

R.A.F.T (ROLE, AUDIENCE, FORMAT, AND TOPIC) AS WRITING STRATEGY TO TEACH WRITING FORMAL LETTERS

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Submission date: 16-Nov-2020 01:53PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1447532154

File name: artikel_proceeding_6th_lltc_feb_2020.pdf (403.22K)

Word count: 3485

Character count: 18559



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Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta

**R.A.F.T (ROLE, AUDIENCE, FORMAT, AND TOPIC)
AS WRITING STRATEGY TO TEACH WRITING
FORMAL LETTERS (APPLICATION LETTER)**

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DOI: <http://doi.org/24071/lltc.2019.16>

received 13 January 2020; accepted 27 January 2020

Abstract

Teaching English writing for high school students requires high creativity and improvement by creative ways from time to time. In addition, other difficulties are faced by the students themselves: lack of vocabulary and poor grammar skills. RAFT's writing strategy focuses on the point of view of students as writers, target audience, unique writing format, and stated topic. This study was carried out as descriptive qualitative research by the researcher. The research subjects were twelve-graders of Science 2 class of MAN 2 in Bojonegoro. The results of this study were derived from field notes, observation checklist, writing assignment for the students and interview. The process of teaching writing formal letters, specifically application letter by RAFT strategy was successfully implemented. Students demonstrated positive attitude toward the strategy and English subject.

Keywords: writing, formal letter (application letter), RAFT

Introduction

Writing plays vital roles in English Language Teaching due to some reasons. First, writing is productive skill that requires students in producing a language to communicate. Second, it can support other language skills, such as listening, reading, and speaking. Writing in English has established a very significant place in the world of communication. People from around the world need to connect by writing to each other. There are many reasons to write, according to Harmer, for example when someone wants to express their ideas, emotions, opinions and experiences to others without the burden of face-to-face contact, he or she can write to convey them.

Since writing is used in almost all fields and occupations, it is a skill that all students and employees need to learn and improve in. Regardless of the actual task and the structure used, learning what makes for good writing and the best methods to use will lead to a well-crafted essay being produced in a shorter time frame. A good writing is clear, straightforward and easy to understand, and it has confident beginnings and endings, according to Barry, Campbell & Daish (2006, p.11). In addition, the writers demonstrate great concern with the subject they write about, and are able to arouse the reader's interest in it.

There are some reasons why it is important to write. First, writing is productive skill which requires students to communicate in producing a language.

Second, other language skills such as listening, reading, and communicating may be provided. According to Hacker (2009: 2) writing is not about capturing formed thoughts, but about finding out what you think. In addition, Cremin (2009:86) notes that writing is an act of imaginative use of sound, color, and visual variety as well as words. Writing demands the students to understand the intent and the audience. An effective writing helps students to write to an audience fluently and deliberately. Lucantoni (2002: 53) claims that a good writer “involves a consideration of the purpose of the activity, and the audience, which in turn will indicate the writer whether a formal or informal register is required”. Moreover, Barry, Campbell, & Daish (2006: 12) urge that an effective writer consider the tone, register, and sense of audience which are fit with the purpose. For example, “a letter to friend should sound friendly and sympathetic, whereas a letter to a newspaper should sound more formal and distanced.”

According to Rebecca Corfield (2009:8), an application letter, also known as a cover letter, is a document sent with your CV to send an employer additional information about your skills and experience. The application letter is intended to give detailed information about why you are a good job candidate. Application forms are the most common approach employers use to recruit new employees. An application form is a folder that all candidates have filled in to apply themselves for a particular job. This helps the employer to compare applicants and to contrast them. A party can be chosen in this way to be invited for interview. This method is often referred to as shortlisting: a longer list of applicants is reduced to a smaller number or a shorter list.

Additionally, application forms can be written in pieces of paper sent and distributed by the courier. They may be between two and eight pages in length. These are increasingly taking the form of a written document, completed and sent by e-mail (electronic mail). The websites of organizations can often include the appropriate application form when there is a vacancy, and applicants simply fill in it and return it to the recruiter via the website or by email.

The whole objective of filling out an application form is to impress an employer enough to earn a spot on the day the interviews take place. After thinking about the position you should complete the form and you should try to present your skills and experience in the light of what is needed for the job. The employer will also submit descriptions of the position in the form of a job description and a qualification for the employee. A job description is a concise overview of the position's core roles and responsibilities, intended to communicate the primary fields of employment to candidates and potential job holders. A person specification depicts the type of person the employer wants for the job. Often an individual specification may include both necessary and preferred attributes for the position.

Having observed the compositions written by 17 students of Grade XI IPA 2 of MAN 2 Bojonegoro, the researcher found out that the students had difficulty in writing, especially writing a formal letter. Writing a formal letter is one of seven exercises in Reading and Writing Review in IGCSE English as a second language syllabus. Students are expected to write about 150-200 words with the intent, format, and audience defined. The students must use a corresponding

10 register. A stimulus in the form of pictures or photos and/or brief prompts was provided. Many writings were found to be difficult to understand and re-reading was required to get the meaning out. The writings do not make a reader feel pulled into the subject and the meaning is not fully obvious. The context is plain for certain works, but they do not make the reader find them especially fascinating or fun to read. In addition, the students do not concentrate on the prompts given and do not use correct register according to letter format.

Given the above argument, the researcher is motivated to apply RAFT strategy in writing guidance because RAFT belongs to one of writing techniques that can be used in writing teaching and can be used to enhance the writing skills of students. Furthermore, this approach will enable the students to understand their position as a writer, the audience they were addressing, the varied writing styles and the varied subject they were writing about (Santa, 1988). RAFT strategy refers to the abbreviation of R (Role of the writer), A (Audience to whom the product is being directed), F (Format of the product being created), and T (Topic of the product).

In addition, RAFT is a technique for creating discrete performance tasks, and originally developed to help teachers think about and prepare to teach various styles of writing (Santa, as quoted by Doubet and Hockett, 2015:232). They agree that RAFT is a versatile technique that can be used to develop sensory experiences, jigsaw assignments, homework assignments, or overview evaluations; the best RAFTs often have specific objectives of knowledge, comprehension, and skill. A RAFT practice infuses imagination, ingenuity, and inspiration into a writing task. It involves writing to an audience other than the teacher from a student's point of view and in a form other than a standard assignment or written answers to questions (Buehl, 2014).

Method

This study used descriptive qualitative as research design. Creswell (2002) stated that descriptive research aims to describe, explain and interpret some conditions that occurred in specific time and place. This is just observation of the entire cycle within the activities by following the qualitative concept and describes it into a qualitative result. One of the qualitative research goals is to describe the operation as a whole and then summarize the analysis. The researcher looked at the finding and used it in different ways (Cohen et al 2007: 461).

RAFT as a writing strategy is considered more applicable for higher education level students but is still relevant to Senior High School level. This strategy worked effectively to all senior high students which have higher sense of thinking at their age. The researchers selected the twelve graders of Science Class at MAN 2 Bojonegoro as the subjects of the study, exactly class XII IPA 2 consisting of 17 female and 18 male students.

The data in this study were collected through non-participant observation where the researcher only as an observer. They were collected through field notes, observation checklist, students' task and interview. The researcher interpreted the data descriptively from field observations, observation checklist, interview and the mission of the students. The definition was based on the field phenomenon. Then

the researcher interpreted the data taken from these instruments, and made some analyses on it. According to Creswell (2007 cited by Ary (2010: 481), the results were interpreted descriptively by the researcher who obtained and familiarized the data by reading them, and furthermore based on field data. The interpretation must be based on theory and represented the resulted data.

The researcher analyzed the detailed information in the observation field notes and then explained it descriptively in paragraphs. The analysis was carried out by taking the description during the classroom activity by following the below ways: 1) Researcher organized all information within the observation through field notes and explained the yielded mature data in paragraphs. The analysis discussed about making the description on the teaching learning process in the classroom. 2) To find out student response, the reseracher conducted interview using 8 questions to 6 students as the respondents. The result of the interiew was presented in words and sentences. The researcher processed and analyzed the data descriptively in paragraphs. 3) To find out the student writing ability about RAFT implmentation, the teacher gave tasks and then collected all students' works as well as analyzed them descriptively in paragraphs.

Findings and Discussion

The Implementation of RAFT

Pre Activity	Whilst Activity	Post Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher prepared the material and steps of RAFT - The teacher greeted the ss, opened the class and brainstormed ss - The teacher activated the ss schemata by showing some pictures, examples of formal letters and video - Teacher introduced raft strategy and 4 components - Students were given examples of job vacancy text and applications letter and instructed them to analyze the language features and generic structure by using RAFT 	<p>ROLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - R (Role of the writer/who is the writer/what role does she/he play). - The students were asked to take on a particular role in the professional world. - The teacher encouraged the students to select a job in their chosen career field. <p>AUDIENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The audience for the writer (to whom are you writing?, who will read your writing) - The teacher had the students brainstorm why job vacancy text is important and how it could be applied and promoted in their career field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher gave feedback and evaluation and evaluation of students' work - Tteacher reviewed what students have learned today - She gave conclusion and closed the lesson.

	<p>F²ORMAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Format of the writing (what form will you writing take?)- The teacher had the students select a method to disseminate the information that is appropriate for the role they assuming. <p>TOPI²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The topic of the writing (what will you be writing about?)- The students identify the topic based on the job vacancy given to them.- The teacher asked the ss to work in groups to complete their writing. ¹⁵- The ss with the same career interest could work in the same group- Students started to make an application letter based on the set of RAFT.- Students thought about the content they need to tell and what purpose they need to use, also words choice.	
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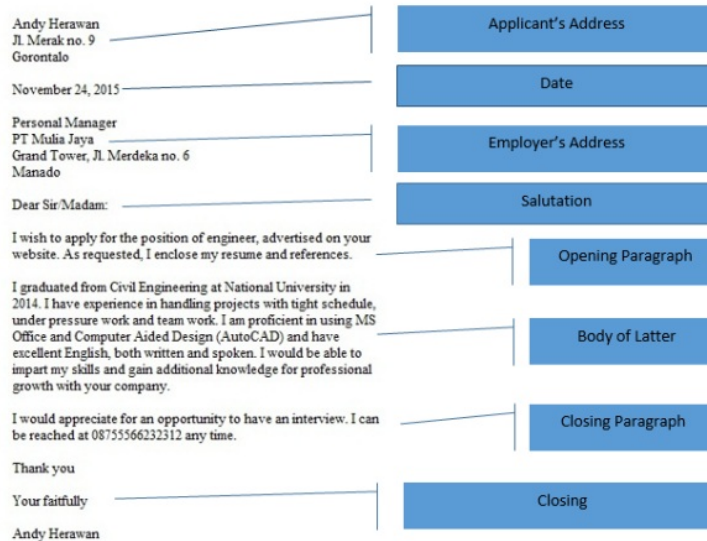
Student's Writing Ability
(Content, Organization, Language Use, Vocabulary, Mechanics)

No	Score	Components				
		Content	Organization	Language use	Vocabulary	Mechanics
1	Excellent	20	30	15	26	30
2	Good to average	12	5	18	6	4
3	Fair to poor	2		2	2	1
4	Very poor	2		1	2	

Students' Responses

Teaching and learning	What did they say?
English subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English belonged to one of the difficult subjects in school and it is not easy to cope with. - They had willingness to write as long as they were interested
Implementation of RAFT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAFT was very interesting - They could understand the instructions from the teacher - The instructions were clear - They could follow all the steps including made a group work - RAFT strategy was different - It promoted creative writing. - RAFT motivated them to learn writing a formal letter
Learning material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The material was helping them to understand about formal letter - It helped them a lot in creating a formal letter - They got different points of view which could lead them to have different sides of topics in writing. - They could write the text nicely, it can be made them interested in writing

Figure 1. Generic Structure of Application Letter (adapted from Suparna, 2019)



Students' Work in Writing Application Letter

*Bojonegoro, June 25, 2019
To : Resources Departement Manager
Intercontinental Jakarta Midplaza
Jl. Jakarta Indah No. 15
Jakarta*

*Dear Sir,
I wish to apply for the position of Accounting Staff that was advertised on Jakarta Pos, June 15, 2016.
I have over one experience as an Accounting with PT. Pelayaran Nasional and have experie¹²nce of wide variety of pattern techniques. My computer skills are very good, and I have an excellent record as a reliable, productive ³mployee.
I am looking for a new challenges and the position of Accounting Staff sounds the perfect opportunity. Your organization has an enviable record innovation in investor financial consultant, and an excellent reputation as an employer, making the position even more attractive.
A enclose my CV for your inspection and look forward to hearing from you soon. I am available for interview at your convenience.*

*Sincerely yours,
Aris Setiawan*

Advantages and Disadvantages Using RAFT Strategy

The researchers found many advantages and disadvantages of teaching writing through the use of RAFT strategy after research. The benefits were: 1) RAFT strategy helped the students understanding their role as a writer, the audience they were addressing, the varied writing styles and the subject they wrote about; 2) Students were given a clear structure for their writing; students were also more inspired to pursue a writing assignment because it affected them directly and encouraged more innovative response to the material learning; 3) RAFT approach provided students with opportunities to illustrate their comprehension of a subject or concept through a writing experience to help them learning about the topic and expressing their understanding on it in a creative and interesting way; 4) The RAFT approach helped students to coordinate their thoughts and keeps students focused on the learning; 5) RAFT strategy increased the enthusiasm of students to write because that approach made them writing for a specific purpose.

Whereas, the drawbacks of the RAFT strategy were as follows: 1) RAFT strategy only helped students passing by selecting topic and drafting which were pre-writing parts; 2) RAFT did not always allow the students to explore other potential perspectives on the subject.

Taking RAFT elements into account in literature, the students became more conscious that a good writer should be interested in the writing personally. Sejnost & These (2007, p. 78) encourages the more aware the students are of their position in writing, the more successful their writing will be. At the first meeting the teacher explained only briefly, without a clear example, about the value of the RAFT strategy. In the second meeting, however, the teacher discussed the RAFT elements as the students became more concentrated and their writing improved more as the teacher gave a clear example of taking the wrong position would affect the article. The students started to learn none of the RAFT technique, before they knew no such common strategy. The teacher kept making the students acquainted with RAFT strategy. She made them aware of what they're writing about, who they're writing to, the structure of their letter and what their letter's subject is all about. The focus of the students has been focused on the elements of RAFT. The instructor assumes that those who care the most will know the most in Ying & Hendricks (2004: 5) as Schmidt & Frota says in Ying & Hendricks (2004: 5).

One thing that could help the writing skills of the students is that group work is more competitive, and the instructor encouraged the passive students to be actively involved in group work. In the group discussion more students participated. This helped the students understand RAFT elements better, which in the end made them more conscious of RAFT elements in their teaching.

Another aspect that may support the students' writing skill is the group work is more active and the teacher engaged the passive students to be involved actively in the group work. More students participated in the group discussion. It made the students have better understanding about RAFT elements, which in the end made them more aware of RAFT elements in their writing. Further successful group work led to an increase in writing for the students from this observation. All

learning is social according to Vygotsky cited in Jacobs, Lee, & Ng (1997, p.12). In the other hand, what the students do within their group can be accomplished on their own.

Conclusion

Having analyzed the research data, the researcher concludes that the RAFT strategy could improve the ability of the students to write application letters. It strengthens their sense of being a writer by making them aware of the theme and style impacts on their audience. RAFT approach has helped students improve their ability to write a formal letter in terms of content and language in this study. Students have been able to write effectively as they have been aware of their position, audience, writing style, and writing subject. After being introduced to the RAFT writing strategy, the students wrote more purposefully and focused. In addition, RAFT strategy in this research also helped the students write more appropriate expressions used in a formal letter and accurately respond to the written prompts provided.

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