gain more writing confidence. In addition, they perceived that free writing helped increase their writing fluency.

Table 6

## Findings of Students' Opinions toward the Acceptance of Free Writing Activity

Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D.	Level of response
11. I do not like free writing activity because the teacher did not correct my grammatical mistakes.	4.07	1.24	Disagree
12. I can see no values in the free writing activity.	4.17	1.16	Disagree
13. I think it is a good idea to use free writing to practice writing skills in English.	4.26	.74	Strongly agree
14. I enjoyed participating in the free writing activity because it made me learn in a relaxing way.	4.04	.84	Agree
15. Free writing should be encouraged continued in future writing classes.	4.00	.97	Agree
16. Free writing activity was too time-consuming.	3.65	1.20	Disagree
17. I did not know what to write in a free writing.	3.61	1.00	Disagree
18. Without an English writing class, I will still write a free writing in the future.	3.76	.99	Agree
19. I did not have enough time to write in my free writing.	3.74	1.10	Disagree

Table 6 (continued)

Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D.	Level of response
20. Free writing is convenient because I can write anywhere and anytime.	3.98	.98	Agree
21. Free writing is a waste of time.	4.02	1.22	Disagree
22. I could let my ideas flow when I wrote free writing.	4.02	.93	Agree
23. Overall, free writing was a valuable and worthwhile experience.	4.00	.92	Agree
Total	3.95	1.04	Agree

With regard to the result of students' opinions toward the acceptance of free writing activity, it was found that they accepted free writing activity at a "agree" level with a mean score of 3.95 and the standard deviation was 1.04. In other words, they agreed to participate in the activity and did not reject it.

Table 7

## Findings of Students' Opinions toward the Affect of Free Writing Activity

Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D.	Level of response
24. I can be more creative when I write my own free writing.	4.00	.79	Agree
25. I feel no pressure when I write my own free writing.	4.26	.83	Strongly Agree

Table 7 (continued)

Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D.	Level of response
26. I felt more motivated when I wrote a free writing than when I was assigned a writing topic.	4.15	1.07	Agree
27. In general, I feel that my English fluency has improved since I began writing.	4.04	.92	Agree
28. I think I have improved my writing skill since I started free writing.	4.13	.91	Agree
29. When I write a free writing, I do not worry about making grammatical mistakes.	4.20	1.00	Agree
30. I enjoyed the free writing activity.	4.22	.87	Strongly agree
Total	4.14	.91	Agree

With regard to the affect aspect, the findings suggest that the students liked free writing activity at a “agree” level with a mean score of 4.14 and the standard deviation was .91. In other words, they enjoyed participating in the activity and they felt motivated to write.

In conclusion, the findings show that students’ writing fluency had significantly increased after using free writing activity ( $p < 0.05$ ). The students held positive views toward the free writing activity. However, to further understand the research findings, the discussion of major findings is presented in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the chapter is to discuss how the two research questions have been answered and to offer the implications of these findings. Based on the findings, recommendations for English language teaching are offered as a way to enhance the learning experience of Thai students in the English writing classroom. It concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the research and some suggestions for further studies.

#### **Summary of the Findings**

The answers to the two research questions are presented below.

#### **Research question 1: Does the students' writing fluency increase after using free writing activity?**

The study has revealed that the students' writing fluency has increased after using free writing activity. The findings indicate that the mean scores and standard deviation of the students' post-test are higher than those of their pre-test. Furthermore, T-test dependent shows that the students' mean scores have increased from 104.59 at the beginning to 128.48 at the end of the semester. The result shows that students' writing fluency is significantly increased at the level of .05.

In summary, the evidence suggests that in quantitative terms, free writing activity has some positive impact on the students' writing fluency which supports the first research hypothesis (*Students' writing fluency has increased after using free writing activity*). Such finding appears to resemble the study of Hwang (2010) which also found that free writing

activity had a positive influence on the students' writing abilities in terms of writing fluency. In similar vein, Tuan (2010) conducted a study about the use of free writing in an EFL classroom and similar results were achieved. The students' writing fluency had increased after using free writing activity. They were able to produce a much longer text at the end of the semester.

From the findings of this study, it can be argued that free writing could have a positive effect on writing fluency. As Desalvo (1990) notes, free writing activity supports fluency development which related to the term "flow" and the increasing of students' writing confidence. At the end of the semester, the students are able to write longer i.e. 120 words. It is higher than the average mean scores at beginning of the semester which they are able to write no more than 105 words.

**Researcher Question 2: How do the students experience the free writing activity?**

The findings of the second research question show that the students had positive views toward the free writing activity. The opinions of the students toward free writing activity in terms of usefulness, acceptance, and affect are at an "agree" level with a mean score of 4.04.

To further elaborate, it can be argued that the students have positive opinions toward free writing activity. In terms of usefulness, the overwhelming majority of students agreed that the free writing activity really benefits them. In addition, they show a high degree of acceptance and affect toward the activity.

The results appear to reflect the statement made by Williams (2008), who states that the free writing is useful as a process of discovering the thought. It can connect students' interests, experiences with the texts. It is also supported by Spencer (2007) who did a study on the perception towards free writing in a first-year composition class. At the end of the study, the students had positive attitudes towards free writing in terms of the usefulness because it helps them to recognize and develop their ideas. The findings of this study are also similar to those of Lannin (2007) and Hwang (2010). Lanin (2007) did a study on high school students' experiences and attitudes toward free writing and he found that the students liked free writing activity because it motivated them to write. They had the freedom to write by themselves. Similarly, Hwang (2010) did a study on the use of freewriting in EFL college level. In his survey, he found that students enjoyed the freewriting activity. It was useful, meaningful, and interesting for them.

Building on the evidence of the analysis, it can be concluded that free writing has positive impact in a writing classroom. Students develop their writing fluency during the semester i.e., they are able to write more than 120 words at the end of the semester. Furthermore, the students have positive views towards the use of free writing activity. As supported by Casnave (2004), free writing relates to writing fluency. It encourages the writers to continue writing without worrying too much about grammatical accuracy. Practicing free writing supports students to sense the power of the language as the creators (Dickerson, 1987). In addition, free writing allows the writers to play with their ideas. It advocates the writers to get more confidences and build up the love of writing (Fulwiler, 1987).

## **Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Further Studies**

Like all other research, this work is open to improvement in several ways. Some of which are considered here:

1. The participants in this study were limited to 46 tenth graders studying English Reading and Writing Course at Debsirinromklao School. It has been acknowledged that even though this sample size allowed me to have in-depth observations of the entity being studied, it limits the statistical power available to detect differences. Moreover, due to the small number of students involved in the study, it would be inaccurate to claim that the results can be generalized to other populations outside Debsirinromklao School. The results observed in this study need to be substantiated by further research with a wider range of participants. Further studies could possibly involve more classrooms or focus on different levels such as primary, or college level, or even mixed levels to confirm the positive impact of free writing activity.

2. The length of the data collection was only 12 weeks. It was not a long period. Hence, a longitudinal study is encouraged. Future studies might extend the length of data collection to thirty weeks (an academic year) to confirm the result of the study.

3. The study was a quantitative research which was based on the comparison of pre writing test and post writing test scores. Instead of focusing at the beginning and the end products, future studies should take into account the ongoing process by looking at the students' homework to observe the students' development during the semester.

4. Further studies should include an in-depth interview in order to gain more information that could not be found from the questionnaire. It is possible that students have more to say about the use of free-writing activity.

### **Recommendations for Teachers and Practitioners**

On the basis of the research findings, I would like to offer some general thoughts of how to enhance students' writing fluency. The intention is to further develop English language teaching in Thailand, particularly in the writing area.

1. I would like to argue for the continual practice of free writing activity for many reasons. First, it provides students opportunities to practice writing. They will be familiar with how to compose and express their ideas. Furthermore, the free writing activity helps them to write without having to be worried about grammatical correctness. Their writing confidence can be boosted.

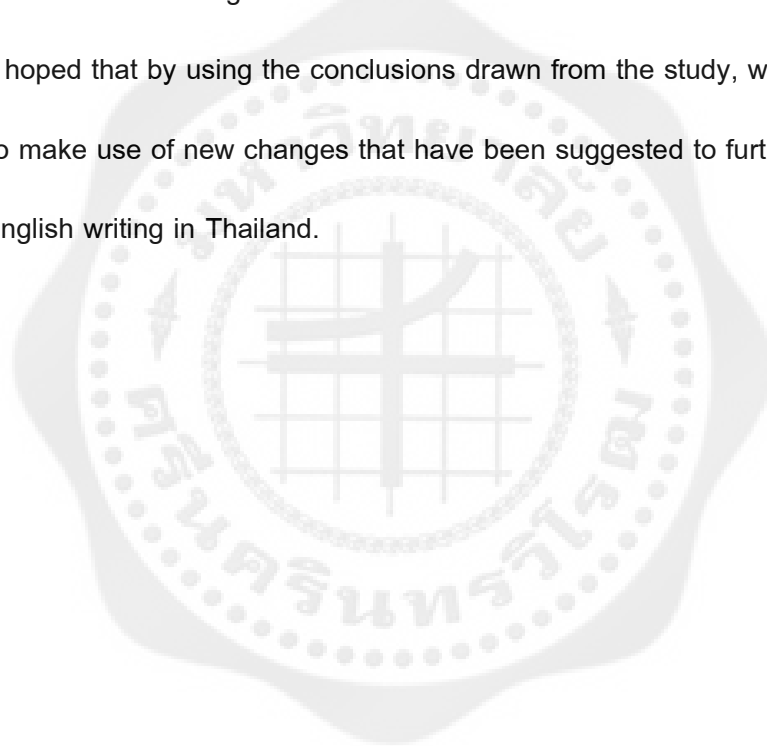
2. A shift toward a more agentive and self-responsive learning approach calls for student-centered activities. When students are allowed to create their own topics, they will learn to be more responsible for their own learning. In addition, they will feel motivated to write when they write about things that they are interested in.

3. Free writing activity can be used as an alternative way in boosting up students' writing confidence. As evident from the questionnaire findings, the students felt more motivated, happy, and enjoyable. When they could see that they could write longer, they were more confident and believed that they could actually "write" in English. Therefore, the free writing activity offers an opportunity for students to practice and become authors of their own stories.

4. The students' cooperation is crucial in this kind of study. In order to ensure the number of writing assignment submission, it is necessary for the teacher to employ a strategy to encourage the student to be responsible and hand in their work on time. For example, the teacher may give extra points to students who submit their work on time.

5. Accuracy is not a focus of this study. Further studies may take into account both fluency and accuracy. It can be done through counting the number of words that are in grammatical sentences and ignore words that occur in ill-formed sentences.

It is hoped that by using the conclusions drawn from the study, writing teachers will be able to make use of new changes that have been suggested to further develop the teaching of English writing in Thailand.





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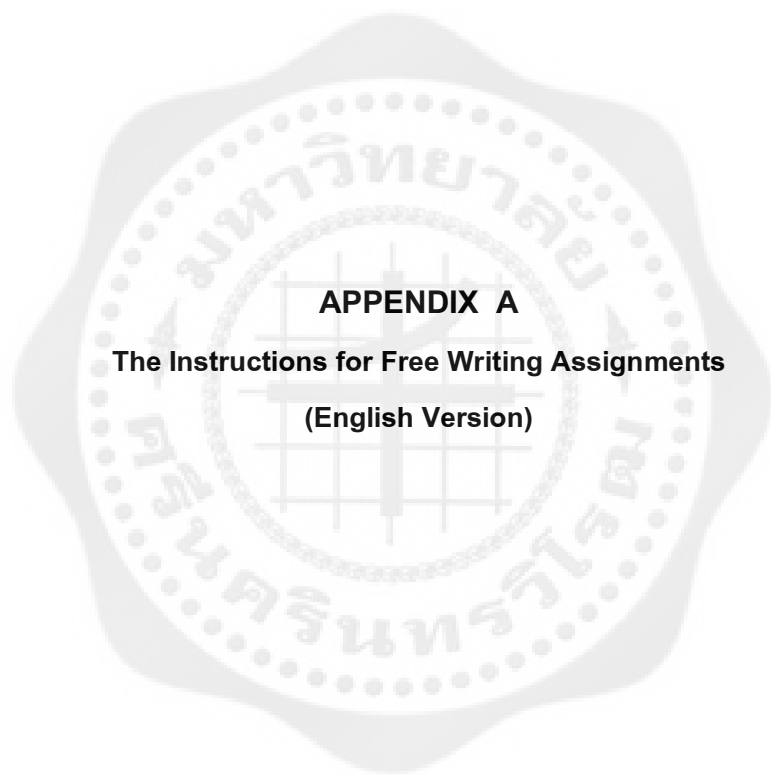
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**APPENDIX A**

**The Instructions for Free Writing Assignments**

**(English Version)**

## Instructions for Free Writing Assignments

Instructions are presented in the first week on the orientation day. Below is the instruction sheet that will be distributed to the students.

1. You can choose any topic you wish to write about. It can be about your daily life, things that you are interested in or stories that you would like to share with the teacher.
2. In this activity, grammatical accuracy will not be evaluated. The main concern is the content.
3. Do not copy from other sources. Copying and plagiarism will not be tolerated.
4. Every assignment is read and given feedback by teacher.
5. You will be asked to write free writing assignments as extra homework for ten weeks from November 2016 to January 2017.
6. You have to submit a free writing assignment weekly. It will be an extra writing homework starting from November 2016 to January 2017.
7. You are encouraged to type your work. Please use time new roman font size 12 with double space.
8. Submit your work by emailing it to the teacher at [supperkwang@gmail.com](mailto:supperkwang@gmail.com)
9. If you have problems accessing the Internet, you can hand in your hand written journal in class on Monday.



**APPENDIX B**

**The Instructions for Free Writing Assignments**

**(Thai Version)**

### คำแนะนำการส่งชิ้นงานการเขียนนิสระ

คำแนะนำนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อบอกรายละเอียดกิจกรรมการเขียนนิสระ มีรายละเอียดดังนี้

1. นักเรียนสามารถเลือกเขียนงานเขียนนิสระตามหัวข้อเรื่องที่ตนเองสนใจหรือตามความชอบ
2. กิจกรรมการเขียนนิสระจะไม่ตรวจความถูกต้องทางด้านไวยากรณ์ แต่จะเน้นไปในเนื้อหาที่นักเรียนเขียน
3. ห้ามนักเรียนคัดลอกมาจากเพื่อนร่วมชั้นเรียนหรือแหล่งข้อมูลต่าง ๆ หากตรวจพบนักเรียนจะโดนปรับตกในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษอ่าน – เขียน ทันที
4. ครูอ่านชิ้นงานการเขียนนิสระที่นักเรียนส่งมาในแต่ละสัปดาห์และให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับ (feedback) ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับเรื่องที่นักเรียนเล่ามาเท่านั้น ครูจะไม่ให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับด้านไวยากรณ์
5. ชิ้นงานการเขียนนิสระเป็นการบ้านพิเศษที่นอกเหนือจากการเรียนในห้องเรียน โดยนักเรียนจะต้องเขียนจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 10 ครั้ง และส่งในทุกสัปดาห์ รวมเป็นระยะเวลา 10 สัปดาห์
6. นักเรียนจะต้องเขียนชิ้นงานเขียนนิสระโดยใช้โปรแกรม Microsoft Word ตัวอักษร Time New Roman ขนาด 12 โดยเว้นความห่างระหว่างบรรทัด 2.0
7. นักเรียนส่งงานเข้าจดหมายอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ (E-mail) [supperkwang@gmail.com](mailto:supperkwang@gmail.com) ภายในวันจันทร์ก่อนเวลา 20.00 น.
8. กรณีที่นักเรียนมีปัญหาด้านอินเทอร์เน็ตหรือคอมพิวเตอร์ นักเรียนสามารถเขียนส่งได้ โดยจะต้องนำมาส่งที่ห้องพักรูภายในวันจันทร์ก่อนเวลา 16.00 น.
9. กรณีที่นักเรียนส่งงานหลักจากระยะเวลาที่กำหนด นักเรียนจะโดนตัดคะแนนการส่งงาน



**APPENDIX C**

**Pre-test**

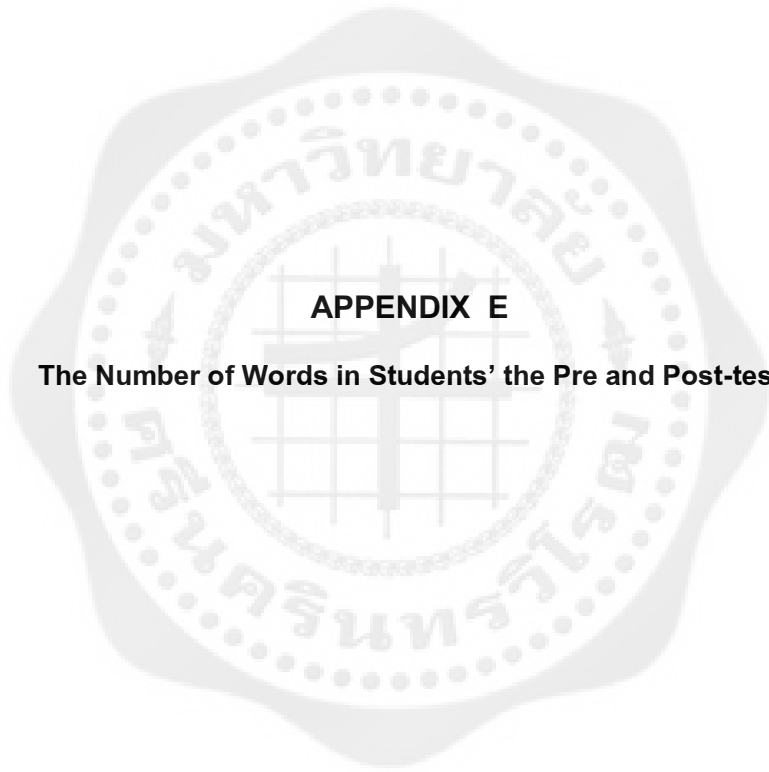




**APPENDIX D**

**Post-test**





**APPENDIX E**

**The Number of Words in Students' the Pre and Post-test**

Students	The number of words		Students	The number of words	
	The pre-test	The post-test		The pre-test	The post-test
<b>S1</b>	186	204	<b>S25</b>	105	146
<b>S2</b>	63	94	<b>S26</b>	69	54
<b>S3</b>	98	125	<b>S27</b>	82	119
<b>S4</b>	207	187	<b>S28</b>	108	82
<b>S5</b>	71	96	<b>S29</b>	112	175
<b>S6</b>	129	77	<b>S30</b>	86	194
<b>S7</b>	101	124	<b>S31</b>	74	150
<b>S8</b>	51	84	<b>S32</b>	136	77
<b>S9</b>	134	87	<b>S33</b>	112	69
<b>S10</b>	134	147	<b>S34</b>	119	110
<b>S11</b>	166	230	<b>S35</b>	92	79
<b>S12</b>	124	182	<b>S36</b>	138	156
<b>S13</b>	87	163	<b>S37</b>	94	71
<b>S14</b>	131	146	<b>S38</b>	189	208
<b>S15</b>	158	150	<b>S39</b>	69	103
<b>S16</b>	71	115	<b>S40</b>	96	120
<b>S17</b>	229	228	<b>S41</b>	52	84
<b>S18</b>	104	151	<b>S42</b>	93	90
<b>S19</b>	61	62	<b>S43</b>	86	153
<b>S20</b>	89	160	<b>S44</b>	71	64
<b>S21</b>	100	178	<b>S45</b>	88	150
<b>S22</b>	61	104	<b>S46</b>	37	41
<b>S23</b>	82	73	<b>Total</b>	<b>4811</b>	<b>5772</b>
<b>S24</b>	66	110	<b>Mean</b>	<b>104.59</b>	<b>125.48</b>



**APPENDIX F**

**Questionnaire (English Version)**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

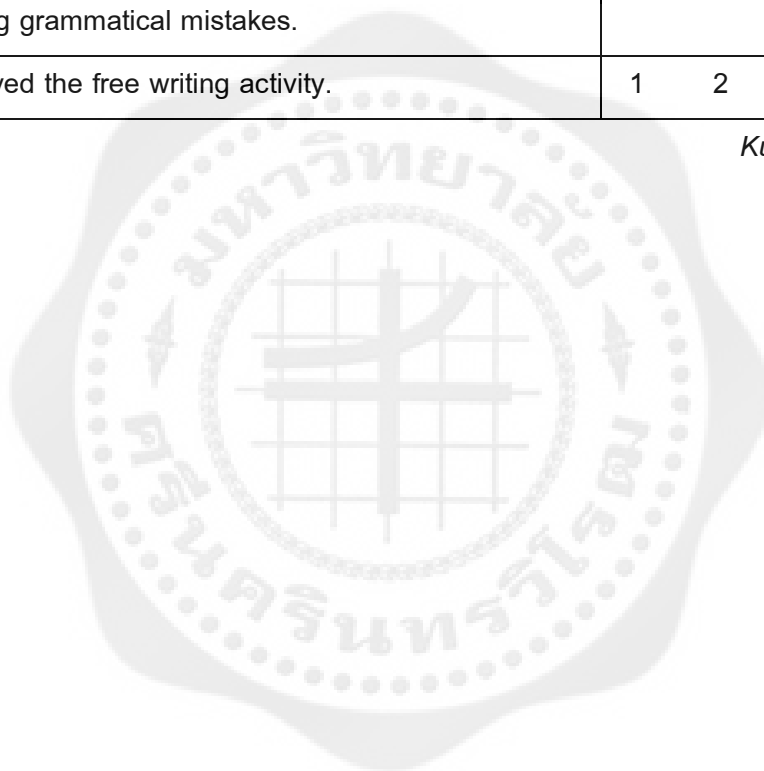
**Instructions:** Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by placing a check mark in the appropriate box.

	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1.	Free writing helped to talk about my experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Free writing helped me to express my ideas and opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Free writing stimulated my critical thinking skills.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Free writing offered me a chance to develop and reinforce my writing skills.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Frequent free writing has increased my writing fluency.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Free writing motivated me to write more.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Free writing helped me produce longer text.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	At the end of the course, free writing activity helped me become more confident about my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Free writing provides the avenue for students who are uncomfortable to voice their opinion in person.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I do not think free writing has benefited my writing skills.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	I do not like free writing activity because the teacher did not correct my grammatical mistakes.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	I can see no values in the free writing activity.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	I think it is a good idea to use free writing to practice writing skills in English.	1	2	3	4	5

	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
14.	I enjoyed participating in the free writing activity because it made me learn in a relaxing way.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Free writing should be encouraged/ continued in future writing classes.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Free writing activity was too time-consuming.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	I did not know what to write in a free writing.	5	4	3	2	1
18.	Without an English writing class, I will still write a free writing in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I did not have enough time to write in my free writing.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	Free writing is convenient because I can write anywhere and anytime.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Free writing is a waste of time.	5	4	3	2	1
22.	I could let my ideas flow when I wrote free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Overall, free writing was a valuable and worthwhile experience.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I can be more creative when I write my own free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I feel no pressure when I write my own free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I felt more motivated when I wrote a free writing than when I was assigned a writing topic.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	In general, I feel that my English fluency has improved since I began writing.	1	2	3	4	5

	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
28.	I think I have improved my writing skill since I started free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	When I write a free writing, I do not worry about making grammatical mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I enjoyed the free writing activity.	1	2	3	4	5

*Kulsirisawad (2016)*





**APPENDIX G**

**Questionnaire (Thai Version)**

## แบบสอบถามความคิดเห็นของนักเรียน

### ที่มีต่อกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ (free writing activity)

#### คำชี้แจง

แบบสอบถามฉบับนี้เป็นเครื่องมือหนึ่งของงานวิจัย ใช้เพื่อเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลความคิดเห็นของนักเรียนระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 ที่มีต่อกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ โดยข้อความในแบบสอบถามมีทั้งสิ้น 30 ข้อความ แบ่งเป็น 3 ด้าน คือ ประโยชน์จากกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ การยอมรับการใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ และความรู้สึกที่มีต่อกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ

ขอความร่วมมือนักเรียนตอบแบบสอบถามโดยใส่เครื่องหมาย ( ✓ ) ลงในช่องที่ตรงกับความคิดเห็นของนักเรียนมากที่สุด

ข้อความ	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่แน่ใจ	เห็นด้วย	เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
<b>ประโยชน์จากกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ</b>					
1. การเขียนอิสระช่วยให้ฉันได้กล่าวถึงประสบการณ์ของตนเอง	1	2	3	4	5
2. การเขียนอิสระช่วยให้ฉันแสดงประสบการณ์และความคิดเห็นของฉัน	1	2	3	4	5
3. การเขียนอิสระกระตุ้นทักษะการคิดอย่างมีวิจารณญาณ	1	2	3	4	5
4. การเขียนอิสระช่วยเพิ่มโอกาสการพัฒนาและเสริมสร้างทักษะการเขียน	1	2	3	4	5
5. การเขียนอิสระบ่อย ๆ ช่วยเพิ่มความคล่องในการเขียน	1	2	3	4	5
6. การเขียนอิสระสร้างแรงจูงใจให้ฉันเขียนได้มากขึ้น	1	2	3	4	5
7. การเขียนอิสระช่วยให้ฉันเขียนข้อความได้ยาวมากขึ้น	1	2	3	4	5

ข้อความ	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่แน่ใจ	เห็นด้วย	เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
8. หลังจากที่ฉันเรียนจบรายวิชานี้ กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระช่วยให้ฉันมีความมั่นใจในการเขียนที่มากขึ้น	1	2	3	4	5
9. การเขียนอิสระเป็นช่องทางแสดงออกของนักเรียนที่ไม่ชอบแสดงความคิดเห็นของตนแบบระหว่างบุคคล	1	2	3	4	5
10. ฉันไม่คิดว่ากิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระมีประโยชน์ต่อทักษะการเขียนของฉัน	5	4	3	2	1
<b>การยอมรับการใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ</b>					
11. ฉันไม่ชอบกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ เนื่องจากครูไม่ตรวจความผิดพลาดด้านไวยากรณ์	5	4	3	2	1
12. ฉันไม่เห็นคุณค่าของกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ	5	4	3	2	1
13. ฉันคิดว่ามันเป็นความคิดที่ดีที่จะใช้การเขียนอิสระเพื่อการฝึกฝนทักษะการเขียนในวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ	1	2	3	4	5
14. ฉันเพลิดเพลินในการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ เนื่องจากฉันได้เรียนแบบผ่อนคลาย	1	2	3	4	5
15. ควรจัดให้มีการเขียนอิสระต่อไปในวิชาการเขียนอื่น ๆ ในอนาคต	1	2	3	4	5
16. กิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระต้องใช้เวลามาก	5	4	3	2	1
17. ฉันไม่รู้ว่าจะเขียนอะไรในการเขียนอิสระ	5	4	3	2	1
18. หลังจากจบวิชานี้ ฉันจะเขียนอิสระต่อไป	1	2	3	4	5
19. ฉันไม่มีเวลาเพียงพอที่จะเขียนงานเขียนอิสระ	5	4	3	2	1
20. การเขียนอิสระเป็นสิ่งที่สะดวก เนื่องจากฉันสามารถเขียนได้ทุกที่ทุกเวลา	1	2	3	4	5
21. การเขียนอิสระเป็นการเขียนที่เสียเวลา	5	4	3	2	1
22. ฉันสามารถแสดงความคิดเห็นของฉันออกมาได้เรื่อย ๆ ขณะที่ฉันเขียนแบบอิสระ	1	2	3	4	5
23. โดยภาพรวมการเขียนอิสระเป็นประสบการณ์ที่มีคุณค่า และคุ้มค่า	1	2	3	4	5

ข้อความ	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ไม่แน่ใจ	เห็นด้วย	เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
<b>ความรู้สึกที่มีต่อกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ</b>					
24. ฉันมีความคิดสร้างสรรค์มากขึ้นเมื่อฉันเขียนงานเขียนอิสระ	1	2	3	4	5
25. ฉันไม่รู้สึกกดดันเมื่อฉันเขียนงานเขียนอิสระ	1	2	3	4	5
26. ฉันรู้สึกมีแรงจูงใจมากขึ้นเมื่อฉันเขียนอิสระมากกว่าที่จะเขียนตามหัวข้อที่กำหนด	1	2	3	4	5
27. ฉันรู้สึกว่าเมื่อฉันเขียนอิสระ ฉันได้พัฒนาความคล่องด้านภาษาอังกฤษ	1	2	3	4	5
28. ฉันคิดว่าฉันได้ปรับปรุงทักษะการเขียนของฉันตั้งแต่เริ่มเขียนอิสระ	1	2	3	4	5
29. ระหว่างที่ฉันเขียนอิสระ ฉันไม่วิตกกังวลถึงเรื่องความผิดพลาดทางไวยากรณ์	1	2	3	4	5
30. ฉันเพลิดเพลินกับการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนอิสระ	1	2	3	4	5

จาก กุลสิริสวัสดิ์ (2559)



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