THE EFFECT OF ROLE, AUDIENCE, FORMAT, AND TOPIC (RAFT) STRATEGY

TOWARD STUDENTS' ABILITY IN PARAGRAPH WRITING A STUDY AT THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF COLLEGE OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION (STKIP) - PGRI WEST SUMATERA

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Abstrak: Artikel ini ditulis berdasarkan masalah terhadap rendahnya keterampilan mahasiswa dalam mengungkapkan ide secara tertulis dalam menulis paragraf. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian eksperimen. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah penggunaan strategi Role, Audience, Format and Topic (RAFT) memberikan efek yang signifikan terhadap kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis paragraf. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (STKIP)-PGRI Sumatera Barat. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan antara kelas eksperimen dan kelas kontol dalam hal menulis paragraf. Dengan kata lain, strategi RAFT memperoleh kemampuan yang lebih baik dalam menulis paragraf.

Key Words: Role, Audience, Format, and Topic strategy, students' ability, paragraph writing

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of ways for people to communicate ideas and information. They can express themselves effectively in written form. For students, at schools, writing is a media to express their thinking and feeling. They will improve their ability to think the ideas clearly because they have to organize those ideas correctly. It is aimed to produce and prepare the students as the creative generation and also the critical thinkers.

However, writing in a foreign language is not easy for students. Writing needs a lot of concentration in order to get the successful result or product. Based on the researcher interview with some lecturers who teach Writing I subject, most of the students still have difficulties in writing a paragraph. Most of them could not express their ideas clearly. They cannot write down a good topic sentence as a starting point in their paragraph. They also do not know the appropriate words that will be chosen that are relevant to the content of their writing. And then, they have difficulties in organizing those ideas into the correct order.

In addition, the students also have problem in grammar. They are still confused in representing their ideas by using the appropriate tenses. And then, related to mechanics of

writing, the students, sometimes, still in doubt to use correct punctuation, like commas, full-stops, colon, semicolon, etc, and also they still have misspelling of the words in their writing. Even the students get confused to use capital letter in the beginning of their sentences.

The problem above supported by Ur (2000:63). He agrees that the students still have mistakes in mechanics of writing, such as in using punctuation, capitalization, and also spelling of the words. They also were poor in grammar and choice of words. The students also have difficulties to connect their ideas from sentence to the next sentences. They get confused to start their idea in the first sentence and do not know how to continue the idea to the next sentence. As a result, their product of produced without writing is coherence and unity.

the From preliminary research conducted by the researcher in English Department of STKIP PGRI West Sumatera for students who registered in 2009/2010 academic year, it was found that the developing good quality of paragraph could not attain fully by the students. From the data that taken from lecturers who teach Writing I. the results of students' semester test of Writing I, the raw scores, showed that there were about students who got mark A (excellent), 15% students who got B 49% students got (good), (enough), 15% students who got D (poor), and 10% students who got E (worse). In academic year 2010/2011 showed that there were about 12% students who got mark A (excellent), 20% students who got B (good), 27% students got C (enough), 29%

students who got D (poor), and 10% students who got E (worse). The remaining percentages belong to F or it can be said incomplete mark. It is caused by certain cases. For example, the students did not complete some tasks or assignment, or they cannot attend the class fully or even they did not take final examination.

From the percentage above, it can be assumed that the students' writing ability in developing a paragraph is still more in the level of sufficient and poor. It is caused by some factors. First, the students do not have ability to express the ideas that they have clearly. They still have difficulty in writing a good topic sentence in their paragraph. Second, they still have limited vocabulary. It makes them have difficulty to choose the appropriate words which are relevant to the content of their writing. Third, the students are not familiar with the criteria to develop a good paragraph. Finally, the writing strategies that have been applied in the classroom did not really help the students to be able to construct a good paragraph.

One of the strategies which have been commonly applied in teaching writing is PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production). This is a kind of simple teaching strategy. In Presentation stage, the teacher explains the aims of the lesson in order to make the students know what they will learn and why they learn it. The teacher explains the material in this stage. In Practice stage, the teacher just asks the students to produce sentences or answer the questions related to the material that have been taught. In Production stage, the teacher just motivates and gives the students

opportunity to do exercise. Based on the stages that have been explained before, it is assumed that this strategy cannot help the students in writing because it does not give satisfactory result toward students' product of writing. Actually, writing is a production skill. The students need to have much practice during teaching and learning process and they also need feedback from the teacher. They also need to learn the lesson in an enjoyable and effective way to help them to communicate their ideas through their product of writing.

Related to the problems above, the lecturer's strategy is considered as the important thing to guide the students in writing. According to Buehl (2009:144), RAFT is a writing strategy that helps students understands their role as a writer and they can communicate their ideas effectively. It also helps the students focus on their writing task and discover ideas from writing. By using this strategy, the lecturer can encourage the students to write creatively and effectively, and the product of students' writing can be understood easily.

The purpose of this research is to find out the effect of using writing strategy toward RAFT students' ability in paragraph writing consisting of five paragraphs development, namely, argumentative, narrative, descriptive, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect paragraph for the first year students of the English Department who are registered in 2011/2012 academic year at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera.

Paragraph Writing Definitions of Paragraph

The basic unit of writing that should be acquainted by the students is writing a paragraph. According to Langan (2005: 5), a paragraph is a short paper of around 150 to 200 words. It usually consists of an opening point which is called a topic sentence and it is followed by a series of sentences which support that point. If a writer wants to communicate effectively with readers, he/she must provide solid evidence for any point that he or she makes.

Furthermore, Zemach and Rumisek (2005: 11) note that a paragraph is a group of sentences which have a single topic. The sentences in one paragraph can be shorter or longer. It can be five or ten sentences long. Actually, it depends on the topic which will be discussed in that paragraph. And then, the sentences in the paragraph discuss about the writer's main idea related to the topic.

Besides, according to Oshima and Hogue (2006:2), paragraph is as a basic unit organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or long as ten sentences. They underline that the number of sentences in one paragraph is not important because a paragraph can stand by itself and it should be long enough in order to develop the main idea clearly.

From all explanations above, it can be concluded that paragraph is important as the basic unit organization in writing. It consists of

one main idea that will be developed into several sentences. It is better to have knowledge and understanding about the way how to write paragraph in order to make a writer has confidence in expressing and organizing the ideas freely and clearly.

Components of Paragraph

A paragraph is made up of a group of sentences which discusses topic. A paragraph about one consists of three main parts, namely topic sentence, body which known as supporting sentences and concluding sentence. According to Oshima and Hogue (1991:17), there are three major components of a paragraph; a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. First, topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It is not only names the topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. Second. supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. It has the function to explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotations. Then, concluding sentence will signal the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important point to remember.

The similar idea is given by Zemach and Rumisek (2005:12). They note that a paragraph has three basic components. First is the topic sentence. It is the main idea of the paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph and it is the most general sentence of the paragraph. Second are the supporting sentences. These are sentences that talk about or explain the topic sentence. They are more detailed

ideas that follow the topic sentence. And the last is the concluding sentence. It is found at the last sentence of the paragraph. It has a function to sum up the main point or restated the main idea in a different way.

Then, Oshima and Hogue (2006:18) also add that there are two important elements of a paragraph; namely, unity and coherence. Unity means a paragraph only discusses one main idea from the beginning to the end. The main idea is stated in the topic sentence, and each or every supporting sentence explains and proves the main idea. Coherence means the paragraph is easy to read understand because and supporting sentences are in some kind of logical order and the ideas connected by the use of appropriate transition signals. Each sentence in the paragraph should flow smoothly into the next sentence. In summary, it can be said that a well-written paragraph consists of three major components which are a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentence, and two important elements which are unity, and coherence.

To sum up the explanations about the components of paragraph above, it can be concluded that a paragraph can be written shorter or longer. It also consists of three main components, which are known as an introductory sentence, body supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. All sentences in a paragraph are connected each other and of course it has the same idea to be developed.

RAFT Strategy Definitions of RAFT Strategy

RAFT is an acronym of a structures strategy that can be used to guide students' writing. The teacher can use RAFT strategy to show students writing skills. It combines different elements of writing which include imagination, creativity, and self motivation. According Urquhart and Mclver (2005: 96), RAFT is an acronym that stands for Role of the writer, what is the writer role?, Audience, who will be reading this writing?, Format, what is the best way to present this writing?, Topic, who or what is the subject of this writing?. The RAFT writing strategy helps the writers make determination while thev drafting. It can be said that the writers who determine the purpose for their writing and the audience for whom the writing can maintain the focus during the drafting process. Because knowing who the audience will be and the purpose for the writing will influence how the writer proceed with their work.

The similar idea also stated by Singleton and Newman (2009: 249). They say that RAFT stands for Role (what is the writer's role), Audience (who will be reading the writing), Format (what form will the writer use), and Topic + strong verb (who or what is the subject of this writing). This strategy allows the writer to express the topic from several different perspectives. It also can be done when the writer wants to write something to someone. It will not only show someone's knowledge to develop the topic, but it also will allow some creativity. The opinion supported by above is (2011:179), who has the same idea which states that RAFT is an acronym which is used to describe the four critical ingredients

writing, namely R for Role of the writer, A for Audience for the writing, F for Format the writing will take, and T for Topic which covered in the writing. This strategy helps the students to think critically and creatively about the content that they are studying. They can make connection to the events, people, times, and places they are reading about, and then they can combine all of the information into a creative piece of writing.

Furthermore. Buehl (2009:144) states that a RAFT strategy involves writing from a point of view. It infuses a writing assignment with full of imagination, creativity and motivation. Students' writing goes to the audience not only for the teacher, they write their writing in a form not in a standard assignment. It means that students will develop their ability in writing by expressing their idea clearly and effectively in a certain form and for the audience that they choose as their target.

In addition, Santa in Sejnost and Thiese (2010: 85) also states that of Role, RAFT, an acronym Audience, Format and Topic is a popular writing strategy that can improve students' ability to think critically. RAFT writing strategy is also effective because it requires that the students examine the topic that they have studied from different perspective from their own. Then, they write the topic for an audience in unfamiliar format or it can be said that it is new to them. It is also suggested that the teacher gives a model before asking the students to use it independently.

Then, Simon (2012:1) believes that RAFT is a writing strategy that helps students to

understand their role as a writer and learn how to communicate their ideas effectively and clearly in order to make the readers understand about what have been written. In addition, she adds that RAFT writing strategy helps the students more focus on the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the topic they will be writing about. The opinion above is emphasized on the role of a teacher to encourage the students to write creatively, help them to determine a topic to be discussed, and to see the students' ability to write the topic for different audiences.

Dealing with the explanations above, it can be concluded that RAFT as an acronym used to describe the elements of writing: Role of the writer, Audience for the writing, Format the writing will take, and Topic covered in the writing. This strategy helps the students to have a creative thinking during the process of writing because it is used to demonstrate students' knowledge by using a defined point of view. The students are asked to analyze, synthesize, generalize, and evaluate the information in order to be written to the format.

Procedures of Implementing RAFT Strategy

Procedures refer to the steps that should be done by the teacher in order to apply the RAFT writing strategy. As stated by Buehl (2009:144),there are several procedures of RAFT strategy. First is analyzing the important ideas or information that the teacher wants the students to learn from a story, a textbook passage, or other classroom material. Second is brainstorming possible roles students could assume

in their writing by deciding who the audience will be for communication and determine the format for the writing. Then, after the students complete the reading assignment, the teacher writes RAFT on the chalkboard and list the role, audience, format, and topic for their writing. The teacher can assign the same role for the writing, or offer several different roles from which students can choose. Finally is making available sample authentic examples for a specific RAFT project for students to consult as they plan their writing.

Besides, Sejnost (2009:165) also notes that there are several procedures of RAFT strategy. First, students must analyze the important ideas, concepts or information from the reading assignment. This will determine the topic of assignment. Second, with the students, brainstorm possible roles class member could assume in their writing. This will determine the role for the assignment. Then, students to determine the audience for this writing. Finally, the format of the writing must be determined.

Next, Santa in Sejnost and Thiese (2010:85) identifies several procedures of using RAFT writing strategy. First, the teacher introduces the elements of the RAFT strategy to the students; R = Role of the writer (who is the writer?, what role does she/he play?), A = Audience for the writer (to whom are you writing?, who will read your writing?), F = Format of the writing (what form will your writing take?), T = Topic of the writing (what will you be writing about?). Second, together with the students. the teacher determines the important concepts or information from the reading assignment in order to determine the topic of the assignment. Then with students, the teacher brainstorms possible roles class member could assume in their writing. This will determine the role for the assignment. Next, the teacher asks the students to determine the audience for their writing. Finally, the teacher asks the students to decide the format the writing will take.

In relation to the ideas above, she notes that it is usually effective if the students are assigned the same role, audience, format and topic for their writing. It is done until the students familiar with the RAFT strategy. And then, the students will be allowed to brainstorm their own role, audience, and format if they have known and familiar with this strategy.

Furthermore, Simon (2012:1) explains about the procedures of RAFT writing strategy. First is explaining to the students the various perspectives writers must consider when completing any writing assignment. Second is deciding on an area of study currently taking place in the classroom for which the teacher could collaborate with the students and write a class RAFT. Discuss with the students the basic premise of the content for which the teacher likes the students to write, but allow students to help you pick the role, audience, format, and topic to write about. Third, have a class think-aloud to come up with ideas for the piece of writing that you will create as a group. Model on a whiteboard, overhead projector, or chart paper how you would write in response to the prompt. student input and creativity as you craft your piece of writing. Next,

give students another writing prompt (for which the teacher has already chosen the role, audience, format, and topic) and have students react to the prompt either individually or in small groups. It works best if all students follow the same process so the students can learn from the varied responses of their classmates. Then, choose a few students to read their RAFT aloud. Have a class discussion about how each student created their own version of the RAFT while using the same role, audience, format, and topic. As students become comfortable in reacting to RAFT prompts, give students a list of options for each component and let them choose their role, audience, format, and topic. Finally, students may choose a role, audience, format, and topic entirely on their own.

METHOD

This research was conducted by using a quasi experimental method. The purpose of this research was to find out whether the students who were taught by using RAFT writing strategy had better ability in paragraph writing for the first year students of the English Department who are registered in 2011/2012 academic year at STKIP PGRI West Sumatera. This research used Pretest - Posttest Control Group Design. Pretest scores and posttest scores compared were then from experimental and control group to improvement determine the students' ability by using RAFT writing strategy after giving treatment.

The population of this research was the first year students of English Department at College of Teacher Training and Education

(STKIP)-PGRI Padang West Sumatera in 2011/2012 academic year. It consists of twelve classes. The twelve classes, with the same background knowledge in writing, were randomly selected. They were selected by writing the name of each class in piece of small papers, placing them in a glass, and shaking them. The first small piece of paper was considered as experimental group and the second one was considered as control group.

instrument The of this research was a paragraph writing test. The test was for pretest and The pretest posttest. administered to experimental group and control group on several topics given. It was used to get students' writing result as a starting point to their ability before having treatment, and it was in five types of development forms, paragraph namely argumentative, narrative, descriptive, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect. The students were asked to choose one of topics from each paragraph development to be written. The topics were general and familiar for the students.

Similarly with pretest, the posttest was administered by using the same topics. Before giving test to the sample groups, the test was tried out to another group which was not assigned in this research. Try-out was aimed to analyze the validity and reliability of the test items. Then, based on the result of students' writing in posttest, the researcher analyzed students' product of writing based on the rubric of scoring writing.

The data of this research were collected through students' products of paragraph writing which were scored by two lecturers, and it was taken from experimental class and control class after giving treatment as long as eight meetings. Each of students was asked to write five types of paragraph development from existing topics prepared by the researcher. The test was conducted in 100 minutes. The result of students test were scored by using rubric of paragraph writing which contains six indicators, namely topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, unity, coherence, and mechanics and grammar.

The data analysis was aimed at testing the hypothesis of the research. The scores of two groups, experimental and control group, were compared determine to the effectiveness of the treatment. The results of students' writing were also scored by two scorers. Furthermore, in this research, Product Moment correlation technique was used to see the correlation of the scores from two scorers. It was also aimed at finding the reliability of two scorers. To prove whether hypotheses were accepted or rejected, it was tested by using t-test formula as the following (Sudjana (2005:239).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data of this research were taken from the result of pretest and posttest. Pretest was administered on June 6th 2012 and posttest was administered on July 11th 2012. Before administering pretest for both groups, the researcher did try out test related to the topics of the pretest. The try out class was given to class F. The distribution of students' score for both groups on pretest can be seen in the following table.

Table Distribution of students' score on pretest

No	Group	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Mean score	
1	Experimental				
	a. Argumentative	15.5	0	11.71	
	b. Narrative	20.5	8	13.67	
	c. Descriptive	20	9	14.5	
	d.Comparison and Contrast	16.5	0	11.60	
	e. Cause and Effect	16.5	0	10.18	
	Total			61.31	
2	Control				
	a. Argumentative	20	8	14.18	
	b. Narrative	21	0	13.69	
	c. Descriptive	20	4	12.96	
	d.Comparison and Contrast	18.5	0	8.42	
	e. Cause and Effect	20.5	0	5.81	
	Total			55.06	

From the table above, it can be concluded that the experimental group and control group were almost the same in producing the numbers. The highest score gained by experimental group was 20 and that gained by control group was 21. The

lowest score in experimental group was 0 and in control group was also 0. Furthermore, the mean score in experimental group was a little bit higher than the mean score in control group.

The distribution of posttest can be seen in the following table.

Table Distribution of students' score on posttest

No	Group	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Mean score		
1	Experimental					
	a. Argumentative	23	0	15.06		
	b. Narrative	21.5	0	15.60		
	c. Descriptive	20.5	13	16.64		
	d. Comparison and Contrast	21.5	0	13.11		
	e. Cause and Effect	21.5	0	13.26		
	Total			73.67		
2	Control					
	a. Argumentative	20.5	9	14.28		
	b. Narrative	21.5	5	14.15		
	c. Descriptive	17.5	6.5	13.28		
	d. Comparison and Contrast	20	0	13.00		
	e. Cause and Effect	17	0	11.56		

Total 66.26

The table above shows that the experimental group achieved higher score than the control group. The highest score in experimental group was 23 and in control group was 21.5. On the other hand, the lowest score in experimental group was 0 and in control group was also 0. Furthermore, the mean score of students in experimental group was higher than the mean score in control group.

The result of posttest indicated the students' score in developing paragraph for five kinds of paragraph development. The test assigned the students to show their

ability to develop those kinds of paragraph development. The results of students' writing product were analyzed by using rubric of scoring by assessing six indicators, namely topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, unity, coherence, mechanics and and grammar. The highest score for each indicator was 4 and the lowest score was 1. The maximum score was 24. The students' product of writing was scored by two scorers. Then, the result scores of two scorers were checked by using Product Moment Correlation technique; (Arikunto (2009:72).

Table Reliability of Two Scorers

No	Group	Classification	Result	Criteria
1	Experimental	Pretest	0.81	Very High Reliability
		Posttest	0.91	Very High Reliability
2	Control	Pretest	0.92	Very High Reliability
		Posttest	0.77	High Reliability

From the table above, it clearly can be said that the scores of students' product of writing from two scorers were reliable. Not only Pretest scores from Experimental class and control class were very high reliable, but also posttest score

of experimental class. The result of posttest score from control class was high reliable.

In short, to illustrate the mean score from experimental group and control group can be seen in the following table.

Table Recapitulation of Mean Scores (Pretest and Posttest)

Classification	Experimental Group	Control Group	
Pretest	61.31	55.06	
Posttest	73.67	66.26	
	12.36	11.2	

The table above showed that between two groups, experimental and control group, experimental group got higher result between pretest and posttest rather than control group. Thus, the difference was only 1.16. As it is calculated

statistically, it clearly indicated that there is a significant effect of using RAFT writing strategy toward students' ability in paragraph writing.

Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis was tested by using t-test. It is important to know which hypothesis is

accepted based on the finding of this research.

Variable	N	Mean	The Closest	t-calculated	t- _{table}	Interpretation
RAFT Strategy	36	73.67	<i>df</i> 70	3.79	2.00	t-calculated > t-table. Therefore, there is a significant difference between X and Y
PPP Strategy	36	66.26	70	2.98	2.00	t-calculated > t-table. Therefore, between X and Y are the same

From the calculation of t-test, the t-calculated of experimental class is 3.79. The total case degree of freedom was 70; (36-1) + (36-1). The t-table at the level of significance 0.05 and 70 degree of freedom (the closest df) is 2.00. This calculation reveals that the t-calculated is higher than the t-table. It means that the research hypothesis (Ha_6) was accepted. statistically interpretation is that the students who were taught by using RAFT writing strategy had better ability than those who were taught by using PPP strategy in paragraph writing.

From the two-calculation of t-test above, the t-calculated of experimental class (3.79) is higher than the t-calculated of control class (2.98). It is clearly said Ha was accepted. Statistically, RAFT writing strategy is better than PPP strategy in paragraph writing.

There are some possible explanations related to the result of this research. The students were motivated to write the topics that were given to them because it was related to their real life. Therefore,

the result is consistent with theories and researches.

Furthermore, it was also found that the effect of Role, Audience. Format, and Topic (RAFT) strategy on students' writing positive. ability is From research, it was also found that the students who were treated by using RAFT writing strategy had active role in participating during the teaching and learning process. They created a good atmosphere among them in the classroom to stimulate them to be active in the process of writing.

Moreover, the finding of this research indicated that RAFT writing strategy can help the students to understand their role as a writer and learn how to communicate their ideas effectively and clearly in order to make the readers understand about what have been written. In short, statistically, RAFT writing strategy was better than common classroom strategy; namely, PPP strategy.

Above all, according to Buehl (2009:144), RAFT writing strategy makes a writing assignment with imagination, creativity, and

motivation. It can be used to provide the variation of students writing product. He also states that this strategy can be used for any kinds of writing assignment, not only in social field but also in science field. Unfortunately, in this research, teaching writing of comparison and contrast paragraph by using RAFT writing strategy did not give satisfactory result.

CONCLUSION

The data collected have been tested statistically by calculation of ttest. The result of the calculation indicates that t-calculated is higher than t-table. Referring to the result of this research, for four kinds of paragraph development, the hypothesis (Ha) of this research was accepted. It means writing that RAFT strategy effective to be used to improve students' ability paragraph writing.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this research and due to the effectiveness of RAFT writing strategy toward students' ability in paragraph writing, the future research should include more specific development of paragraph, different samples, and different places. It is expected that by having such kind of research, the effectiveness of using RAFT writing strategy can be more explored and students' product of writing will be better.

Notes

¹ This articles was made based on the writer's thesis at Graduate Program of State University of Padang entitled "The Effect of Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) Writing Strategy Toward Students' Ability in Paragraph Writing; A Study at the First Year Students of College of Teacher Training and Education (STKIP) PGRI West Sumatera.

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