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The Impact of Using RAFT Strategy on Enhancing Creative Writing Skills of EFL Ninth Grade Students and Their Attitudes Towards It

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the impact of using RAFT strategy in enhancing creative writing skills of EFL ninth grade students and their attitudes towards it, in the first semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The sample of the study consisted of (60) EFL female ninth grade students attributed into two groups, one was experimental, and the other was control group. A pre post creative writing test was applied to examine the impact of the strategy, and creative writing attitudes scale was used to identify the students' attitudes towards creative writing. validity and reliability of the instruments were verified. The results indicated that RAFT strategy is effective in enhancing the creative writing skills of EFL ninth grade students. It also showed that RAFT strategy is effective in enhancing students' attitudes towards creative writing. in light of the study results, the study recommends Including English language teacher book with instructional strategies of teaching creativity, and guide the teacher to use it effectively, and to include more writing activities in the English language curricula in order to enhance the student's achievement level in writing proficiency.

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1.Introduction

Creativity plays a significant role in innovating and developing various fields of life and individually help other for well-being, expressing themselves and identity. Creativity is a vital factor to progress in education and on twenty first century learning. It also important for the development of basic skills of language and literacy, so teacher must foster creativity of their students, and develop more creative approaches to teaching, and integrating creative teaching methods in their regular practice, under the supporting of their school leaders and peers. In order to integrate creativity in teaching and learning, developing clearer definitions of creativity in education, rethinking curricula, and exploring new approaches of instruction and assessment are necessarily required. (Collard & Looney, 2014).

2. Creative writing

Creative writing is the ability to create an imaginative, original literary production or composition (Ramet, 2011). It can be learned like any game or craft effectively if the students have some talent for it, and if the teacher can steer that talent. It might be taught within other discipline if students can take the practice and the desire to use it as a part of their world (Morley, 2007). Creative writing foster student's artistic expressions, promote their language proficiency and develop the literary understanding, these benefits can be achieved by engaging students in some imaginary scenes which enhance good writing and develop students' imagination (Adam & Babiker, 2015).

3. RAFT Strategy

Robert and These (2007) indicated that RAFT is a strategy that can be used in any content area. It is found by Santa in 1988 and it is an acronym for Role, Audience, Format, and Topic. According to Hidayati (2012) RAFT strategy is applied in different language skills, reading, writing, and speaking. In her study, Hidayati tried to present the application of RAFT strategy in speaking as a Productive skill. She added that RAFT strategy is effective in motivating the students to involve actively in processing information, and giving a clear structure for their speaking skill, and undertaking speaking task. She also noticed that RAFT strategy is effective in making the students more interesting in their reading class by sharing their knowledge about what they have read.

4. Empirical studies

4.1 Studies on RAFT Strategy

Al Mahdawi and AL Smadi (2019) examined the potential effect of RAFT strategy on Jordanian EFL eleventh grade students creative writing. Fifty students of eleventh grade were Purposefully selected from Al-Andalus Secondary School for Girls, they were distributed equally into two groups: control and experimental group. Two instruments were developed by the researcher in order to collect data: A pre-post creative writing test, and a language creativity rubric. The results showed that RAFT instructional strategy had a significant positive effect on the total skills of creative writing and language proficiency.

In the same context, Saliem, Mohamed and Ali (2020) investigated the effect of RAFT strategy on developing EFL creative writing skills for the third-year governmental language preparatory school students. The sample of the study consisted of eighty students who were chosen randomly from a governmental language preparatory Egyptian school, and was distributed into two groups, control, and experimental group. The instruments of the study included: pre-post creative writing test, and the creative writing skills checklist. The results showed that RAFT strategy had a positive effect on developing creative writing skills.

In their study, Riswanti and Masrul (2021) aimed at finding out the effect of using RAFT strategy on the student's writing skill in online class. A clustering sample of forty-six eleventh grade students distributed equally into two groups were participated in the study. A pre-post writing skill test was applied to collect data. The results indicated that RAFT strategy was effective for overcoming students writing skill problems in online class.

4.2 Studies on Attitudes Towards Creative Writing:

So far, to the researcher knowledge, there aren't any studies on students' attitudes towards creative writing, so the researcher decided to add studies on students' attitudes towards writing skills in general:

In order to examine if the students experience in journal writing with peer feedback would have an influence on their attitudes towards writing in English, Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012) conducted a study, using a sample of forty-two ninth grade students from a secondary school in Thailand. To collect data, a questionnaire and a pre-posttest were employed. The results revealed that students had significantly higher positive attitude towards writing in English after they had some experience in journal writing with peer feedback.

In Algeria, Hanane (2015) conducted a study by using a descriptive method to investigate English foreign language students' attitudes towards writing skill and find out the problem that faced third year students when writing. The sample of the study consisted of twenty-six of third year students who were selected randomly, and four teachers of written expression module. The instruments used in the study included a questionnaire and interview. The results indicated that students had negative attitudes towards writing which affected their academic achievement.

Ni'mah, Kadarisman, Suryati (2017) examined the degree of relationship between the students' writing attitudes, apprehension, and writing performance, and investigated the causes of both factors. The study adapted the mixed method research design. Sixty-eight students from the university at east Java participated in the study. Four instruments were employed to collect data: writing attitudes questionnaire, writing apprehension questionnaire, writing test, and semi-structured interview. It was found that there was a statistically positive significant correlation between the students' attitude towards writing and their writing performance, and the students' performance in writing was different according to their positive and negative attitudes towards writing.

5. Statement of the Problem

According to the importance of creative writing skills and its effect in developing the other skills of language, and because of weakness in creative writing skills which we must focus on improving it by using modern method of teaching and learning mostly based on modern strategies ,to enhance writing skill, and abiding by some recommendations of some research which indicate the importance and the effect of using RAFT strategy in teaching different fields of knowledge such as Kabiting (2020) and Hamdani (2017) studies which indicated that using RAFT strategy as an aid in teaching writing among students was effective, and has encouraged the learning environment, and increased the student's motivation.

Based on the results of previous studies which confirm the low achievement of students in creative writing skills, and there is a need to adapt modern teaching strategies to support the students, and give them a chance to practice the creativity in writing, such as the study of Ghoneim and ELGhotmy (2019) who confirmed that most of the students couldn't write fluently, and their performance reflected weakness in their creative writing skills. Another study was conducted by AL Mukhallafi (2022) showed that the weakness in students creative writing skills due to the shortcoming in teaching practices and strategies.

Several studies, including Razgathoglu and Ulusoy(2022), Khadawardi (2022), Turkel & Cetinkaya (2020) showed that students attitudes towards writing can be changed from negative to positive ones by adapting strategies where students feel satisfied through writing process, and creative writing activities affect the student's attitudes towards writing, and increase their writing achievement, and make their writing level better.

As an English language teacher with nineteen years' experience in teaching primary and secondary stages, the researcher has noticed that there is a low level on students' competencies in general and writing skill competency in particular. Accordingly, there is a need to use effective instructional strategies to address this weakness as well as provide assistance for EFL learners to promote their creative skills. Therefore, this study attempted to explore the effect of using RAFT strategy in enhancing creative writing skills of EFL students, and to know their attitudes towards it.

6. Questions of the Study:

The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1-Are there statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \le 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post test of enhancing creative writing skills measurement due to the using of RAFT strategy and conventional method?

2-Are there statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \le 0.05$) in the EFL ninth grade student's attitudes towards creative writing skills due to the using of RAFT strategy?

7. Objective of the Study

The study aims to identify the steps of applying RAFT strategy and to review it concepts and characteristics in learning English language in general and creative writing in particular. It also aims to explore the effect of the strategy in enhancing creative writing skills of EFL ninth grade students, and how the strategy can change and rang the attitudes of the EFL ninth grade students towards creative writing skills positively.

8. Significance of the Study:

The importance of this study could be summarized as follows:

-Identifying the importance of RAFT strategy and it is role in providing an educational environment.

-Detecting the interest of the EFL students to use RAFT strategy in learning and enhancing different skills of English language especially creative writing.

-Proposing some suggestions that may contribute to enhancing creative writing skill by using some effective strategies.

-Providing the Ministry of Education with the creative writing skill requirements to keep it in mind while planning the English language curriculum.

-Encouraging the researchers to conduct further studies on enhancing students creative writing skills using RAFT strategy in other educational stages.

-Encouraging English teacher to develop new and positive attitudes towards creative writing.

-Fostering creativity by using modern strategies in writing programs.

-Giving students a chance to practice writing creatively by supporting them with essential knowledge.

9. Study Design

In order to know the impact of using RAFT strategy in enhancing the creative writing skills of EFL ninth grade students and their attitudes towards it, the researcher adapted the quasi-experimental design depending on prepost test that applied on two groups, one experimental groups and the other is control group. the study instruments (creative writing test and attitudes scale) were pre-applied on the research group, then the participants are exposed to the independent variables (teaching strategies), after that the researcher re applied the study tools on the two groups; to explore the effectiveness of the independent variable (teaching strategy) on the dependent variables (creative writing skills and attitudes scale).

10. Population of the Study

The study population is consisted of (1742) ninth grade students at Tafilah Directorate of Education, in the academic year 2022/2023.

11. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study is consisted of (60) female EFL ninth grade students who were purposefully chosen at Wadi Zaid Mixed Basic School, they were distributed randomly into two sections, each section consisted of (30) female students, section one represents the control group which was taught through conventional strategy, and the other section represents the experimental groups which was taught through RAFT strategy.

12. variables of the Study:

The study has two variables; the independent variables RAFT and conventional strategies, and the dependent variables are the students score on the creative writing test and the student's attitudes towards creative writing skills.

13. Instruments of the Study

To explore the impact of RAFT strategy in enhancing the creative writing skills of EFL ninth grade students and improving their attitudes towards it, the researcher used the following instruments:

1-Creative Writing Test

2-Creative Writing Attitudes Scale

14. Validity and reliability

14.1 To ensure the content validity of the test, and its relevance to achieve the aims of the study, a jurys' of ten, who are specialist in curricula and teaching methods, were asked to comment on the suitability of the test language to the level to the ninth grade EFL students, the researcher based on the percentage of agreement (80%) and more to remain the question, and less than (80%) to delete or modify the question. The test was modified according to the jury's comments and suggestions. The researcher also calculated the correlation coefficient for each creative writing skill with the total score of the test to obtain the construct validity by using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

14.2 Reliability of the creative writing test:

To obtain the reliability of the test, the researcher administered the same test twice over a period of two weeks to the same pilot group, Pearson's correlation coefficient between the two tests were calculated.

14.3 Validity of creative writing attitudes scale: To ensure the validity of creative writing attitudes scale, a jury of ten were asked to examine it. The percentage of the jury's agreement was 80 %, some items were modified, the other were deleted to obtain the suitability of the scale to the student's attitudes towards creativity in writing. The scale included (20) items in its final form according to Likert rating scale ranging from 5 to 1 (appendix: H) is represented the attitudes scale in its final form.

14.4 Reliability of creative writing attitudes scale:

To obtain the reliability of creative writing attitudes scale, the researcher used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, it was (0.90), which means that the scale is reliable and accepted to measure the student's attitudes towards creative writing skill.

15. Findings and discussion

15.1 Findings Related to the First Question:

To answer the question "Are there statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \le 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post test of enhancing creative writing skills measurement due to the using of RAFT strategy and conventional method? "

An independent sample T test was used to examine the differences between the two means of the ninthgrade students scores on the creative writing skills according to the teaching strategy (RAFT strategy vs conventional strategy), and on the level of each skill of creative writing. The results are presented in table (1).

Table (1)

The results of the T-test to examine the significance of the differences according to the teaching method (RAFT vs Conventional)

DOMAIN	GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	Т	DF	Sig. (2- tailed)	Eta Squared
fluency	raft	8.07	0.74	- 7.45	58	0.00*	48.9%
	conventional	6.57	0.82	7.43	38		
originality	raft	8.27	0.64	- 9.11	58	0.00*	58.9%
	conventional	6.60	0.77	- 9.11	38		
flexibility	raft	8.03	0.67	776	58	0.00*	51.00%
	conventional	6.53	0.82	- 7.76			
elaboration	raft	7.90	0.84	(()	59	0.00*	42 50/
	conventional	6.50	0.78	- 6.68 58		0.00*	43.5%
TOTAL	raft	32.27	1.72	11.12	50	0.00*	69.1%
	conventional	26.20	2.44	- 11.12	58		

The data in table no. (1) shows that there are statistically significant differences in the two means score of the ninth-grade students performance level on the creative writing skill according to the teaching strategy (RAFT strategy vs conventional strategy), and this is on the level of each skill separately and on the level of all skills

together with the significance of T value and its related significance. According to the means value the significant differences were in favor of the experimental group that was taught by RAFT. The values of Eta squared for each skill were between (43.5 % - 58.9 %) and for the total domain was (69.1 %), this means that based on Cohen's – effect size RAFT strategy has a great effect on enhancing EFL ninth grade students creative writing skills.

15.2 Findings Related to the Second Question:

To answer the second question:" Are there statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \le 0.05$) in the EFL ninth grade student's attitudes towards creative writing skills due to the using of RAFT strategy?"

An independent sample T test was conducted to find out the significant differences between the two means of EFL ninth grade students attitudes scores towards creative writing due to teaching strategy (RAFT vs conventional strategy). The results are presented in table number (2).

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Tab	e i	(2)	

Test (T) to examine the differences in students' attitudes towards creative writing according to the teaching method(RAFT. Conventional)

GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	Т	DF	Sig. (2- tailed)	Eta Squared
raft	91.70	5.38	11.021	58	0.00*	(7.6)/
conventional	65.97	11.62	_			67.6%

The data in table number (2) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the two means of the students attitudes scores towards creative writing according to the teaching strategy (RAFT vs Conventional), and this by the significance of T value and its significance level. The mean score of RAFT group was (91.70) whereas the mean score of the conventional group was (65.97), this means that the significant differences on the attitudes scores were in favor of experimental group which was taught using RAFT strategy. An Eta squared size effect which was (67.6%) based on Cohen's also confirmed the great effect of RAFT strategy in enhancing the attitudes of EFL ninth grade students towards creative writing.

15.3 Discussion the Findings of the First Question

The first question of this study states that "Are there statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \le 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post test of enhancing creative writing skills measurement due to the using of RAFT strategy and conventional method?"

It was found that there are statistically significant differences in the two means score of the ninth-grade students performance level on the creative writing skill due to the teaching strategy used, in favor of the experimental group which was taught using RAFT strategy. It also found that the impact of each sub-skill of the creative writing in descending order were originality, flexibility, fluency, and elaboration. Thus, the most effective sub-skill was originality and the least effective one was elaboration.

This result may be due to its simple and well-defined steps which guide students through their writing to use their imagination effectively, in order to think creatively on their ideas, and how to play an effective role to describe their thoughts as a person who play the role of his favorite character in an imaginational way with creatively. El Sourani (2019) confirmed that RAFT strategy motivates students to play many roles, which means it helped them to use writing skills in many situations in an easy and flexible way.

The result also due to the importance of modern strategies in teaching creative writing skills, this type of writing which requires a thinking based on creativity need a strategy that increases the role of students in learning process, and give them a chance to be responsible about their learning, under the guidance of teacher who monitor the students by giving them some instructions, which leads for a good product at the end of writing process. Such strategy activates and motivates students to be active in the classroom and engage them in the learning process, which helps them to improve their academic achievement. Asserting that, Hamed and Nagem (2020) who employed effectively RAFT strategy to improve the student's achievement.

As RAFT strategy is consisted of four steps starting by imaginative role that students play, then imagining the audience who will receive the topic after formulating it in a suitable format, all these steps of RAFT strategy facilitate the generating of varied and unique ideas with an enrichment detail, all these ideas which were generated represents the students' performance in creativity, and what the extend they have the skills of creative writing, which are; flexibility, fluency, originality, and elaboration.

As the results revealed, RAFT strategy has the most effective impact on originality which focuses on generating unique ideas, whereas the least effective impact was on the elaboration sub-skill, this means that RAFT foster creativity and enrich the writing product with a new and unique ideas in different situation, this result aligned with Saliem, Mahmoud and Ali (2020) who confirmed that RAFT strategy motivate students to be

creative by helping them to act as a real creative writer. The results are also agreed with those studies which related to the effectiveness of RAFT strategy on writing skill in general, such as Lindawaty and Sada (2014) study which indicated that RAFT strategy improve the students' performance in writing formal letter and made it more effective, purposive, and focused. The study of Hidaya (2020) showed that there was improvement in students writing skills due to the using of RAFT strategy in teaching and learning narrative text writing, Kabigting (2020) study found that RAFT strategy was effective in improving writing competency, Ranjilita (2021) confirmed the effectiveness of RAFT strategy in writing analytical exposition text, Samosa and other (2021) study showed the effectiveness of RAFT strategy in improving grammatical writing skills, Riswanti and Masrul (2021) indicated that RAFT strategy was effective for overcoming students writing skills problems in online class, Rahmasari and Rifa'i (2022) revealed that RAFT strategy was effective in creating descriptive text.

The result is also consistent with some studies that aimed at investigating the effect of RAFT strategy on creative writing particularly, such as the study of Al Mahdawi and Al Smadi (2019), which showed the positive effect of RAFT on the total skills of creative writing, it also aligned with Saliem, Mohamed, and Ali (2020) study which showed RAFT strategy was effective on developing creative writing skills.

15.4 Discussion the Findings of the Second Question

The second question of this study states that "Are there statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \le 0.05$) in the EFL ninth grade student's attitudes towards creative writing skills due to the using of RAFT strategy?"

It was found that there is statistically significant difference between the two means of the students attitudes towards creative writing due to the teaching strategy used, in favor of experimental group which was taught using RAFT strategy, the mean score of the students attitudes who was taught by RAFT strategy was (91.70), which means that RAFT strategy has a great effect on enhancing the students attitudes towards creative writing positively. This result due to the effective impact of RAFT strategy which is aligned with students learning style in English language competencies in general, and creative writing in particular, this strategy helps the students to manage the writing process and improve its quality, which lead to make students feel confident as a writer when they discover the creative power in themselves, so this changing in feeling during writing happened because of using RAFT strategy will rang the students attitudes from one level to another, which means from negative to positive. Erdogan (2013) asserted that attitudes play an essential role on the students' success in writing process. In addition, Setyowati and Sukmawan (2016) confirmed that using writing strategies enhance the EFL students writing skill effectively.

Additionally, students who were taught using RAFT strategy enjoyed writing process because they had a chance to play a certain role as a writer, and imagine their audience who they want to write to, and they wrote topics related to their interests by following well defined steps under the guidance of teacher, and this make the students feel that they are supported by their teacher, this motivates them to engage actively in the writing task without any anxiety. As the researcher noticed that the students feeling, and interest was exactly different and changed positively at the post instruction period. That meaning, the students passed the feeling of boring, anxiety and difficulty and became feeling comfortable and satisfied while writing creatively.

This result is consistent with the result of Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012) which revealed that students had significantly higher positive attitudes towards writing in English after they had some experience in journal writing with peer feedback. It also consistent with the studies of Abu Hussein (2020), and Babayigit (2018) which revealed that using some strategies and techniques such as creative writing activities and online reflective journals improve the students' attitudes towards writing positively.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to identify the effects of using RAFT strategy on enhancing creative writing skills of EFL ninth grade students and to observe the effects of the strategy on the students attitudes towards creative writing. The results of the study confirmed the effective impact of RAFT strategy on improving the creative writing skills of the students as well as on ranging their attitudes towards the creative writing skills positively.

Based on the findings, it could be concluded that students felt enjoyment when they wrote using this short instructional strategy because it motivates them and provides them with an active learning environment, and make them aware of their ability in creative situation. Furthermore, RAFT was well-structured strategy with a simple well-defined steps which made it more suitable for the students in the primary stages. It also based on the students centered learning approach that increased the students interaction and engagement in the creative writing activities, that meaning it provides them with more control and responsibility of their learning process.

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