

The Effect of R.A.F.T Strategy and Anxiety upon Writing Competency of The Seventh Grade Students of SMP Negeri 3 Mengwi in Academic Year 2013/2014

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Abstract

This research aimed at investigating the effect of RAFT strategy and anxiety upon writing competency. It was an experimental research with 2x2 factorial design. The result showed that (a) there was significant difference in writing competency between the students taught by RAFT strategy and those taught by conventional strategy, (b) there was an interaction effect between the implementation of RAFT strategy and the students' anxiety, (c) there was significant difference in the writing competency between the students with high anxiety, taught by RAFT strategy and those who are taught by conventional technique, (d) there was significant difference in the writing competency between the students with low anxiety, taught by implementing RAFT strategy and those who are taught by conventional strategy,

Keywords: anxiety, RAFT strategy, writing competency.

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the main languages of international communication. In Indonesia, English as a foreign language is taught as compulsory subject started from elementary until university. The students should master English competence if they do not want to fail in the final exam. In the field of language teaching, it is stated that teaching English focuses on the mastery of four language skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Depdiknas, 2006).

In relation with the competence above, writing as one of the four major skills needs to be taught. Among those four skills that are learned by the students,

writing is one of language skills which have to be acquired by the students. Clanchy and Ballard (1987: 1) define writing as a process of transferring thoughts into written words and connecting those thoughts systematically one upon another in a coherent manner. To support the concept of writing, Massi (2001: 1) defines writing as a transmission process of ideas from an addresser to an addressee via a text. In line with the concept above, Phelps (2001: 2) explains writing as an activity that engages writers more actively in processing, interpreting, and evaluating information and putting it in a logical, coherent, and well-responded arrangement.

According to Raimes (1983), teaching writing is important because of three reasons. The first is that writing reinforces the grammatical structure, idiom, and vocabulary that teacher has been working within the class. The second reason is when the student writes. They have a chance to be adventurous with the language. The third reason is that the students become more involved in the language, involved with themselves and their readers. Due to the facts above, we can see clearly that to overall objectives of teaching writing is used by the students to express their ideas and thoughts in a written form.

In accordance with the definition above, it can be summed up that writing is ability to express and convey our ideas, message or thought in written form. The purpose of writing is to connect and link between writer and reader's thought.

Based on the investigation through interview to the English teacher of SMP Negeri 3 Mengwi, the students still have difficulties in writing paragraph. Some of them find difficulties in writing paragraph for example: stuck to get diction, getting idea, and ordering the words.

Most of the students find difficulties to develop ideas in their minds. Actually, they might have something to state in their mind, but they are often confused to express and develop their ideas into a good writing. It is such a common problem that is encountered by most of English teachers in teaching writing. Campbell (2002) claims that the biggest problem that students have in writing is that they cannot put their ideas and facts into paper since they are afraid if their ideas cannot be written correctly in terms of grammar. This condition leads the students to a state of anxiety. In addition, Chakraverty and Gautum (2000) state further that one of the students' problems is that they have difficulty in arranging information or ideas logically to achieve coherence in their writing, which is the foremost requirement in writing.

As a proof, students' writing competency in first semester was low. The students' writing competency mean score

in first semester is 67.28. The factor that may affect the students' competency in writing is the strategy used by the teacher in teaching writing. Conventionally, teachers rarely give brainstorming to stimulate the students' ideas before being expressed in written form and often let them work alone without giving them any guidance to develop or express their idea properly. To ease the students in discovering their ideas, the teacher should provide adequate warming up activity about the topic being discussed. Moreover, during the process of writing the teacher should guide and assist the students to write a good paragraph as well as revise their work since several aspects need to be considered in writing such as: grammar, mechanic, vocabulary, content and organization of paragraph. The teacher however, gives no chance to the students to realize their mistakes in writing. The students only wait for their score and teacher's correction without knowing how to correct their mistakes by themselves. This reflects the use of conventional writing technique that is usually applied by the teacher.

Based on the phenomena above, the current researcher is inspired to apply RAFT strategy in teaching writing. RAFT strategy is one of guided writing that can be applied in teaching writing and can be used to improve students' writing competence. This strategy can help the students understand their role as a writer, the audience they were address, the varied formats for writing, and the topic they were writing about (Santa,1988). RAFT strategy is the acronym of R (Role of the writer), A (Audience to whom the product is being directed), F (Format of the product being created), T (Topic of the product). This strategy provides opportunities for the students to demonstrate their understanding of a topic or subject through a writing experience that helps them to think about subject and communicate their understanding of it in creative and interesting way, encourages students to organize their thoughts, and keeps the students attention because they are focused on the writing activity. This strategy is attractive to the students to

study so that they will give their efforts in writing a paragraph. By using this strategy in teaching learning process, the teacher will solve the student's problem or difficulties in understanding a sentence. It will improve the student's interest and motivation of studying in the classroom.

Another factor that can influence the students' writing competency is anxiety. According to Sarason (2009) anxiety is a basic human emotion consisting of fear and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an event as being a threat to the ego or self-esteem. Cheng et al. (1999) attempted to differentiate the components of general oral language anxiety and second language writing anxiety. They found that second language writing anxiety is distinguishable from oral communication anxiety; at the same time, they found underlying similarities between the two specific facets of language anxieties.

Writing is an emotional and cognitive activity, that is, we think and feel while we are writing. Second language writing is also considered as a complex system of social, cultural and contextual factors, and of the learner's individual characteristics, such as institutional requirements, parental or social expectations, teaching and evaluation procedures, motivation, personality, self-confidence, learner's belief, L2 proficiency, and even gender and years in school (Cheng, 2002). Therefore, the reasons why the second language learners feel anxious when writing might be different and multiple, but some general causes ranging from highly personal (such as self-confidence) to procedural (such as classroom activities and teaching methods) can be found on the basis of the previous studies in the field of L2 writing as well as writing anxiety.

Furthermore, Hassan (2001) states that some possible causes of writing anxiety from a linguistic and cognitive perspective, such as poor skill development, inadequate role models, lack of understanding of the composing process, and authoritative, teacher-centered, product-based model of teaching. He stressed that self-confidence

is extremely important in determining students' affective response to writing task. Some studies showed that no matter how skilled or capable individuals are in writing, if they believe they will do poorly or if they do not want to take courses that stress writing, then their skills or capabilities matter little (Holladay, 1981; cited by Hassan, 2001: 4).

Based on the explanation above it can be said that there is interaction among writing competency, RAFT strategy, and Anxiety. In writing the students may be influenced by anxiety and its affects the result of their writing. Both high and low anxiety will influence students' writing competency. The students who have a higher scale of anxiety have an effect on their achievement; that is lower achievement than students who have lower scales of anxiety (Marhaeni, et.al., 2007). Because the students feel worry when they write task in which it influences their writing competency, it is needed a kind of strategy which enable them to write easier. As explained above that RAFT strategy is a good strategy so it could influence students writing competency with the consideration of students' anxiety.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Mengwi for students at grade VII in the academic year 2013/2014. This school was chosen because this school still uses conventional strategy in teaching writing to the students. This conventional strategy could not present students' ability in writing maximally. This means that the teacher rarely gives brainstorming to stimulate the students' ideas before being expressed in written form and often let them work alone without giving them any guidance to develop or express their idea properly. The teacher however, gives no chance to the students to realize their mistakes in writing. The students only wait for their score and teacher's correction without knowing how to correct their mistakes by themselves. It can be said that the teacher in SMP Negeri 3 Mengwi have not been introduced yet with new writing strategy, one of them is RAFT strategy.

The score of students in writing is also influenced by anxiety. So, the anxiety

questionnaire was conducted at students grade VII especially in terms of writing competency. The students who have low anxiety tend to get better score than those who have high anxiety because the low anxiety students feel more confident in develop their ideas in writing. Teaching strategy may play a role to decrease the writing anxiety. The students with low and high anxiety who taught by RAFT strategy got higher score than taught by conventional strategy.

To sum up, this study focuses on the effect of RAFT strategy on students' writing competency with consideration of students' anxiety, which would be conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Mengwi in Academic Year 2013/2014. By considering the importance of writing skill for students at grade VII of junior high school and realizing that many students still have difficulty in writing, the researcher would like to do a research on the effect of students' writing competency based on the chosen variables stated above. Additionally, the methodology of this present study was quantitative and the method that was used was comparative analysis.

TYPE OF ARTICLE

The article is based on an experimental research which was conducted in seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Mengwi in academic Year 2013/2014

METHOD

The research made use of a *Posttest Only Control-Group Design* using a 2x2 factorial arrangement. For the data collection instrument, writing competency test (post-test), anxiety questionnaire were administered. The questionnaire was based on the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) was designed to assess if there is ESL writing anxiety among students and to what level. The original version of the SLWAI, developed

by Cheng (2004) for students of English as a second or foreign language. It consists of 22 items. Meanwhile, for the treatment instruments, teaching scenario and teaching handout were used. The data collection instruments were firstly tried out and estimated that the instruments were reliable and valid. The gained data were analyzed by Two-Way Anova and Tukey test which were assisted by SPSS 16.0.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, some findings are resulted:

Table 4.11 The Summary of the alculation of Each Group

	RAFT Strategy (A1)	Conventional Strategy (A2)	Total
High Anxiety Scale (B1)	N = 21 \bar{X} = 80.29 S = 8.696	N = 21 \bar{X} = 67.38 S = 6.881	N = 42 \bar{X} = 73.835 S = 7.789
Low Anxiety Scale (B2)	N = 21 \bar{X} = 82.05 S = 4.141	N = 21 \bar{X} = 70.48 S = 6.445	N = 42 \bar{X} = 76.265 S = 5.293
Total	N = 42 \bar{X} = 81.17 S = 6.419	N = 42 \bar{X} = 68.93 S = 6.663	N = 84 \bar{X} = 75.05 S = 6.541

Remarks:

N = Number of Data

\bar{X} = Average score of writing test

S = Standard Deviation

First, the result of hypothesis testing has successfully rejected null hypotheses (H_0) stating that there is no significant differences in students' writing competency between the student who were taught by RAFT strategy and those who were taught by conventional strategy, or accepting hypothesis (H_1) stating that there is a significant difference in students'

writing competency between the students who were taught by RAFT strategy and those who were taught by conventional strategy. It is based on the result of the calculation which shows that the sig. value of the strategies was 0.001, which was lower than 0.05. It means that the effect of the RAFT strategy on the students' writing competency was significant. This first result of data analysis discovered that RAFT strategy affects the students' writing competency better than conventional strategy.

The first result of the data analysis discovered that RAFT strategy affects better than conventional strategy. In line with this finding, Alisa and Rosa (2013) also discovers that RAFT strategy can be chosen for the alternative strategy to teach writing skill because this strategy encourages students to write creatively, to think a topic from various points of view, to a specific audience in a variety formats of texts because to convey the reader, the writer needs to consider those aspects. It is suggested to apply RAFT strategy in teaching writing to help the students get better achievement.

In this research RAFT strategy is the treatment that was given to the experimental group. RAFT strategy was considered as an effective strategy for writing that enable students to improve their writing competency. There are some reasons why RAFT strategy is better than conventional strategy. RAFT strategy is a pre-writing tool to organize their thoughts that will help students to understand their role as writer, the audience they will address, the variety format and the topic of their writing. This strategy provides opportunities for the students to demonstrate their understanding of a topic or subject through a writing experience that helps them to think about subject and communicate their understanding of it in creative and interesting way.

Groenke (2006) said that RAFT strategy can help students make connections between prior and new knowledge, and among interconnected concepts, and provides a context for thinking deeply about a topic. This strategy has potential to help students connect

prior and new knowledge, to write in a rich context, and to develop literacy skills that will serve them far beyond the classroom.

Using this RAFT strategy (Holston & Santa, 2004) empowers students with an easy, meaningful way to incorporate writing into content-area instruction. RAFT is especially engaging because students write to an audience other than their teacher, and they write for a specific purpose. Since writing is specific and focused, students better understand the need to explain the topic clearly and completely. This strategy increases the students' motivation in writing, because when the students can keep their attention and they are interested in the writing activity, they automatically increase their motivation in learning English.

The explanation above about RAFT strategy shows that this method is very meaningful in writing. RAFT strategy can be chosen for the alternative strategy to teach writing skill especially in writing functional text. This strategy encourages students to write creatively, to think a topic from various points of view, to consider a specific audience in a variety formats of functional texts because to convey the message to the reader, the writer needs to consider those aspects.

Second, the result of hypothesis testing has successfully rejected null hypothesis (H_0) stating that there is no significant interactional effect between RAFT strategy and anxiety on students' writing competency, or accepting alternative hypothesis (H_1) stating that there is significant interactional effect between RAFT strategy and Anxiety on students' writing competency. It is based on the result of the calculation which shows that the value of f was 2.726 and the sig. value was 0.013. Due to the fact that the sig. value was lower than 0.05, it can be stated that the interaction between writing strategies (RAFT & conventional writing strategy) and anxiety level on the students' writing competency existed.

Therefore, alternative hypothesis on the interaction between the two variables was accepted. The data analysis clearly shows that there is disordinal interaction between writing strategies

(RAFT & conventional writing strategy) and anxiety level on the students' writing competency. It can be concluded that there was interaction between writing strategies and anxiety level on the students' writing competency. However, it was found out that the low anxiety learners who were treated by RAFT strategy consistently gained higher mean score compared to the group treated by conventional writing strategy, meanwhile the high anxiety learners who were treated by RAFT strategy also gained higher mean score than those who were treated by conventional writing strategy.

One factor that can influence the students' writing competency is anxiety. According to Hassan (2001) writing anxiety, as a subject and situation specific anxiety, was defined as a general avoidance of writing behavior and of situations thought to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing. The students with high anxiety will not take any risk to do failure. They are not confident to develop their ideas in writing, they are afraid of making mistakes in writing. The low anxiety students are very innovative, creative, independent, and confident. The students find a new way of learning to write and know what their role as writer, the audience they will address, the variety format and the topic of their writing.

Another factor that may affect the students' competency in writing is the strategy used by the teacher in teaching writing. To ease the students in discovering their ideas, the teacher should provide adequate warming up activity about the topic being discussed. Moreover, during the process of writing the teacher should guide and assist the students to write a good paragraph as well as revise their work since several aspects need to be considered in writing such as: grammar, mechanic, vocabulary, content and organization of paragraph.

In RAFT strategy the students make a draft based on RAFT table and then develop it into a short functional text. RAFT is structured to help students organize their thoughts on a topic,

elaborate on it, and create a thoughtful piece of writing that expresses their understanding (Strayer & Strayer, 2007). The students that have a low anxiety will be more confident and creative to explore themselves to fill the RAFT table and then can develop it into a creative writing. The students with high anxiety will find difficulty and they will be unwilling to do it since they are afraid of making failure.

Another conclusion from the result of hypothesis is teaching strategy may play a role to decrease the writing anxiety. In relation to this explanation, the students with low anxiety taught by RAFT strategy got higher than taught by conventional strategy. It could be found that they had a willingness to try using RAFT strategy. Although at the first they were probably afraid of develop their ideas but they were thrilled to use RAFT strategy. This feeling decreased their anxiety and makes them easier in following this RAFT strategy.

Third, the third hypothesis testing was based on the calculation that the value of t was 5.294 and sig. value was 0.002. Since the sig. value was lower than 0.05, it means that the difference was significant. Therefore, alternative hypothesis was accepted and null hypothesis was rejected. It can be concluded that there was a significant difference in writing competency between high anxiety learners who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using conventional writing strategy.

This research also aimed to investigating the effect of students' anxiety scale on students' writing competency. The students' anxiety scale in this study is just divided into two, high and low anxiety scales of students.

Hassan (2001) pointed out some possible causes of writing anxiety from a linguistic and cognitive perspective, such as poor skill development, inadequate role models, lack of understanding of the composing process, and authoritative, teacher-centered, product-based model of teaching. He stressed that self-confidence is extremely important in determining students' affective response to writing task. RAFT strategy can increase the

students' self confidence because according to Holston & Santa (2004) RAFT strategy empowers students with an easy, meaningful way to incorporate writing into content-area instruction.

The students with high anxiety who were taught by RAFT strategy got higher score than who were taught by conventional strategy. In other words, students with high anxiety are more appropriate to be taught by RAFT strategy than conventional strategy. The RAFT strategy provides feedback that may also influence their psychology. If they view the feedback positively, it will trigger them to do better. However, if the students view the feedback negatively, it will make them down. So, high anxiety students feel more comfortable by RAFT strategy than conventional strategy. Consequently, they get better score than those taught by conventional strategy.

Forth, the forth hypothesis testing was based on the calculation that shows the value of t was 6.452 and sig. value was 0.007. Since the sig. value was lower than 0.05, it means that the difference was significant. Therefore, alternative hypothesis was accepted and null hypothesis was rejected. It can be concluded that there was significant difference in writing competency between low anxiety learners who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using conventional writing strategy.

For low anxiety students, it is discovered that students' writing competency taught by RAFT strategy is higher than conventional strategy. In other words, students with low anxiety are more appropriate to be taught by RAFT strategy than conventional strategy. The low anxiety students feel more comfortable and confident by RAFT strategy; they can explore their ideas through RAFT strategy. The students have a guide line in writing so they feel easier in develop their ideas; they also know what their role as a writer. So, they get better score than those who taught by conventional strategy.

It is supported by Santa (1988) who states that RAFT strategy is one of guided writing that can be applied in

teaching writing and can be used to improve students' writing competence. This strategy can help the students understand their role as a writer, the audience they were address, the varied formats for writing, and the topic they were writing about.

The result of hypothesis testing which were done shows an interesting picture phenomenon in relation with the implementation of RAFT strategy and anxiety levels. RAFT strategy gives positive effect for high and low anxiety students. In other words, even low and also high anxiety students will reach the best writing achievement if they are taught by RAFT strategy.

It can be concluded that if individuals respond the anxiety rationally and directly, so the individual will try to survive, do something based on abilities and accomplish the tasks that cause anxiety while if the reaction is not rational, the individual will always feel anxious about the lack of ability to complete particular tasks, even worse the happiness that result is not able to determine the destiny.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be drawn several conclusions that can be presented as follows:

First, there is a significant differences in students' writing competency between the students who taught by RAFT strategy and conventional strategy. It based on the result of the calculation in which showed that the sig. value of the strategies was 0.001, which was lower than 0.05. It means that the effect of the RAFT strategy on the students' writing competency was significant.

Second, there is significant interactional effect between RAFT strategy and Anxiety on students' writing competency. It based on the result of the calculation in which show that the value of f was 2.726 and the sig. value was 0.013.

Third, there was significant difference in writing competency between high anxiety

learners who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using conventional writing strategy.

Fourth, there was significant difference in writing competency between low anxiety learners who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using conventional writing strategy.

Based on the research finding, the discussion, and the conclusion, several suggestions are proposed. They can be stated as follows:

(1) It is recommended for the English teacher of grade seventh in SMP Negeri 3 Mengwiin academic year 2013/2014 to use RAFT strategy as an alternative technique in writing class, both for students with low anxiety and students with high anxiety.

(2) Since the anxiety level has significant role in contributing students' writing competency, the English teachers are expected to know the level of their students' anxiety since it will influence the choice in implementing strategy in teaching.

(3) The other researcher who want to conduct research to improve the quality of writing competency, it is recommended to do further research with different writing approach and characteristic of students. Moreover, it is recommended to research other variables, such as: student motivation, gender, socio-economic background of the students' parent, or the location of the school (in city or village).

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