Using Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) in Teaching Writing

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Abstract

This study was a quantitative research about the implementing of Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) strategy used in teaching writing descriptive text. The participant of this study was the students from second grade of Junior High School: SMP 10 which divided into the experimental group and the control group. They were chosen by using simple random sampling. The reason for conducting this study was due to the fact that students’ writing skill was still low. Moreover, the design used in this study was true experiment with pre-test-post-test control group design. The data was collected through pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The findings showed that mean of post-test of experimental class (=62.35) was higher than mean of post-test of control class (=44.3). The result of t-score of experimental class (=9.16) was higher than t-score of control class (=4.87) with the level of significance (=0.05). Hence, it can be concluded that Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) can improve the students’ writing skill in descriptive text.

Keywords: Writing skill, role, audience, format, and topic (RAFT)

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of language skill that must be learned by students. Writing enables the students to share ideas, experience, information, and knowledge to the reader through a written form. According to Haynes and Zacarian (2010) learning to write is a developmental process to communicate meaningful through writing. Having good writing skills enable the students to share and deliver the messages to the readers clearly. Furthermore, the purpose of writing in School Based Curriculum of 2013 is that second grade students of junior high school are
expected to have an ability to comprehend and create some various kinds texts, one of them is descriptive paragraph (Ref. BC: 3.10).

As one of language skill, writing is a difficult subject to be mastered. One of the reasons that make writing becomes the most difficult skill to learn is limited ideas to be developed. In writing, students are not only have to share ideas from the brain, but also have to be clever to choose and combine vocabularies to create meaningful sentences. As said by Richards and Renandya (2002), the difficulty of writing lies on how to generate and organize ideas using an appropriate choice of vocabulary, sentence and paragraph organization, and translate these ideas into a readable text. In other words, the difficulties of writing are not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in developing the ideas into a paragraph. Moreover, Hughes and Schwab (2010) added that writing is considered to be one of the most difficult skills because it requires not only the mastery of technical aspects, such as punctuation and spelling, but also the mastery of strategic ones, namely design, organization, and register. Thus, it is reasonable that many students have problems in writing skill.

Furthermore, based on the experience in internship teaching in SMP Negeri 10 Banda Aceh, the second year students got the problems in writing skill, especially in writing descriptive text. Firstly, the students had problem in using appropriate vocabulary. They used some vocabulary not in the right context. Moreover, the students also had difficulty in expressing their ideas into written form. When they had ideas, they could not develop them. Consequently, their achievement in writing is below the minimum completion criteria or KKM (75). This low achievement is caused by some reasons. Firstly, it occurs as a consequence of uninteresting technique or media used in teaching process. The teacher only asked the students to read an example of text, analyze the text together, and then asked them to write another text. They rarely got knowledge how to write a simple good text step by step, such as how to generate and organize ideas using an appropriate vocabulary, connect sentences and develop it into a paragraph as well. Consequently, the students used vocabulary not in a right context or asked the teacher to translate vocabulary they need to write and their writing product was disorganized.

In addition, Fisher and Frey (2007) said that a scaffold that is provided by Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) prompts helps students to explore their writing based on various roles, audiences, formats, and topics. Moreover, RAFT provides students to learn more enjoyable and inspires them to write more imaginative. Buehl (2014) that RAFT activity infuses a writing assignment with imagination, creativity, and motivation. In short, this strategy involves writing from a view-point other that of a student, to an audience other than the teacher, and in a form other than a standard assignment or written answers to questions.

In this study, the researcher is interested in finding a better way in teaching writing skill which can help students to improve their ability in writing. Students must have a technique to generate their ideas to be a plan for writing. It is believed that Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) can improve the students writing
ability. Thus, the researcher formulated the research question as follows: Does RAFT strategy improve students’ writing skill in SMP Negeri 10 Banda Aceh?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) Strategy

Fisher and Frey (2007) stated RAFT is a combination of words: R: role of the writer (what is the students’ role), A: audience for the writer (to whom is the students’ writing), F: format of the writing (what is the format for the writing) and T: topic to be an addressed in the writing (what is writing about). It is a writing strategy that helps students to understand their role as a writer and how to effectively communicate their ideas clearly so that the reader can easily understand everything written. Additionally, RAFT helps students focus on the audience they address, the varied formats for writing and the topic of writing about. By using this strategy, teachers encourage students to write creatively, to consider a topic from multiple perspectives, and to gain the ability to write for different audiences. Furthermore, RAFT has the potential to help students connect prior and new knowledge, to write in a rich context, and to develop literacy skills that serve them far beyond the classroom (Groenke and Puckett, 2006). In addition, writing using RAFT strategy increases the students’ critical thinking about an object and expresses it into a piece of paper. As said by Meredith & Steele (2011) that RAFT is used to engage in drafting, making issues and getting decision to write in a paper.

RAFT strategy has some procedures namely: analyzing the important ideas or information from a story, a textbook passage, or other appropriate text. Brainstorm possible roles that students could assume in their writing. For example, students reading The Sea Eagle text, it could be assumed the role as a student, describing the characteristics of this animal. Decide who the audience for this communication and determine the format for the writing. For example, Students could be writing in the format of an article, to be read by other friends in the classroom based on The Sea Eagle text. List the role, audience, format, and topic for students’ writing on the whiteboard.

2.2 Writing Skill

Writing is an instrument of thinking that allows students to express their thought through a written form. Moreover, they more understand and share their perceptions of the world around them by writing (Brummer & Clark, 2008). According to Linse and Nunan (2005) writing is a combination of process and product of discovering ideas, putting them on a paper and working with them until they are presented in manner that is polished and comprehensible to the readers. Writing as a process means that a piece of writing is always possible to be reviewed and revised before it is shared to the readers (Nuarta et al, 2016).

This process of writing involves four main stages namely planning, drafting, revising, and editing. It also could be inserted three other stages after the drafting stage, these are responding, evaluating and post-writing (Fata et al. 2016).
Whereas, writing as a product means the result of thinking which has different purposes, audiences, and context in a written form.

3. METHOD

This is an experimental research Ary, et al. (2010). According to Scott and Usher (2011), experimental research is about studying the causal relationship between phenomena by intervening in the natural setting and controlling the relevant variables. It is used to determine if factors may affect the result of an experiment.

The model of this experiment design was called “Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design” (Ary, et al. 2010). This research design involves pre tested ($Y_1$), treatment ($X$), and post tests ($Y_2$). The purpose of this treatment is comparing the pretest and posttest scores. The treatments were given by using RAFT strategy at the second grade students of SMP Negeri 10 Banda Aceh. The reasons of choosing this school are this school as the place where the researcher did internship teaching and found the problems in writing descriptive text. The sample of this research was chosen randomly by using lottery. It was selected with assumption each individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population.

The instrument of data collection in this research was writing test. As stated by Richards and Schmidt (2010), a test is any procedure for measuring ability, knowledge, or performance. In addition, the researcher gave two kinds of test namely pretest and posttest. Pretest and posttest were provided to measure the students’ writing achievement prior to and subsequent to the treatment. Furthermore, the writer gave pretest and posttest to the students about writing descriptive text. Treatments were given for three times between pre-test and post-test. The technique of data collection was in the form of writing test by using pretest-posttest control group design.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

Pretest was conducted in the first meeting. The test was given to collect the students’ writing prior to the application RAFT strategy in teaching and learning process. In pretest, the students were asked to write a descriptive text with the title “My Pet”. Pretest was given in both of control and treatment class.

The treatment was conducted at the second, third, and fourth meeting. In those meetings, the researcher taught the students how to write descriptive text by using RAFT strategy. The researcher started the first treatment by teaching students by using Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT). The researcher activated students’ prior knowledge by linking the topic with students’ pet and asking the students some questions related to the topic. In this meeting, researcher taught the students about writing descriptive text about animal. Firstly, researcher explained that all writers need to consider four key components: the role of the writer, the audience, the format, and topic.
Furthermore, the researcher explained to the students that they are going to structure their writing around these elements by using RAFT strategy. Then, researcher gave an example of descriptive text entitled “The Sea Eagle” and asked them to read the text in five minutes. After that, identifying the important ideas or information of the text and discussing the key elements with the students (R: students, A: friend, F: Article, T: an animal).

Moreover, the researcher and the students brainstormed possible RAFT ideas of students could be assumed in their writing about the animal. Then, in pairs students discussed each other about the topic given. Next, the students were asked to write a descriptive text from a chosen topic of the brainstormed list by using RAFT strategy. The researcher gave them 30 minutes to write. After the students finished, they were asked to analyze the text in pairs and share their writing to the others and collected the students’ worksheet.

In this meeting, the researcher still used the same strategy in teaching writing, RAFT. Next, the researcher gave a descriptive text entitled “My Best Friends” and asked them to read the text in five minutes. After that, identifying the important ideas or information of the text and discussing the key elements with the student (R: students, A: teacher and friends, F: conversation, T: telling about best friend).

Moreover, the researcher and the students brainstormed possible RAFT ideas of students could be assumed in their writing about people. Then, in pairs students discussed each other about the topic given. Next, individually were asked to write a descriptive text from a chosen topic of the brainstormed list by using RAFT strategy. The researcher gave them 30 minutes to accomplish the writing task. After the students finished, they were asked to analyze the text in pairs and share their writing with the class and collected the students’ worksheet.

In this meeting, the researcher still used the same strategy in teaching writing, RAFT. Next, the researcher gave a descriptive text entitled “Botanical Garden” and asked them to read the text in five minutes. After that, identifying the important ideas or information of the text and discussing the key elements with the student (R: traveller, A: friend, F: short story, T: last holiday).

Moreover, the researcher and the students brainstormed possible RAFT ideas of students could be assumed in their writing about place. Then, the students were asked to sit in pairs with student who has the same role. This used to make them discussed each other about the topic given. Next, individually students were asked to write a descriptive text from a chosen topic of the brainstormed list by using RAFT strategy. The researcher gave them 30 minutes to accomplish the writing task. After the students finished, they were asked to analyze the text in pairs and share their completed RAFT with the class and collected the students’ worksheet.

Post-test was conducted after the treatments of Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) applied in teaching and learning process. The students were asked to write a descriptive text by using the given topic (Role: Traveller, Audience: Public, Format: Blog, Topic: Favorite Place) in 100-150 words in 30 minutes. The researcher gave a different topic with pretest in order to know the students’
improvement after taught by RAFT strategy. Moreover, the result of pretest and posttest were analyzed to know the improvement of students’ writing.

In scoring the students’ writing, there are five aspects to be scored; they are organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Below is the table of analytic scale for rating composition task which is adopted from Brown (2004). In this study, the researcher also observed the five aspects of writing skill. These aspects were content, vocabulary, organization, grammar, and mechanics. The following figure presented the result of students’ writing skill in each aspect.

![Writing Skill Aspects](image)

**Figure 1.** The Result of Writing Skill Aspects of experimental Class.

From figure 1, it can be seen that all writing skill aspects were improved from pre-test to post-test. First, content in pre-test was 9.15 while post-test was 12.5. It means that content was raised for about 3.35. Second, vocabulary aspect in pre-test was 8.6 while 13 in post-test. So, this aspect improved for about 4.4. Next, organization in pre-test was 7.6 while 11.45 in post-test. This aspect increased for about 3.85. Then in grammar, pre-test was 9.65 while post-test was 12.3.

Thus, this aspect had an improvement for about 2.65. Last, mechanics in pre-test was 8.75 while the post-test was 12.4. It also rose for about 3.65. Furthermore, it can be noted that vocabulary was the aspect with the highest improvement with 4.4, and grammar was the lowest improvement aspect with 2.65. In addition, the total of students’ pre-test score in each aspect was 43.75, the post-test was 61.65, and gain was 17.9. In addition, the chart below described the result of students’ scores in each aspect between pre-test and post-test in control class.

It stated that all writing skill aspects were improved from pre-test to post-test. First, content in pre-test was 7.6 while post-test was 10.1. It means that content was raised for about 2.5. Second, vocabulary aspect in pre-test was 8.1 while 11.9 in post-test. So, this aspect improved for about 3.8. Next, organization in pre-test was 4.8 while 6.8 in post-test. This aspect increased for about 2. Then in grammar, pre-test was 5.1 while post-test was 6.7. Thus, this aspect had an improvement for about 1.6. Last, mechanics in pre-test was 5.8 while the post-test was 7.8. It also rose for about 2.
5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) can improve students’ writing ability of the second grade students of SMP Negeri 10 Banda Aceh. It is proved by the students’ mean of post-test was higher than pre-test (62.35>44.15). Furthermore, in this research, the researcher used level of significant $\alpha=0.05$. Moreover, for the testing criterion of the hypothesis: if $t$-score>$t$-table this means that the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$) is accepted, and the null hypothesis ($H_0$) is rejected, while if $t$-table>$t$-score this means that the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$) is rejected, and the null hypothesis ($H_0$) is accepted. Furthermore, Sudjana (2005) explains that the $t$-table with the significant standard of $\alpha 0.05$ with the degree of freedom / $df=(n-1)$.

Moreover, the standard deviation between pre-test and post-test was 9.39, and obtained $t$-test was 9.16. Owing to the number of students in this experiment was 20, so the degree of freedom was 19 that obtained from $df=n-1$, 20-1=19. After comparing the result, the researcher found that $t$-score was higher than $t$-table (9.16>2.093). Thus, it can be concluded that the result was significant which means that the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$) was accepted. Furthermore, one technique that teachers may implement in teaching writing is Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT). It is advisable that the teachers use this technique in teaching writing because it has significant benefit for students. By implementing this technique, the teachers can activate the students’ prior knowledge, let them to discuss within pairs and enrich the students’ vocabulary. Moreover, it enables to make the students to be more active and motivated in teaching and learning process.
In addition, for further studies, the researcher suggests the other researchers who want to conduct the similar research to use control group as a comparison and choose different level of education, so that the result of the study may have a new contribution to the implementation of Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) in teaching writing.

REFERENCES