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2

The Effectiveness of Using RAFTs Strategy in Improving English Writing Skills among Female Tenth Graders in Gaza

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using RAFTs strategy in improving English writing skills among female tenth graders in Gaza.

The researcher adopted the experimental approach and selected a sample of (68) female tenth graders studying at Hassan Salama Elementary School for Girls (A) in Gaza Strip.

The findings of the study revealed that there were significant differences in learning English writing between the experimental and the control groups in favor of the experimental group, due to using RAFTs Strategy.

Study Tools: As a main tool for the study, the researcher used an achievement test of six questions designed and validated to be used as a pre- and posttest. Used as a pre-test, the achievement test was meant to prove the groups' equivalence. Besides, it was used as a posttest to measure any possible differences between the two groups. In addition, the researcher used a content analysis card and a rubric to score students' writing.

Study most important recommendations: Based upon the previous findings, the study recommended the necessity of implementing RAFTs Strategy in teaching and learning English writing to bring about better outcomes in students' achievement. Also, the researcher suggested that further research should be conducted concerning the effectiveness of using RAFTs strategy in teaching different English language skills and other school subjects as well.

Keywords: Effectiveness – RAFTs - English Writing.

فاعلية استخدام استراتيجية RAFTs في تحسين مهارات الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طالبات الصف العاشر في غزة

الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على فاعلية استخدام استراتيجية RAFTs في تحسين مهارات الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طالبات الصف العاشر في غزة.

من أجل تحقيق هدف الدراسة، استخدم الباحث المنهج التجريبي.

طبقت الدراسة على عينة ممثلة مكونة من (68) طالبة من مدرسة حسن سلامة الأساسية (أ) في قطاع غزة.

لقد خلصت نتائج الدراسة إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في تعلم مهارة الكتابة الإنجليزية بين المجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة وذلك لصالح التجريبية تعزى لاستخدام استراتيجية RAFTs.

أدوات الدراسة: ومن أجل جمع البيانات صمم الباحث اختباراً تحصيلياً مكوناً من 6 أسئلة، ومن ثم قام بالتحقق من صدق الاختبار وثباته، وقد استخدم الباحث الاختبار التحصيلي كاختبار قبلي وذلك للتحقق من مدى تكافؤ المجموعتين وكاختبار بعدي وذلك لقياس أي فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المجموعتين. كما استخدم الباحث بطاقة تحليل محتوى وقائمة معايير لتقييم كتابة الطالبات في اللغة الإنجليزية قبل وبعد تطبيق الاستراتيجية عليهن.

أهم توصيات الدراسة: في ضوء النتائج أوصت الدراسة بضرورة توظيف استراتيجية RAFTs في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لتحقيق نتائج أفضل في تحصيل الطالبات، كما واقترح الباحث ضرورة إجراء المزيد من الدراسات للتعرف على أثر استراتيجية RAFTs على مهارات أخرى من اللغة الإنجليزية وغيرها من المواد الدراسية.

كلمات مفتاحية: الفاعلية – مهارات الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية

Introduction

As a source of knowledge and science, English is considered as a universal language. Learning foreign languages, particularly English, has become an urgent need in the contemporary life in the light of the information revolution and the advanced communications technology. This information revolution has dissolved barriers between people and cultures, and turned the world into a small global village whose parts are adjacent and benefit from each other. Learning English as a foreign language helps to understand others' ideas, and spreads the cultural communication between nations. It also contributes actively to the transfer of science, knowledge, experiences and culture through translation (Abdallah, 2013).

Students still have significant problems with the mechanics of writing; they are oftentimes in doubt about the use of correct punctuation, like commas, full stops, colons, etc. They also have problems with correct spelling. Even some students find the use of capitalization a problem (Radjab, 2013).

There is interaction among writing competency, RAFTs strategy, and anxiety. In writing, the students may be influenced by anxiety, which affects the result of their writing. Both high and low anxiety will influence students' writing competency. The students who have a higher level of anxiety will have their achievement more badly affected; that is, lower achievement than students who have lower levels of anxiety. Therefore, they need a kind of strategy which enables them to write more easily. RAFTs strategy can be effective in improving students' writing competency as it may reduce students' anxiety (Parilasanti, 2014).

According to the importance of the RAFTs and the role of new learning strategies in improving female students' skills in English writing, the study was chosen to investigate the effectiveness of RAFTs strategy in improving writing skills among the 10th grade female students in Gaza.

Statement of the problem:

Among the four language skills the writing skill is considered as an important communication medium. Simply, students and people generally through written forms can express their feelings and generate new ideas. Hence, understanding and developing this skill is strongly needed. On the other hand, it is not easy to write down your ideas in a written form. This could be related to the difficulties and low abilities for effective writing among students (Sudarningsih and Wardana, 2011).

RAFTs is a strong useful strategy in teaching writing in order to enhance students' writing competences. It can be used and widely applied to help students to understand the four components of the strategy which are: role as writers, the audience, written formats, and the writing topic where the student is talking about RAFTs strategy as acronym that refers to writer role (R), Audience (A), written products format (F), and written Topic + strong verbs (Ts).

Study main question:

What is the effectiveness of using RAFTs strategy in improving the English writing skills among the tenth female graders in Gaza?

Research questions:

1. Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in composition (paragraph) writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method?
2. Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in formal letter writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method?
3. Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in talking about oneself in writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method?
4. Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental in the pre- and post-application of the writing with reference to the elements of the RAFTs strategy?

Research Hypotheses:

The research experiment the following hypotheses:

1. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in composition (paragraph) writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method.
2. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in formal letter writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method.
3. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in talking about oneself in writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method.
4. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental in the pre- and post-application of the writing test with reference to the RAFTs strategy.

Limitations of the Study:

1. Spatial limits: Hassan Salama Elementary School for Girls (A) in Gaza City was selected, purposely, while classes were distributed randomly.
2. Objective limits: English for the tenth grade, writing activities were taught using RAFTs strategy.
3. Time limits: sample members were selected from the tenth grade the 2nd semester of the academic year 2016 - 2017.
4. Human limits: Tenth grade students.

5. Exclusion of male students.

Importance of the study:

The importance of this research can be attributed to the following:

1. Few studies considering the role of RAFTs strategy in improving writing English have been conducted in the Arab world according to researcher's best knowledge.
2. Presenting RAFTs strategy to the English teachers to add it to their repertoire of teaching methods instead of using traditional teaching methods all the time.

Previous Studies

The first part: Studies Related to RAFTs Strategy:

1. Umaemah, latief, and Lrawati (2016).

The aim of this study was to encourage and improve students' writing skill and ability to use RAFT strategy employing classroom action research. In the implementation of this study, the researcher used an observation checklist, writing test, field notes and questionnaire. The findings showed that the implementation of RAFT strategy was successful in improving the students' writing ability.

2. Lindawaty and Sudarsono (2015).

The aim of this research was to find out how the implementation of RAFTs strategy improved the 10th grade students' writings. The sample of this research was 15 students.

The study found that students' writing scores improved from cycle to cycle regarding language and content.

The second part: Studies Related to the Writing Skill:

1. Cole and Feng (2015).

This study aimed to investigate the challenges encountering English language learners particularly in the field of writing and examine the effectiveness of research-based techniques in improving the writing skills of ESL students. The findings suggested the use of technology in teaching writing and other language skills and systems.

2. Javid And Umer (2014).

The aim of the study was to identify the important writing tasks and major areas of difficulty in academic writing. The sample of this study consisted of (194) Saudi EFL learners (108 males and 86 females). The findings pointed out the particular writing problems which Saudi EFL learners encountered in their academic writing. The recommendation was to implement a stricter admission policy, develop activities, provide increased practice in academic writing and increase language courses.

Commentary on the Previous Studies Related to Writing Skill:

The current study, however, disagreed with several previous studies that addressed writing skills in general, and how it could be improved by employing modern techniques and strategies without resorting to RAFTs strategy in particular. The study of Cole and Feng (2015) concentrated on the role of modern techniques and strategies in improving the writing skills of the primary grade students.

However, the current study was distinguished from the other studies by the fact that it investigated the effect of using RAFTs strategy in enhancing English writing skills among tenth grade

female students in Gaza using several tools such as a content analysis card, an achievement test and a writing rubric.

RAFTs Strategy

Overview:

RAFTs is considered as an effective writing strategy to solve some of the problems facing students while learning how to write. RAFTs strategy an acronym that refers to writer role (R), Audience (A), written product format (F), and written Topic + strong verbs (Ts). These key elements should be evident in every good writing assignment (Buehl, 2014). The RAFTs strategy boosts students' understanding of their role as writers, their audience, their varied formats, and their expected content. This writing strategy helps students to raise their ability to think critically and reflect while synthesizing what they have learned (Sejnost and Thiese, 2010).

Definition of RAFTs strategy:

RAFTs is an acronym of a structured strategy that can be used to guide students' writing. The teacher can use RAFTs strategy to show students' writing skills. It combines different elements of writing which include imagination, creativity, and self-motivation. According to Urquhart and McIver (2005), RAFTs strategy as an acronym refers to the writer role (R): Imagine yourself as a writer, How are you? Audience (A): Who will read? Written product format (F) :Which format your written product will take? Topic (T), who or what is the subject of this writing?, and which are the strong verbs (s)? The RAFTs writing strategy helps the writers make decisions while they are drafting. It can be said that the writers who determine the purpose for their writing and the audience for whom the writing can maintain the focus during the drafting process. Knowing who the audience will be and the purpose for the writing will influence how the writers proceed with their work.

A similar idea is also stated by Singleton and Newman (2009), who say that the points or the topic can be tackled from various perspectives when he/she wants to write something to someone. It will not only show someone's knowledge to develop the topic, but it will also allow some creativity. This strategy encourages students to think outside the box with more creativity about what they are writing about and study. Moreover, it enhances the ability of connecting people, things, events, places, times and what they are reading about to their thinking process to produce a creative written product.

Furthermore, Buehl (2009), states that RAFTs strategy involves writing from a point of view which supports writing assignments to be solved with full creativity, strong motivation as well as good and wide imagination. Students' writing goes to the audience not only for the teacher; they do their writing in a form not in a standard assignment. It means that the students will develop their ability in writing by expressing their ideas clearly and effectively in a certain form and for the audience that they choose as their target.

In addition, Sejnost and Thiese (2010) state that RAFTs can improve students' ability to think critically because it requires that the students examine the topic that they have studied from a different perspective from that of their own. Then, they write the topic for an audience in unfamiliar format or it can be said that it is new to them. It is also suggested that the teacher gives a model before asking the students to use it independently.

It can be concluded from what has been mentioned above that RAFTs can help the students to think creatively during the process of writing because it is used to demonstrate students' knowledge by using a defined point of view. The students are asked to analyze, synthesize, generalize, and evaluate the information in order to be written to the format.

The importance of RAFTs strategy:

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

1. Improving students' writing competence.
2. Assisting students to realize their role as writers, the audience, the different writing product formats, and the topics they are discussing.
3. Encouraging students to organize their thoughts and holding their attention because they are focused on the writing activity. This strategy is attractive to the students to study so that they will give their effort to the writing task.
4. Solving students' problems or difficulties in understanding a sentence.
5. Improving students' interest and motivation of studying in the classroom.

Elements of RAFTs Strategy:

According to Kurtis, et al. (2011), applying RAFTs is relatively easy once students understand its fundamental elements that pertain to the writing skills. These elements are as follows:

- **Role:** One critical element that students must understand about all writing is that it reflects perspectives or points of view, and there is no writing without bias. This idea affects students to be mature and they also realize the significance of the perspective in writing because students need to be familiar with the different roles they can act as writers.
- **Audience:** It can be one of the most fun and challenging elements of writing. Students can learn some critical lessons about writing as a medium for communication by writing on similar topics but to varying audiences. Otherwise, students might be assigned a topic and a single audience to address and then compare their writing to see how each approached that particular audience. Another possibility is to present a topic and ask if writing varies according to audience and format.
- **Format:** As students learn and become experienced with various writing formats, they are putting more tools in communications toolbox. Students are often eager to learn various formats for writing and seek alternatives to basic narrative writing. Varying formats offer opportunities for creative writing and avenues for expressions that might not surface if students are limited to basic essay writing.
- **Topic:** Selection of a writing topic often presents the greatest struggle in content area writing. Teachers usually have some specific essential questions for students to address. When considering topics, it is useful to think in terms of what kind of questions students should address; the students have to consider the conceptual ways in which that essential point can be approached. This can be determined through different topic prompts. Moreover, they might like to pursue in an effective way to engage them in writing about central issues for class.
- **Strong verbs:** One adaptation to RAFTs is by adding "s" to make the acronym RAFT(s). The "s" refers to "strong verb" and suggests students should show how strongly they feel about a

particular topic: whether they are bothered, angry, curious, confused, or relieved, for example. Because there are times when students' strong feeling about a topic may be important for the presentation, there are times when this might be unnecessary. However, it is an interesting adaptation to consider. Figure (2.1) and Table (1) below sketch these different elements of RAFTs.

- R- Role** (Wh..o is doing the writing?)
- A- Audience** (Who will be reading the writing ?)
- F- Form** (Is this a story, letter, poem, or other form?)
- T- Topic** (What am I writing about?)
- S- Strong Verb** (Am I creating ,analyzing?)

Table (1) :RAFTs Elements

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writer • artist • character • scientist • adventurer • inventor • juror • judge • historian • reporter • rebel • therapist • journalist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self • peer group • government • parents • fictional character(s) • committee • jury • judge • activists • immortality • animals or objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journal • editorial • brochure/booklet • interview • video • song lyric • cartoon • game • primary document • critique • biographical sketch • newspaper article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue relevant to the text or time period • topic of personal interest or concern for the role or audience • topic related to an essential question

Why use RAFTs strategy?

RAFTs. is a writing strategy its ability to help students and to encourage them to understand and realize their role as a writer and also to communicate effectively with readers so they can easily understand their ideas and what topics discussing. Furthermore, RAFTs strategy helps students to be more aware their audience, the different formats in addition to the points and topics which they mention. Hence, teachers who are using this strategy can support creative writing, encourage students to grow ideas and topics from another point of view. Therefore, RAFTs can help students practice their skill effectively because of the following:

- It contains writing from another point of view.
- It helps students to pick up important writing skills, for example: audience, organization, and ideas.
- It encourages students to think with more creativity.
- It can be used widely in different fields.

How to use RAFTs

1. Display a completed RAFTs example on the overhead.
2. Describe each of these using simple examples: role, audience, format and topic.(it may be helpful to write the elements on chart paper)

3. Model how to write responses to the prompts, and discuss the key elements as a class. Teachers should keep this as simple and concise as possible for younger students.

4. Have students practice responding to prompts individually, or in small groups. At first, it may be best to have all students react to the same prompt so the class can learn from varied responses.

Benefits of using RAFTs strategy:

RAFTs strategy can be differentiated by readiness level, learning profile, and student interest. It can be tailored to meet the needs of every student. Students who require guided instruction benefit from being given the role, the audience, the format, and the topic. This allows them to focus on one topic and one point of view at a time. This also allows them to master the use of the strategy. Students who have mastered the RAFTs strategy can be given a variety of options. They can also be given the option to create their own! This fosters creativity (Buehl, 2013).

Benefits for the student writer:

1. Students give more thoughtful and often more extensive written responses as they demonstrate their learning.
2. Students are more active in processing information rather than simply answering questions.
3. Students are given a clear structure for their writing; they know what point to assume, and they are provided with an organizational scheme. Furthermore, the purpose of the writing is outlined clearly.
4. Students are well encouraged and motivated enough to do their assignments so that the task can involve them personally and allow for more creative responses to learn the material.

RAFTs as a Writing Strategy:

The ability to produce spoken and written discourse is the aim of learning English in school. process of teaching and learning English focuses on certain literacy levels. According to Depdiknas (2006), literacy stages include performance, functional, informational, and epistemic. Performance refers to the ability of the students to read, write, listen, and speak using the symbol. Functional aspects refer to the ability of the students to use the language to meet their daily needs. Informational level indicates students' ability to access knowledge using their language ability. The epistemic level indicates students' ability to express knowledge in the target language.

To develop writing skills requires that learners follow the process of learning how to get ideas, how to put them together, how to get them on the paper, and how to polish them into a piece of writing (Umaemah, et al., 2016). The process of writing involves content, organization, vocabulary, language feature, and mechanics. A writing task involves simple sentences to elaborated texts or essays. It is the process of putting, discovering, and organizing feelings, beliefs, and the ideas through symbols and through a well-constructed text. In other words, writing requires specific knowledge that helps the writer to put his or her thoughts, useful words and meaningful writing product forms to communicate the message in the text. Brown (2007), considers writing as a very difficult skill students can learn as a foreign language. Learning writing, especially in second or foreign language, needs to focus on many aspects in a certain time. Richard and Renandya (2002), explain that the difficulty lies in the creating process and how to organize ideas, especially using best choices of terms, sentences, as well as paragraphs and also how to convert your ideas using a correct text and readable one.

EFL learners need appropriate ways to be effective. Tanatkun (2008), states that it takes a long time to notice development and achievement in writing among non-native students as learning English writing is a challenge for them. Furthermore, Galbraith (2009), adds that to learn how to write in another language is not considered as a matter of enhancing your verbal skills, or translating it from one language to another; writing is deeper; it is the effect on the writer's beliefs and thoughts.

In respect to the gap between the importance of writing in learning English and the students' problem in writing, Raimes (1983), (as cited in Santi, et al., 2014), mentions some reasons that indicate the importance of teaching writing. Firstly, writing supports the grammatical structure, idiom, and vocabulary where teachers use it in the class. While writing, students are free to adventure with the English language. Second, students are deeply involved in the language with their readers and themselves.

The function of RAFTs strategy in the writing process is to help students generate ideas by arranging RAFTs assignment. In this step, students generate their ideas by connecting Role, their Audience, writing products Format, in addition to the subject and Topic for writing in detail. The students are ready to write the draft after they have done the RAFTs assignment. In other words, RAFTs strategy has a significant role in the writing process especially in the prewriting stages. Alisa, et al. (2013) add that RAFTs strategy encourages thinking of a subject or a topic starting from various points of view to specific audience in a variety of formats of text. The position of RAFTs strategy in the process writing is to open the students' minds for generating ideas by connecting the concept of role, audience, format, and topic in their draft. The integration of the four elements leads the direction of process of writing the draft according to the context. Additionally, the column of topic provides some vocabularies and language features. Therefore, the writing process becomes easy. Furthermore, the students can solve their problems in generating ideas in writing short messages through RAFTs assignments.

Sejnost and Thiese (2010) state that RAFTs strategy also bolsters the students, which means to be a writer by making them aware of the impact that the topic and the format can meet their audience. Therefore, it makes students enjoy their writing. In other words, the insight as writers for learners in RAFTs strategy leads to the emergence of the new spirit to explore their writing task. Furthermore, RAFTs strategy is simple but gives the students opportunity to explore their imagination of what they want to do according to their creativity after they have found ideas by working on the RAFTs assignment. Santi, et al. (2014), say that RAFTs strategy encourages students to connect their past information with new knowledge as well as concepts. It also helps students to think critically in the topic and put it in a good context.

The results of the study of Umaemah, et al. (2016), indicate that RAFTs strategy was effective in solving the problem in the writing class in different levels of school. The positive contributions in using RAFTs strategy for writing class is relevant as a pre-writing strategy in the early stage of process writing, and it is in keeping with the characteristics of the students' problems of eight grade students.

Advantages of using RAFTs Strategy:

When using a certain strategy, the teacher has to know the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy before implementing it in the class. According to Jimenez (2014), there are some advantages of RAFTs strategy that the teacher should know; these are as follows:

Advantages:

- Fostering creativity
- Encouraging critical thinking
- Incorporating writing into content areas
- Showing students how writing relates to real word situations
- Teaching students how to create organized writing

Implementing RAFTs Strategy inside Classroom:

Following are all steps that the teacher should follow while using RAFTs strategy in teaching writing as adapted from (Alisa and Rosa, 2013).

Teacher's Preparation

Teachers have to prepare before they come to the classroom in order to have the teaching-learning process run well. There are several important things that must be prepared before teaching the lesson.

Material:

The material has to be interesting for in teaching writing, especially in teaching a functional text. The teacher prepares some examples of an advertisement. In order to get authentic material, the teacher can bring material that can be found on the internet or in magazines.

Media Preparation:

The media should be appropriate and interesting for students. In this case, the teacher should be careful to choose a piece of writing which is simple and appropriate for the students. First, the teacher shows the piece of writing on a video to activate their background knowledge about the text. Second, the teacher brings some posters of the piece of writing to discuss the components of the text.

Lesson Plan:

When creating the lesson plan, there are several essential elements in preparing it. They are objectives, material, limitation of time.

Teaching Process

• Pre - teaching Activity:

In this stage, the teacher prepares the students, both psychologically and physically to be involved in the learning process. The teacher may begin the lesson by greeting the students in order to catch their attention. To do so, the teacher can show them a photo related to the piece of writing and after that she can ask them some questions about it. Then, the teacher can introduce RAFTs strategy to the students by explaining to them that every writer needs to consider four components: Role, Audience, Format, Topic and strong verb. After that, the teacher also tells the students about the objectives of the materials that will be learned.

- **Whilst Teaching Activities:**

- **Exploration:** In the exploration activity, the teacher checks students' knowledge about the piece of writing by showing them two different posters which discuss the same topic. Then, the teacher asks them these following questions:
 - What is the first poster about?
 - What about the second poster?
 - Are these posters the same?
 - Are there any differences?
 - What do the posters say?

These questions will check how far students' knowledge about the piece of writing is and it will also pull out their curiosity. After that, the teacher discusses the differences between the two pieces of writing even though they discuss the same topic and explains to the students the reason why during writing they need to consider the role, audience, format, topic and strong verb because a different role, audience, format and topic will affect the writing itself by showing them the posters. So, it can be concluded that those pieces of writing are different because they have different audiences although they sell the same RAFTs strategy.

English Writing

Introduction

Writing is a major language skill and a means of communicating ideas. So, student should be instructed in writing short dialogues, letters and paragraphs. Practice is a prerequisite to do better in the skill of writing. In addition to its communicative function, writing is very important in the process of teaching inside the classroom. Students must be trained under the guidance of the teacher inside the classroom by going through the several phases of the writing experience, namely: copying, dictation, controlled, guided and free writing. For pedagogical purposes, a writing program consists of three main phases: guided writing, controlled writing, and free writing.(ELT, Methodology(1) .2007)

Definitions of writing

Several definitions have been given to writing. "Writing is a complicated process involving the construct of the messages on paper and more recently on a computer screen" (Swales and Feak 1999, P. 34). Obviously, this definition is simple and wide. However, writing is defined as "a communicative ability which is to send the messages with the help of written abbreviations" (Millrood, 2001, P. 1). Moreover, Harmer (2005, P. 16), points out that writing is "a process of production." Subsequently, writing is not a passive and easy process or a more of encoding of letters and words, but it must include: visual encoding, mental processing of what has been encoded, and relating it to one's experience. Writing is a simple process of how to find the most means for information, ideas and feelings.

The importance of writing:

Writing is very necessary in the learning process and in all the phases of learning because of the following:

- Writing expresses what a person thinks, believes, feels, etc.
- Writing enhances writers' ability to give worthwhile information.
- Writing helps students when they get feedback.
- Writing fosters students' ability to explain a simple and complex position to readers.
- Writing helps students move easily among ideas, facts, inferences, information and opinions.
- Writing is permanent. It makes one's thinking visible.

Objectives of Teaching Writing:

1. The student should be familiar with the nature of writing and its role as a means of communication.
2. He/She should know the requirements for the writing skill.
3. He/She should be familiar with the different uses of writing in a foreign language.
4. He/She should be familiar with the different stages of writing and how to deal with each one.
5. He/She should understand and be able to apply the different methods of teaching writing.

Purposes of writing:

Writing for Reinforcement:

The teaching purpose is to enhance an understanding on the part of the students. The teacher asks all the students to write in order to enhance something just learned, e.g. what should have been done? The student looks at the photos showing a normal work routine for Heba and writes a sentence for each photo: She should have gotten up at 8 o'clock. She should have gone to job.

Writing for Training:

Writing used in the class for the aim of training initially presents students with a model of rhetorical and linguistic forms. It trains students to vary sentence length, to use complex and compound sentences, and to make stylistic options. Sentence combining exercises and controlled composition by the teacher are popular in this type of training.

Writing for Communication:

In the writing for communication, teachers teach the students how to write a letter, a paragraph and how to introduce themselves well. The communicative nature of the writing process is limited to students-students rather than students-teacher.

Teaching Writing:

Writing is a major skill involved in teaching a foreign language and can be carried out in the following sequence:

Gradation:

Writing must be gradually taught to the students to understand every one of its phases. Thus, gradation is necessary for two reasons; the first is educational, while the second reason is logical. We cannot teach students how to write an essay before we teach them how to write a single paragraph. The teacher should teach the students step by step in the learning process.

➤ **Pre-writing:**

The first phase in teaching writing is to teach handwriting, which may be called the pre-writing stage. In this stage, learners are to collect all the information, ideas, and all the sentences related to the topic. The teacher is expected to do the following:

- Beginners are to be guided to catch the pen or pencil properly.
- All letters should be written in the same slant.
- All letters within a word should be equally spaced.
- Students should be trained to write in straight, horizontal and parallel lines.
- Students are to be trained to write cursively.

All the types of writing may be practiced in the secondary phase.

➤ **Letter Writing:**

In this activity, the teacher reads a letter of some hobbies. He also shows the way of writing letters (writing address, introduction, subject and ending), gives some key words or expressions and the theme of the reply. Students write a letter based on the information provided. At this stage, the letters should be personal or friendly. Most students have friends or relatives who live abroad. They can write about events of home life, about things they know or care about, and so on.

Some people write letters more than they write anything else because letters are short and effective means of communicating what one wants to say to others. There are primarily two kinds of letters: informal letters and business letters. Informal letters (i.e. personal letters) are addressed to close friends and intimate colleagues. Business letters, however, are written to people you might never have seen or talked to.

Objectives of Teaching Writing for Tenth Graders in English for Palestine:

- Expressing opinions, information, and ideas in clear and grammatically correct English. *The teacher teaches the students how to use appropriate punctuation in sentences.
- Writing in a model appropriate for communicative purposes.
- Planning, organizing and presenting ideas, developing and improving a topic.

Monitoring, checking and revising written work.

The Methodology

Introduction

This section describes the procedures the study followed. It also gives a thorough description of the methodology of the study, the population, the sample, the instrumentation, the pilot study, an explanation of the RAFTs strategy applied in the study, and the statistical treatments of findings.

Research Design:

The researcher adopted the experimental design because of its relevance to the nature of the research, which aimed at finding the effectiveness of using RAFTs strategy in improving English writing skills among female tenth graders in Gaza. To achieve the aim of this study, two groups were chosen, an experimental group and a control one. The RAFTs strategy was used in teaching writing skills to the experimental group, while the traditional method was used with the control one.

Study Sample:

The researcher used intact sample from the tenth grade at Hassan Salama Elementary School for Girls (A) in Gaza City. The sample of the study consisted of (68) female students. The researcher chose two classes randomly out of four classes. One class was randomly assigned as an experimental group consisting of (34) students, while the second was assigned as a control group consisting of (34) students as shown in Table (3.1) below. The researcher himself administrated the experiment.

Table (3.1): Distribution of the sample according to the groups

Group	Experimental	Control
Female Students	34	34

The participants were equivalent in their general achievement according to the statistical treatment of their results in the final exam of the school year (2016-2017). Moreover, they were equivalent in their English language achievement according to the statistical treatment of their results in the final exam of the school year (2016-2017). The age variable of the sample was also controlled before the application of the experiment.

Study variables:

The study included the following variables:

1. The independent variable: RAFTs strategy
2. The dependent variable: tenth graders' writing skills

Study instruments:

To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher employed one tool:

1. A pre-posttest

Internal consistency validity

Al Agha (1996, p. 121) asserts that the internal consistency validity indicates the correlation of the score of each item with the total score of the test. It also indicates the correlation coefficient of the mean score of each domain with the total scored of the test. This validity was calculated by using Pearson Formula. Table (2) shows the correlation coefficient of every item of the writing test.

Table (2): Correlation coefficient of each item within its domain

Domains	Items	Pearson correlation	Domains	Items	Pearson correlation
Role	1	**0.590	Topic	1	**0.691
	2	*0.454		2	**0.615
	3	**0.618		3	**0.906
	4	**0.815		4	**0.843
Audience	1	**0.483	Strong Verbs	1	*0.451
	2	*0.393		2	**0.699
	3	**0.773		3	**0.854
	4	**0.776		4	**0.835
Format	1	*0.461			
	2	**0.539			
	3	**0.848			
	4	*0.445			

r table value at df (28) and sig. level (0.05) = 0.361

r table value at df (28) and sig. level (0.01) = 0.463

The Table (2) shows the correlations of the test items were significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), which indicates that there was a consistency among the items. This means that the test was highly valid for the study. The researcher also made sure of the correlation between the domains with the total score of the test as shown in Table (2).

Results & Data analysis

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using RAFTs strategy in improving English writing skills among female tenth graders in Gaza. This section tackles the statistical analysis of the study findings as well as its statistical significance. The researcher used different statistical tests included in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data collected while answering the study questions and testing the hypotheses.

Answers to Research Questions

Following are the analyses of the research findings in connection with the study questions and hypotheses.

Answer to the first question

The first question was formulated as follows: Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in composition (paragraph) writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and those of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method? To answer this question, the researcher tested the following null hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in composition (paragraph) writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and that of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method.

To answer the question and examine the hypothesis, the composition writing skills, means and standard deviations of both groups' findings in the posttest were computed. Independent Samples T-test was used to measure the significance of the differences. Table (4.1) describes those results.

Table (3): T.test independent samples findings of differences between the experimental and the control group in composition skills in the posttest

Domains	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. value	sig. level
Accuracy	Control	34	12.588	2.572	17.988	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	29.559	4.863			
Role	Control	34	8.118	2.171	17.409	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	18.765	2.829			
Format	Control	34	6.000	1.923	15.272	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	14.382	2.559			
Overall quality	Control	34	5.853	1.811	21.780	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	15.853	1.971			
Total	Control	34	32.559	5.206	22.761	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	78.559	10.572			

“t” table value at (66) d f. at (0.05) sig. level equal 2.00

“t” table value at (66) d f. at (0.01) sig. level equal 2.66

As shown in Table (3), the T. computed value (22.761) is larger than T. table value (2.66) in the test, which means that there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the total mean score of composition writing in the post-test between the experimental and control group in favor of the experimental group. The mean of the post-test in the experimental group was (78.559), whereas that of the control group was (32.559). This result indicates that using RAFTs strategy was more effective than the traditional method in developing students' composition (paragraph) writing skills.

To find out the effect size of the RAFTs strategy, the researcher applied the " η^2 " and "d" formulae illustrated below.

To show the extent of RAFTs strategy effect on the experimental group achievement in the writing skills, the research applied the "Effect Size" technique (Affana, 2000, p. 42).

The researcher computed " η^2 " using the following formula:

$$\eta^2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}$$

And "d" value using the following formula:

$$D = \frac{2t}{df}$$

The results of the application of these formulae are shown in Table (4.2) below.

Table (4): The effect Size of RAFTs strategy on the experimental group in composition writing in the posttest

Skill	t value	η^2	d	Effect size
Accuracy	17.988	0.831	4.428	Large
Role	17.409	0.821	4.286	Large
Format	15.272	0.779	3.760	Large
Overall quality	21.780	0.878	5.362	Large
Total	22.761	0.887	5.603	Large

Table (4) shows that the effect size of using RAFTs strategy is significantly large on students' composition writing skills. This large effect may be due to the activities and techniques used in the RAFTs strategy to improve students' writing skills.

Answer to the second question

The second question was formulated as follows: Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in formal letter writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and that of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method? To answer this question, the researcher tested the following null hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in formal letter writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and that of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method.

To answer the question and test the hypothesis, the means and standard deviations of both groups' results in formal letter writing in the posttest were computed. To measure the significance of the differences between the two groups in formal letter writing, the researcher used T-test. Table (4.3) describes those results.

Table (5): T.test independent sample findings of differences between the experimental and the control group in the formal letter posttest

Domains	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. value	sig. level
Accuracy	Control	34	11.765	2.075	32.487	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	32.441	3.077			
Role	Control	34	7.500	2.004	23.774	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	20.118	2.358			
Format	Control	34	5.471	1.656	9.624	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	17.353	7.006			
Overall quality	Control	34	6.353	1.824	27.878	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	17.294	1.382			
Total	Control	34	31.088	3.880	33.427	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	87.206	8.987			

“t” table value at (66) d f. at (0.05) sig. level equal 2.00

“t” table value at (66) d f. at (0.01) sig. level equal 2.66

As shown in Table (5), the T. computed value (33.427) is larger than T. table value (2.66) in the test, which means that there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the total mean score of the posttest between the experimental and control group in favor of the experimental group. The mean of the posttest of the experimental group was (87.206), while that of the control group was (31.088). This result indicates that using RAFTs strategy was more effective than the traditional way in developing the students' formal letter writing skills.

To find out effect size of the RAFTS strategy, the researcher applied the " η^2 " and "d" formulae illustrated above. The results of the application of these formulae are shown in Table (4.4) below.

Table (4.4): The effect size of RAFTs strategy on the experimental group’s formal letter writing skills in the posttest

Skill	t value	η^2	d	Effect size
Accuracy	32.487	0.941	7.998	Large
Role	23.774	0.895	5.853	Large
Format	9.624	0.584	2.369	Large
Overall quality	27.878	0.922	6.863	Large
Total	33.427	0.944	8.229	Large

Table (4.4) shows the effect size of using RAFTs strategy was significantly large on students’ formal letter writing skills. This large effect may be due to the activities used in the RAFTs strategy to improve students' writing skills.

Answer to the third question

The third question was formulated as follows: Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in talking about oneself in writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and that of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method? To answer this question, the researcher tested the following null hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in talking about oneself in writing in the posttest between the mean scores of the experimental group taught writing using RAFTs strategy and that of their counterparts of the control one taught writing using the traditional method.

To answer the question and test the hypothesis, the means and standard deviations of both groups’ findings in talking about oneself in writing skills in the post-test were computed. To measure the significance of the differences between the two groups in talking about oneself skills, the researcher was used T-test. Table (4.5) describes those findings.

Table (4.5): T.test independent sample findings of differences between the experimental and the control groups’ in talking about oneself in writing in the posttest

Domains	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. value	sig. level
Accuracy	Control	34	15.294	4.414	14.248	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	29.588	3.839			
Role	Control	34	10.029	3.486	14.494	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	20.000	1.985			
Format	Control	34	6.765	1.986	17.816	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	15.294	1.962			
Overall quality	Control	34	8.147	2.925	14.490	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	16.088	1.288			
Total	Control	34	40.235	7.332	22.763	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Experimental	34	80.971	7.424			

“t” table value at (66) d f. at (0.05) sig. level equal 2.00

“t” table value at (66) d f. at (0.01) sig. level equal 2.66

As shown in Table (4.5), the T. computed value (22.763) is larger than T. table value (2.66) in the test, which means that there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) in the total

average score of the posttest between the experimental and control group in favor of the experimental group. The mean of the posttest of the experimental group was (80.971), while that of the control group was (40.235). This finding indicates that using RAFTs strategy was more effective than the traditional way in developing the students' writing skills.

To find out effect size of the RAFTS strategy, the researcher applied the " η^2 " and "d" formulae illustrated above. The results of the application of these formulae are shown in Table (4.6) below.

Table (4.6): The Effect Size of RAFTs strategy on the experimental group’s talking about oneself in writing in the post writing skills

Skill	t value	η^2	d	Effect size
Accuracy	14.248	0.755	3.508	Large
Role	14.494	0.761	3.568	Large
Format	17.816	0.828	4.386	Large
Overall quality	14.490	0.761	3.567	Large
Total	22.763	0.887	5.604	Large

Table (4.6) shows the effect size of using RAFTs strategy is large on students' writing skills. This means that the effect of RAFTs strategy is significant. This large effect may be due to the activities used in the RAFTs strategy to improve students' writing skills.

Answer to the fourth question

The fourth question was formulated as follows: Are there statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental in the pre- and post-application of the writing with reference to the elements of the RAFTs strategy? To answer this question, the researcher tested the following null hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-application of the writing test with reference to the elements of the RAFTs strategy.

To answer the question and test the hypothesis, the means and standard deviations of the pre- and the post-test results of the experimental of the questions focusing on the elements of RAFTs strategy were computed. Independent Samples T-test was used to measure the significance of the differences. Table (4.7) describes those results.

Table (4.7): T.Test paired sample results of the differences between the pre- and post-test of the experimental concerning the elements of RAFTs

Domain	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. value	sig. level
Role	Pre test	34	1.618	0.922	4.176	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Post test	34	2.824	1.466			
Audience	Pre test	34	1.588	1.184	6.300	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Post test	34	3.794	1.409			
Format	Pre test	34	2.265	1.463	7.332	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Post test	34	4.706	1.292			
Topic	Pre test	34	1.853	1.635	7.949	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Post test	34	4.882	1.629			

Domain	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. value	sig. level
Strong verbs	Pre test	34	1.176	1.114	4.939	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Post test	34	3.176	1.946			
SUM	Pre test	34	8.500	4.801	7.730	0.000	sig. at 0.01
	Post test	34	19.382	6.238			

“t” table value at (33) d f. at (0.05) sig. level equal 2.00

“t” table value at (33) d f. at (0.01) sig. level equal 2.66

Table (4.7) shows that the T. computed value (7.730) is larger than T. table value (2.66) in the test, which means that there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the total average scores of the post-test of the experimental group in favor of the posttest. The mean of the post-test reached (19.382), whereas that of pre-test was (8.500). This means that there are statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-application of the experimental group in favor of the posttest. This means that using RAFTs strategy is very effective in raising students’ awareness of the different roles they can assume, the different formats possible for different pieces of writing, and the variation of their message depending on the topic and the audience they are addressing.

To find out effect size of the RAFTS strategy, the researcher applied the " η^2 " and “d” formulae illustrated above. The results of the application of these formulae are shown in Table (4.8) below

Table (4.8): The effect size of RAFTs strategy in the pre- and the post test of the experimental group

Skill	t value	η^2	d	Effect size
Role	4.176	0.346	1.454	Large
Audience	6.300	0.546	2.193	Large
Format	7.332	0.620	2.553	Large
Topic	7.949	0.657	2.767	Large
Strong	4.939	0.425	1.719	Large
SUM	7.730	0.644	2.691	Large

Table (4.8) shows that the effect size of RAFTs strategy is large on students' mastery of the different elements of the RAFTs strategy. This means that the effect of RAFTs is significant. This large effect may be due to the activities and techniques which are used in the RAFTs strategy to develop students' writing skills.

Conclusions:

Based on the current study findings, the following conclusions were derived:

1. RAFTs strategy was more effective and outperformed the traditional way in teaching and learning the writing skills.
2. RAFTs strategy provided students with a clear teaching and learning environment, which positively affected their achievement and performance in writing.
3. RAFTs strategy promoted a learning environment that provided opportunities for exploring and investigating ways for understanding their roles as writers.
4. RAFTs strategy increased students' motivation for learning and raised the degree of cooperation among them.

5. RAFTs strategy gave the students the opportunity to play many roles as thinkers, (R) Role of the writer, (A) Audience, writer and poet etc ... (F) Format of the topic, writing a composition, Paragraph and letters. (T) Topic and (s) strong verbs. These roles helped them to acquire and employ English writing skills in different situations more easily.
6. RAFTs strategy increased student's motivation and communication, which increased fluency practice and reduced the dominance of the teacher.
7. RAFTs strategy strengthened the relationship between the teacher and the students and made the teacher as a close friend, which facilitated the process of teaching and learning of the writing skills.

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