

# THE EFFECT OF RAFT STRATEGY ON IRAQI EFL PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE AND SELF-EFFICACY

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## ABSTRACT

*Writing is considered to be a process of getting writing product such as letters, essay, story and so on, affected by such elements as vocabulary, grammar, mechanic, content, and style of writing. It is crucial to consider self-efficacy as a good way to observe writing achievement and motivation, because existing research demonstrates that the "beliefs that students create, develop and hold to be true about them and these are vital forces in their success or failure in school. The current study aims at finding out the effect of RAFT strategy on Iraqi EFL preparatory school students' writing performance.*

*A non-randomized pretest-posttest control group has been adopted. The sample of the study consists of (70) students of Iraqi EFL 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory school, (35) students for experimental group and (35) students for the control group, the academic year (2018- 2019). The instruments of the study are writing test and writing self-efficacy scale which have been exposed to jury members in the field of ELT, Linguistics and literature to verify their validity. The results of the study show that there is a statistical significance difference between the experimental and control group in their writing performance which means RAFT strategy promoted a learning environment that provided opportunities for exploring and investigating ways of understanding their roles as writers, that's to give them the opportunity to play many roles as (thinkers, writers, editors, and essayist, etc.,).*

## 1. AIMS:

This study aims at find:

- 1- The effect of RAFT strategy on Iraqi EFL preparatory school students' writing performance.
- 2- The effect of RAFT strategy on Iraqi EFL preparatory school students' writing self-efficacy.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

Writing is a process of conveying information, message, ideas, or thoughts in grammatically correct sentences. Writing as one of

the language skills is considered a difficult skill and it is also a difficult subject in the school. It is because students have to produce a text by using English correctly according to the grammatically correctness. The students have to write what they think in their mind and state it on a paper by using correct procedure, in narrative text for instance writing also needs series practices to develop this skill. It can't be achieved in one time learning only. Nunan (2003:88) says that writing is an intellectual activity of uncovering the ideas, information, and thoughts and thinking about the approach to express and arrange them into a statement and paragraph which has to be clear in order to be understood by the reader. It may be concluded that writing is an attempt to express the

writer's thoughts, feeling, or ideas in written form by taking into account writing aspects and writing stages to be clear understood by readers.

Harmer(2004:31-33) asserts that, with acquiring writing students will get knowledge how to write efficiently, how to express ideas, how to share their thought with others through writing. Writing helps students circulate easily among thoughts, facts, inferences, information and opinions. It makes one's thinking visible. It fosters students' potential to provide an explanation for an easy and complicated position to readers.

In order to write, there are some principles that should be followed in writing. They include what to say (content), the way to sequence what to say, (organization and mechanic) the way to express what was said, and (language and vocabulary). It can be stated that a writer is success if his writing encompasses these aspects of writing.

Hedge (2005) as cited in Ahlsen and Lunch (2007:4) says that teaching writing is like guiding students to: produce whole items of communication, to combine and develop info, ideas, or arguments for a specific reader or groups of readers. So effective writing requires several factors: a high degree of organization concerning the development and structuring of writers' ideas, information and arguments. In addition, she comments on features such as: accuracy, complex grammar devices, a careful selection of vocabulary and sentence structures so as to make tone, style, and data which are suitable for a written text. Consequently, writing is regarded as a demanding skill to be mastered.

According to Unger and Fleischman(2004) as cited in Ahlsen and Lundh(2007:6) there are several steps that talented writers involve in as they write: planning and organizing ideas, converting ideas into text and revising and evaluating the result.

### **2.1 The Relationship between Self- Efficacy and Writing Performance:**

Research on self-efficacy and writing performance shows that self-efficacy can have an effective impact on students' writing performance. In

the past, there were many quantitative researches focusing on the relationship between self-efficacy and writing one of it was Pajares and his colleagues who have used a lot of correlational studies to show the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement.

Writing is considered to be a cognitively challenging task, if developing writers want to succeed in such task, they have to be motivated and believe in their ability. Students can have high self-efficacy in some academic areas and low self-efficacy in other areas as self-efficacy interacts with key components of motivation, such as self-concept, perceived value, and apprehension. Students can have high self-efficacy are likely to continue working in their tasks for long time and be ready to participate, and experience fewer negative feelings (Brinter and Pajares, 2006: 490).

Bandura's SCT claims that students are going to attempt situations they have a feeling that they have the ability to regulate within their perceived capabilities, and they will avoid those situations within their environment they cannot successfully operate and manage. This belief that students have regarding their capabilities is a motivational concept known as self-efficacy. This concept is instrumental to educational research on motivation and academic performance. Self-efficacy is concerned not with the wide variety of talents students have, but how they are able to do with what they have under a variety of circumstances (Gartner, 2000:59).

### **2.2 RAFT Strategy:**

RAFT is the abbreviation of (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). The strategy addresses teacher concern to create distinct performance tasks initially developed for assisting teachers to think and plan to teach different types of writing. It is believed that RAFT is a flexible strategy for any students' interests or learning profile.

It is a strategy that can be used to design activities for making sensations, games, homework,

or closing evaluations. RAFTs have a clear knowledge, understanding, and skill objectives. Buehl (2013:144) states RAFT strategy activates a written task with imagination, creativity and motivation, involving writing from another point of view of the students to an audience other than the teacher, plus, using different form other than a standard assignment or written answer to questions. He argues that using this strategy, involves the following steps:

- 1- Analyze the idea or important information that the teacher wishes students to acquire from a story, a text book passage or other material in the classroom.
- 2- Possible brainstorming of students we can assume creativity in their writings. By deciding who the audience will be for this communication and specifying the format of the writing.
- 3- Students are exposed to a writing model (type RAFT on the whiteboard, and then teacher will list role, audience, format and the writing topic. Teachers can assign all students to the same role. Before students start writing RAFT, engage them to develop a deeper understanding of their roles.

Students have to think seriously about taking a new role, fitting the audience to the role, create a format which fit that role, and cover the given topics from the content. In short, RAFT strategy can be a guiding strategy which enables students to increase the focus on their written text by recognizing their role, audience, format of their writing, and topic.

Parilasanti, et.al., (2014:6) state that RAFT strategy is important because of the following:

- 1- Enhance the writing competence of the students
- 2- Help students to recognize their role as writers, the audience, the different writing product formats, and topics that they discuss.
- 3- Provide opportunities for the students to explain what they understand from different topics through their experiences that help them to think about the subject and

communicate their understanding of it in a creative and interesting way.

- 4- Improve students' interest and motivate them to study in the classroom.
- 5- Encourage students to form their ideas and hold their attention because they focus on writing activity. This strategy is attractive to the students to study so that they will give their effort to the writing task.
- 6- Solve students' problems or difficulties in understanding a sentence.

### 2.3 Steps for Implementing RAFT Strategy in Classroom:

There are some steps that should be followed while uses the RAFT strategy as adopted from (Alisa and Rosa, 2013:4).

- 1- Teacher's preparation: before teachers come to the classroom, they should be prepared previously. In this way the teaching-learning process will run well.
- 2- Material ; in teaching writing the material should be interesting for the students , particularly in learning a functional text in which teachers have to prepare some authentic material such as ,advert examples, e-mail, formal letters and essays, which can be found on the internet
- 3- Media Preparation; the media have to be suitable, exciting and meet students' interest, so that the teacher has to be precise when he choose any piece of writing that the students find it simple and proper ,by using videos and some posters
- 4- Lesson plan; As the teacher prepares his lesson plan, he has to put in mind several important elements such as objectives, material, the time limits
- 5- Teaching process: pre-teaching, in which teachers have to prepare their students psychologically and physically before involving in the learning process. The teacher have to begin his lecture by greeting students, showing some photos which are associated to the writing task, introducing

- RAFT strategy to them as role, audience, format, and topic.
- 6- Whilst teaching activities: in which teachers check students' knowledge about their writing assignment by asking some questions related to the writing topic.

**Table (1): RAFTs Elements**

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Writer	Editor	Letter to the editor	Issue related to the textbook
Reporter	Public	Email	Topic of personal interest
Self	Friend	Essay	Events happen in the past
Essayist	Government	Informal letter	Cultural topic an
Historian	Teacher	Advert	Traditions and customs

### 3. METHODOLOGY:

The population of this study is the 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory grade in Baghdad from Al-Huria preparatory school for girls, in the academic year 2018-2019. Two sections have been chosen randomly to be the sample of the study, section A which includes 35 students, is chosen randomly to be the experimental group. And section C which includes 35 students, is chosen randomly to be the control group, so the total number of the sample is 70.

In order to obtain equivalent pedagogical changes for both groups included in the experimental design, equalization is needed. It is a fundamental process for any experimental study. Therefore the following variables have been controlled to achieve this equalization: the age of students, the pre-test of students' writing performance, the students' score on writing self-efficacy scale, the students' score on the intelligence test, students' level of motivation, and the level of fathers' education.

The face validity of the instruments has been asserted as they were exposed to a number of jurors. The validity and suitability of the instrument and scoring rubric have been approved by an agreement of 100% by all the jury experts.

A group of 100 EFL students from Al-Hurria Preparatory School for girls has been

randomly selected, other than the experimental and control groups in order to conduct a pilot administration of the instrument, namely an essay writing, the time allocated to complete the test is found to be 15 minutes, and the result shows that the test is suitable and practical to be implemented.

Pearson formula is used to obtain the reliability coefficient of the test to estimate the reliability of the test, inter scorer reliability method has been used which refers to the consistency of scores provided by two or more people by scoring the same performance (Johnson and Christensen, 2012:157). The result has shown that the correlation coefficient of reliability is 0.94.

The analytic scoring scheme proposed by Brown (2007) is adopted for the writing test. According to Perkins (1983) the purpose for using such analytical scoring scheme is to achieve objectivity and to provide more useful diagnostic information about the students' writing abilities. This scoring scheme consists of 5 components each component has allocated 4 scores. So the highest score that the student could get is 20 and the lowest is 5.

In order to identify students' writing self-efficacy, a scale is adopted from Burning, et al., (2013) with some modification made by the researcher. The scale consists of 16 items. The rating

scale comprises a five points Likert scale and each item has 5 responses, each response has given a score.

Pilot administration of the writing self-efficacy scale conducted on a group of 100 students has randomly been selected from the 5<sup>th</sup> preparatory grade from Al-Huria preparatory school for girls to be the pilot sample. The pilot administration of the scale has been conducted to secure the clarity of scale's items, to estimate the time allocated to respond to the scale and to find items' discriminatory power in the light of students' responses. To compute the reliability, the researchers depend on the pilot sample's responses of the 100 students. The result indicates that the reliability of the writing scale is 0.80. This refers that the scale has a an acceptable and adequate reliability coefficient.

The teaching material is taken from prescribed text book entitled "English for Iraq" Unit

1,2 and 3. The main topic for unit one is (Culture and Customs), students have to write an e-mail about Ramadan. (The main topic for unit two is Communication) so students have to write an informal letter describing an accident. While the main topic for unit three is the Environment and the students have to write an essay about the environment.

#### 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

##### 4.1 Result Related to the First Aim

t-test formula has been employed for the two independent samples to calculate the scores of post-test in writing performance, it is found out that the mean score of the experimental (13.68) with a standard deviation of 2.719 and that of the control group is (9.34) with a standard deviation of 3.152. The computed t- value (6.171) which is found to be higher than the critical t-value (2.00), See table (2)

Table (2)

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t- test value of the two Independents Samples in writing performance Post - Test for the Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	No. of group	M	S.D	Df	t-value		Finding
					computed	critical	
Ex.	35	13.68	2.719	68	6.171	2.000	Significant to experimental
Cont.	35	9.34	3.152				

The above table reveals that there is a significant difference at 0.5 level of significance between the mean score of the experimental group which taught according to RAFT strategy and that of the control group which is taught according to the conventional way in the post application of the writing achievement test in favor of the experimental group, this mean that the first null hypothesis is rejected.

##### 4.2 Result Related to the Second:

The results of the final administration of the writing self- efficacy scale on the sample of study which is consisted of 70 students indicate that the mean score of the experimental group is 42.77 with standard deviation of 4.037, and that of control group 34.31 with standard deviation 5.430. t-test has been used to identify the significance of the differences. The computed t-value which is 7.368 which is found to be higher than the critical t-value which is 2.000 at 0.05 level of significant and degree of freedom 68. See table (3).

Table (3)

**The Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the Two Independent Sample in Writing Self-Efficacy Scale**

groups	No. of subjects	M	St.D	d.f	t-value		Finding
					Computed	critical	
Ex	35	42.77	4.037	68	7.368	2.000	Significant to Ex.
Cont.	35	34.13	5.460				

The above table displays that there is a statistical significant difference between the experimental group and control group in their writing self- efficacy in the post application of the scale in favor of the experimental group.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As shown in table 2 and 3, it's found out that:

- 1- The participants of the experimental group have been taught by RAFT strategy which is an instructional writing strategy which is used to improve student writing skill. Therefore the students were able to build on previous knowledge and experiences to construct meaning, assess their understanding continually and they were able to understand their role as a writer and learn how to communicate their ideas clearly to their audiences. All that led them to gain high level of evaluation during the semester in their performance on the writing achievement posttest after the implementation of the RAFT strategy. The total posttest marks in favor of the experimental group, there were also statistically significant differences between the mean of both groups in favor to the experimental group. While through the conventional way of teaching, it was found that students were not able to build on previous knowledge and experiences and they weren't aware who they were writing as, to whom they were writing. All this is reflected through their achievement in the writing post- test. In addition, the study found that the effect size of the strategy on writing performance was significantly high.

- 2- It is found that there is a significant interaction effect between RAFT strategy and self-efficacy on students' writing performance. The participants of the experimental group have been taught by RAFT strategy which is used to improve students' writing self-efficacy, the students were capable of generating writing ideas; expressing them within writing's linguistic forms; and managing behavioral, mental, and emotional challenges of writing, it was the students' confidence in their writing skill which accounted for the correlation between writing believes and writing performance. It based on the result of calculation which showed that there was difference in level of self-efficacy between the two groups which is in favor to the experimental group. In addition the study found that the effect size of the strategy on writing self-efficacy is significantly high.

These findings could be attributed to the many advantages of the RAFT strategy in teaching the writing skill, which encourage critical thinking, foster creativity and teaches students how to create organized writing.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions below have been drawn after applying RAFT strategy

- 1- **RAFT** is a teaching strategy is found to have a positive effect on improving Iraqi EFL students' writing performance which is 1.37 thus the effect of the RAFT strategy is considered to be high.

- 2- **RAFT strategy** is found to have a prolonged effect on students' writing self-efficacy which is 1.55 thus the effect of this strategy considered to be high
- 3- **RAFT strategy** promoted a learning environment that provided opportunities for exploring and investigating ways for understanding their roles as writers, and give students the opportunity to play many roles as thinkers, (writers, editors, essayist, and poet etc....
- 4- **RAFT strategy** increased students' motivation and degree of competition and challenge among themselves

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are stated in the light of the study findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are put forward for the different parties involved in the English Language teaching and learning process

- 1- EFL teachers are recommended to consider their students' writing level, their needs and their interest to make them succeed in improving their writing skill
- 2- Iraqi EFL teachers are invited to adopt the RAFT strategy in teaching writing skill which shows its effect on enhancing students' writing self-efficacy
- 3- Iraqi EFL teachers are recommended to select effective technique and strategies which activate students' participation and enhance the relationship with the students to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere and facilitate the learning process
- 4- Supervisors are recommended to give teachers with instructional materials which develop their knowledge of RAFT strategy and the importance of using this strategy to teach writing skill.
- 5- To conduct workshops inside the ministry that purport at familiarizing teachers with RAFT strategy

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