

THE USE OF RAFT AND FOUR SQUARE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITING ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract: The purposes of this research were to find out whether or not there was any significant difference in narrative writing achievement between before and after the students who were taught by using RAFT strategy, significant difference in narrative writing achievement between before and after the students who were taught by using Four Square strategy and significant difference in narrative writing achievement between the students who were taught using RAFT and Four Square strategies. This study also investigated which aspects of writing that had significant contributions to the students' achievements. The population of this study was all of the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 2 Banyuasin III in academic year 2016-2017. Forty students were selected as the sample by using purposive sampling method. They were divided equally into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught by using RAFT strategy, while the control group was taught by using Four Square strategy. The data were obtained from writing pretests and posttests in both groups and were analyzed by using both paired and independent sample t-test, and regression analyses. The findings showed that there were significant differences in narrative writing achievement between before and after the students were taught by using RAFT, significant differences between before and after the students who were taught by using Four Square strategy, and no significant difference in narrative writing achievement between the students who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using Four Square strategy. In conclusions, both strategies could be applied to improve students' writing achievement.

Keywords: *Writing, narrative, RAFT, Four Square, vocational school*

In this globalization era, English becomes the most important thing for the people because English is the main

language that is used all over the world. According to Cook (2003, p.25), English is taught as the main foreign language in

many countries and used for business, education, and access to information by substantial of the world's population. In Indonesia, English has been taught to secondary school students as a compulsory subject and there are four language skills that the students learn, namely; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Writing is considered as a difficult skill to master in learning English. This is in line with what Kim and Kim (2005, p.69) argue that learning writing is difficult for students to develop especially in English as foreign language (EFL) context. It is also supported by Nunan (1999) who states that writing is the most difficult skill among the four English language skills. English writing is considered as the most difficult subject in the school since students have to write about what they think and state by using a correct procedure. According to Raimes (1983), English writing is not just speech written down on paper. It means that English writing is a form of the written English that demands standard forms of grammar, organization, and vocabulary. It shows that in English writing, the students should master the use of grammar and vocabulary to make the reader understand what they write.

According to Cook, Green, Meyer and Saey (2001, p.46), students are reluctant to write because they have low confidence, inadequate writing time, limited peer collaboration and lack

control over the English writing tasks, which often have insufficient relevance to real life. Improving students' writing skill is important since some facts show that many Indonesian students have problems in English writing achievement, especially in South Sumatera.

Some studies have been conducted to find out students' problems in writing. Based on the study done by Asiah (2015) who conducted her study at SMAN 1 Pagar Alam, the students' writing achievement improved, but it was still unsatisfactory. Another study on improving writing achievement of the tenth graders at SMAN 1 Lahat conducted by Lianasari (2015) also found that the students' writing achievement was improved, but the gain score was so small (0.66). In addition, the study conducted by Sani, Inderawati and Vianty, a student and two lecturers of Postgraduate of Language Study Program of Sriwijaya University (2016) in using podcast with dictogloss procedures to improve listening comprehension and writing achievement of tenth graders of SMAN 22 Palembang. They found that the students had problems in starting, developing and concluding the idea in writing. But after getting the treatment, the result of posttest showed satisfactory result made by the students in experimental group. Most of the students could reach the level above average in listening and writing.

Learning writing in English is challenging for secondary school students in Indonesia since there are many genres such as report, procedure, narrative, recount, descriptive, expository, argumentative and persuasive. In this study, the writer focused on narrative text since based on the Standard Competence of 2006 curriculum of the National Education Department of Indonesia, the students of SMA/SMK must be able to express the transactional and interpersonal meaning in daily life context and also must be able to express the meaning of short functional text and monolog in form of certain kind of texts including narrative text.

Narrative is a piece of text tells a story and, in doing so, entertains or informs the reader or listener (Anderson, 1997, p.8). This is line with the purpose of narrative text that is to amuse or as information to reader. The examples of narrative texts are legend, myth, fable, folktale, fairytale and personal experience. According to Dymock (2007), narrative is the most free form of writing, but it has a structure, a shape or a pattern. Therefore, it is worth saying that it is important for students to know the generic structure of narrative writing in English.

The result of preliminary investigation conducted by the writer by giving the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 2 Banyuasin III a writing test showed that most of the students still have

difficulties in English writing narrative text. The students found it difficult to express their ideas in narrative form, and most of the students lacked of English vocabulary and correct English grammar. According to Meyers (2005, p.52), narrative is one of the most powerful ways of communicating with others; a good written story lets the reader response to some event as if it were their own. Therefore, based on what the writer found in the preliminary investigation, if the students could not make a good narrative form, it would be difficult for them to make a good communication with others through their narrative writing.

To improve the students' writing achievement, the writer applied two strategies. The first strategy was RAFT. Tompkins (2010) states that RAFT is an acronym for Role, Audience, Format, and Topic. RAFT is a strategy that can help the student to understand their role as writer and how to communicate their ideas effectively so that the readers can easily understand what the writer wrote. Santa (1988) claims that this strategy can help the student understand his role as a writer, the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the topic they are writing about. As the strength of this strategy, Santa (2002) claims that RAFT strategy is a useful strategy for helping students to write a paragraph. It means by using this strategy, the students can write English

well because the students can express their ideas and feeling on a paper. In addition, they can share some information with their friends when they do discussion in the writing class. Furthermore, 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.

The second strategy applied in this study was Four Square. Four Square is a strategy that is used to help students organize their idea by filling their ideas into Four Square shape with some clues to form their writing. Gould (1999) describes that Four Square is the way to help the students interested and motivated in easy organization in every square they have. As the strengths of this strategy, Gould and Burke (2010) state the advantages of using four square writing method in in the class. Four square helped the writers organized and brainstormed in a hurry and it allowed the writer to have time and attention in giving detail of writing. Besides, it made students' confidence in English writing. Thus, Four Square strategy could improve the test scores of the students.

Four Square strategy consists of several stages (Gould & Burke, 2010).

- The first stage of four square writing method is categorizing each square with the main idea.
- The second stage is labeling with a summary sentence in the last square.
- The next stage is placing a topic sentence in the center of four square, then writing a sentence in each square based on the main idea that has been written before. After that, the students write each sentence on the square into a short paragraph. It is called an outline.
- The next step is adding more detail that is writing one sentence more in each square so that there are two sentences in it.
- The sixth stage is adding supporting detail; the students make a list of related vocabulary in each square to explore the content of each square.
- The next stage is expanding the introduction with some detail information. The last stage is writing a complete wrap-up sentence and completing each square with the sentences using the vocabulary listed before. The students just re-write the sentences they made into a paragraph from the squares in the right mechanics.

It could be assumed that Four Square is a very simple and easy

organizing strategy for students to plan their writing.

There were three previous studies which related to the writer's study. The first study was done by Sudarningsih and Wardana (2011) who applied RAFT to improve recount writing skill of the ten grade students of SMAN 1 Abiansemal in Denpasar. The finding of their study showed that the students' writing was improved.

The second study was conducted by Mahfudhotin (2014) who applied Four Square technique in teaching narrative writing of short story to tenth grader of a senior high school. After the implementation of four-square writing technique, she found that the students' writing ability in terms of organization showed good result. Another study was conducted by Irlina (2014) whose sample of study were 120 eleventh grade students of SMK Negeri 2 Sekayu, South Sumatera. She found that the writing achievement of the increased, though it was not very satisfactory because she found that 53.75% students were in average level and the mean score only 61.83.

There were some similarities and differences between the previous studies and the current study. Sudarningsih and Wardana (2011) conducted their research to improve recount writing skill through RAFT Technique. Mahfudhotin (2014) conducted her research to investigate the implementation of Four Square Writing Technique in teaching

narrative writing. Irlina (2014) conducted her research to improve functional text writing achievement through Four Square and RAFT strategies.

This present study investigated the effectiveness of the use of RAFT and Four Square strategies to improve narrative writing achievement and to compare two strategies which one as the most significant. Specifically, this study was aimed to find out 1) whether or not there was any significant difference in narrative writing achievement between before and after the students were taught by using RAFT strategy, 2) whether or not there was any significant difference in narrative writing achievement between before and after the students were taught by using Four Square strategy, 3) whether or not there was any significant difference in narrative writing achievement between the students who were taught using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using Four Square strategy, 4) whether or not there was significant contribution of writing aspects to the narrative writing achievement between the students who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using Four Square strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study applied quasi experimental design through the nonequivalent control group design.

This study was conducted by using two groups, the experimental group and control group where the students in experimental group were taught by using RAFT Strategy, while the students in control group were taught by using Four Square Strategy. The students were given a pretest and a posttest. The pretest were done before the treatments, while the posttest were given after the treatments with 22 meetings including the pretest and the posttest.

Population and Sample

In this study, there were 73 students who were selected as population. They were all tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 2 Banyuasin III in academic year 2016/2017. The sample was selected from the population based on the three criteria. The first criteria was the students who are taught by the same teacher of English. The second, they were not taking an English course. Based on the writer's survey, there were 55 students who are not taking course. The last criteria, based on the result of the students' test achievement.. The writer gave general English test from Cambridge University Press (2009). Next, the writer selected 40 students for the sample based on the students' test achievement (high and low levels). Then, from 40 students, the writer divided them into two groups; 20 students which consisted of 10 students in high level and ten students in low level for experimental group and 20

students which consisted of 10 students in high level and ten students in low level students for control group.

Data Collection and Analyses

A writing test was used to collect the data. The data were taken from the result of pre-test and post-test in writing. The pre-test was conducted before doing the treatment and post-test was conducted after doing the treatment to the experimental groups. The students were asked to write a narrative text by using their own words consisting of 150 - 200 words. The students' writing test were assessed by two raters.

The content validity of writing test was checked by giving the test instruments to a rater to make sure that the test content is relevant with the purpose of the study and the syllabus of 2006 curriculum for tenth graders. Based on the judgments of the validators, the writing instrument was considered appropriate and could be applied as the test instrument for this study. Next, to check the reliability of the students' writing, the writer applied inter-rater reliability. According to Best and Kahn (2006, p. 299), inter-rater reliability can be determined by having two persons independently score the same set of the test and then calculate a correlation between the scores. To give scores of writing tests, the raters used rubrics. They scored the students' writing based on the rubrics given by the writer.

The analyses of data based on the test was done in some stages. First, pre and post test scores from both groups were checked by two raters by using the rubric provided by the writer. The raters were selected based on three criteria: 1) they were at least graduated from strata 2 of English study program, 2) they had minimum 5 years teaching experiences and 3) they had 550 for TOEFL minimum scores. Then, the students' score were classified in interval score and certain categories presented in the form of frequency and percentage.

Next, the scores from pre-test and post-test both of experimental and control groups were analyzed to answer the research questions number 1, 2 the writer used paired sample t-test to know whether or not there were significant improvement on students' narrative writing achievements each writing aspect from the pre-test and post test result. To answer research questions

number 3, the independent sample t-test was used to know whether or not there were significant differences between experimental group and control group. SPSS 20 was used in analyzing all the data obtained.

FINDINGS

Students' Writing Scores

Table 1 below shows the distribution of students' writing score. There are five categories of students' writing score; 5 – 10 is *very poor*, 11 – 15 is *poor*, 16 – 20 is *average*, 21 – 25 is *good* and 26 – 30 is *very good*. For the purpose of the analyses to categorize the students' writing scores, raw scores were used. The lowest score is 5 and the highest score is 30. The students' mean gain in experimental group that were taught by using RAFT strategy was 6.15, and the students' mean gain in control group that were taught by using Four Square strategy was 4.25.

Table 1. Score Distribution of Writing Based on Level of Achievement (N=40)

Group	Score Interval	Level of Achievement	Control				Experiment			
			Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Writing	26-30	Very good	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	21-25	Good	6	30	13	65	5	25	15	75
	16-20	Average	8	40	7	35	9	45	4	20
	11-15	Poor	4	20	-	-	-	-	1	5
	5-10	Very poor	2	10	-	-	6	30	-	-
Mean			18.25		22.50		16.15		22.30	
Mean Gain			4.25				6.15			

Result of Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Kolmogrove-Smirnov test was applied to analyze the normality of the data. The result of normality on writing

is presented in the following table. The data can be categorized normal if the value of p output is 0.05 or higher than 0.05.

Table 2. Normality of Writing Scores

Variables	Sig.	
	Exp	Control
Writing Pre-Test	.145	.126
Writing Post-Test	.058	.214

Based on the result of Kolmogrove-Smirnov test, the value of students' writing pretest in the experimental group was .145 and the value of students' writing posttest was .058.

Meanwhile, the value of students' writing pretest in the control group was .126 and the value of students' writing posttest was .214. It could be concluded that all the data of writing tesy was normal since all the p-values of the normality tests were higher than 0.05.

Levene test was used to assess the homogeneity of students' writing pretest and posttest scores in the experimental and control groups.

Table 3. The result of Homogeneity of Writing Scores

Variables	Group	Lavene	Sig.
Writing	Experimental Group → Pretest-Posttest	.109	.743
	Control Group → Pretest-Posttest	.000	1.000
	EG-CG → Pretest-Pretest	.000	1.000
	EG-CG → Posttest-Posttest	.000	1.000

Based on the result of Levene test, the significance value of students' writing pre and post test in experimental group was .743, students' writing pre and post test in control group was 1.000, students' writing pre test between the experimental and control group was 1.000 and students' writing post test between experimental group and control group was 1.000. It could be concluded that all the data of writing was homogeneous since all the p-value of the homogeneity test were higher than 0.05.

Result of Paired Sample and Independent Sample t-Tests

To know the significance improvement in the students' writing and its aspects before and after treatment, the paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test were applied. Table 4 presents the result of paired sample t-test for writing of experimental and control groups.

As shown in Table 4, the result of paired sample t-test showed that there were significant improvements in the students' narrative writing achievement in both the experimental and control groups after they received the treatment. All aspects also showed significant improvements after the treatment.

Furthermore, the result of independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the posttest score of the experimental group that was taught by using the RAFT strategy

and the control group that was taught by using Four Square strategy. It suggests that both of those strategies were good to be applied in teaching writing.

Table 4. Result of Paired Sample t-Test

Variable	Paired sample t-test							
	Four Square Strategy				RAFT Strategy			
	Mean		Mean diff	t value/ Sig.	Mean		Mean diff	t value/ Sig.
	Pre-test	Post-test			Pre-test	Post-test		
Writing	18.2	22.5	4.25	-.242 .810	16.1	22.3	6.15	-3.86 .001
Grammar	3.57	4.20	.62	.141 .889	2.97	4.22	1.25	-4.25 .000
Vocab	3.87	4.67	.80	-1.047 .302	3.35	4.47	1.12	-3.20 .005
Mechanic	3.25	4.42	1.17	-.580 .565	3.35	4.07	.72	-1.79 .089
Fluency	3.50	4.35	.85	1.024 .312	3.17	4.55	1.37	-4.24 .000
Form	3.60	4.60	1.00	.152 .880	2.97	4.62	1.65	-4.24 .000

Table 5. Result of Independent Sample t-Test

Variable	Independent t-test	
	Mean diff.	t-value/ Sig.
Writing	.200	-.242 .810
Grammar	.025	.141 .889
Vocab	.200	-1.047 .302
Mechanic	.350	-.580 .565
Fluency	.200	1.024 .312
Form	.025	.152 .880

Contribution of Each Aspect of Writing

Since there were significant improvements in the students' writing achievements in the experimental and control groups after being taught by using RAFT and

Four Square strategy, multiple regression analyses was applied to know which aspects gave significant contribution to the students' writing achievements. The result of analyses is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Result of Multiple Regression Analyses

	Aspects	R	R ²	R ² changed	Sig.
RAFT	Form	.923 ^a	.852	.852	.000
	Form, grammar	.969 ^b	.939	.087	.000
	Form, grammar, mechanic	.985 ^c	.970	.031	.000
	Form, grammar, mechanic, vocabulary	.992 ^d	.984	.014	.000
	Form, grammar, mechanic, vocabulary, fluency	.998 ^e	.995	.012	.000
Four Square					
	Mechanic	.878	.770	.770	.000
	Mechanic, fluency	.971	.943	.173	.000
	Mechanic, fluency, Grammar	.988	.976	.033	.000
	Mechanic, fluency, Grammar, form	.993	.986	.010	.000
	Mechanic, fluency, Grammar, form, vocabulary	.999	.997	.011	.000

As shown in Table 5, all of aspects of writing in experimental group contributed to the students' writing achievement. The contributions were as follows: form (85.2%), grammar (8.7%), mechanic (3.1%), vocabulary (1.4%), and fluency (1.2%). Similarly, in control group, all of writing aspects also gave contribution to students' to students' writing achievement. The aspects of mechanic contributed

77%, followed by fluency (17.3%), grammar (3.3%), form (1%), and vocabulary (1.1%).

DISCUSSION

The finding of pair sample t-test in the experimental group that used RAFT strategy showed significant improvement. The mean score of pretest in the experimental group was 16.15 and the posttest was 22.30. 15 students in the experimental group

could reach good level, 4 students in average level, and only 1 student in poor level and none of them in very poor level of achievement in the post test. This is in line with Suharni, Mukhaiyar and Radjab (2010) who found that RAFT strategy could improve the students' writing achievement. According to Santa (2002) RAFT strategy is a useful strategy for helping students to write a paragraph. It is also supported with what had been found by Tompkins (2010) states that RAFT can help the student to understand their role as writer and how to communicate their ideas effectively so that the readers can easily understand what the writer wrote.

Next, the result of paired sample t-test of the control group which used Four Square strategy also showed significant improvement. The mean score of pretest in control group was 18.25 and the posttest was 22.50. After the treatment, 13 students could reach good level, 7 students were in average level, and none of them in poor and very poor level. It is in line with Nursyifa, Ngadiso and Asrori (2012) found that Four Square strategy could improve students' writing skill. Additionally, Gould (1999) describes that Four Square is the way to help the students interested and motivated in

easy organization in every square they have. As the strengths of this strategy, Gould and Burke (2010) state the advantages of using four square writing method in the class. Four square helped the students organized and brainstormed in a hurry and it allowed the student to have time and attention in giving detail of writing. Besides, it made students' confidence in English writing.

To conclude, RAFT and Four Square strategies taught by the writer to the experimental and control group for 20 meetings worked well to improve students' writing achievement. In those 20 meetings, the students were given a copy of narrative text, then they were asked to write a narrative text with their own words individually. By using RAFT strategy in the experimental group and Four Square strategy in the control group, the writer could analyze which strategy was most to make the students active in learning English writing during the teaching and learning process.

The result of independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference in students' writing achievement between the students' who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using Four Square strategy.

It concluded that both of those strategies were on the almost similar level. It also proofed those strategies were good to be applied in teaching and learning activities. The researcher assumed that this might happen because the students were familiar with the narrative text, whether they faced narrative by watching television cartoon film, and short narrative story from magazines or a book. The researcher also assumed that it happened because students have discussed the mistakes they had made to their teacher and classmates, so they were not only improved by their own mistakes, but also learning from their friends' mistakes.

Based on the result of regression analyses, all aspects have given 100% contributions in writing achievement. First, the result of regression analyses of the experimental group which used RAFT strategy showed that in writing achievement, form as the highest contribution (85.2%), followed by grammar, mechanic, vocabulary and fluency. The writer assumed form could be the highest contribution because most of students in experimental group were good in organizing ideas in a paragraph, but fluency could be the lowest contribution because the

students were still not consistent in using correct form of tense in a paragraph. Beside using past form in narrative text, they still used some form of tenses in making sentences.

The result of control group which used Four Square strategy showed mechanic was contributed the most (77%) followed by fluency, grammar, form, and vocabulary as the lowest contribution (1.1%). Mechanic could be the highest contribution because most of students could use correct punctuation and spelling in their texts. Contrastly, vocabulary could be the lowest contribution because the students were still poor in using variant of words in their text. Then, the result of control group which used Four Square strategy showed mechanic was contributed the most (77%) followed by fluency, grammar, form, and vocabulary.

In short, each strategy had its strengths so it could be said that the two strategies, RAFT and Four Square were good in improving the students' writing achievement. The students enjoyed using the strategies so that they felt confident to write.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the interpretations, the use of RAFT and Four Square

strategies has improved the students' narrative writing achievements after they were given the treatments. Some aspects of writing have improved from pretest to posttest. The aspects that improved the most were *form* in the experimental group that used RAFT strategy and *mechanic* in the control group. Actually, the other aspects also improved, all of the aspects showed significant improvements from the pretest to posttest after being taught by using RAFT strategy in the experimental group and Four Square strategy in the control group. Then, there was no significant difference in narrative writing achievement between the students who were taught by using RAFT strategy and those who were taught by using Four Square strategy. Both of those strategies were on the almost similar level. It also proofed those strategies were good to be used in teaching and learning activities.

Furthermore, there are some suggestions that can be offered as the follow up of this study. First, in the classroom activity, the teacher should help the students to improve their ability in every aspect. RAFT and Four Square strategies are suggested as some of appropriate strategies to improve students' writing achievement. Besides giving

RAFT or Four Square strategy to brainstorm and help the students to have an idea to write, the teacher also should help them to comprehend how to write a text with the appropriate grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, fluency and form, and based on what the writer found, especially in teaching narrative writing, the teacher must focus on the fluency and the vocabulary aspects to make all aspects give good contribution in improving students' writing achievements. Next, the students are suggested to practice their writing skill not only in the classroom but they must be active and creative to build social interaction to the other by using English.

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