

The Effectiveness of the Raft Strategy on Vocational Students' Descriptive Report Text Writing

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ABSTRACT

Penulisan teks laporan deskriptif merupakan keterampilan penting namun menantang bagi siswa SMK karena menuntut penyajian teks teknis yang akurat dan komunikasi sistematis sesuai bidang keahlian. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh strategi Peran, Audiens, Format, dan Topik (RAFT) terhadap kemampuan menulis teks laporan serta persentase peningkatan tiap aspek penulisan. Penelitian kuantitatif dengan desain one-group pretest-posttest melibatkan 36 siswa kelas XI DPIB di salah satu SMK Negeri di Sidoarjo melalui tiga sesi perlakuan. Data diperoleh dari tugas menulis yang divalidasi sebagai pretest dan posttest dengan dua penilai independen, lalu dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, paired sample t-test, dan repeated measures ANOVA. Hasil menunjukkan rata-rata posttest (74,57) lebih tinggi daripada pretest (66,33), dengan perbedaan signifikan ($p < 0,001$) dan ukuran efek besar (Cohen's $d = 0,93$). Analisis repeated measures ANOVA menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada seluruh aspek penulisan, dengan peningkatan tertinggi pada isi (10,00%), diikuti kosakata (7,64%), organisasi (7,56%), penggunaan bahasa (7,33%), dan mekanika (7,22%). Dengan demikian, strategi RAFT efektif meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks laporan deskriptif siswa SMK serta mendukung kesiapan mereka berkomunikasi secara profesional di dunia kerja.

Writing descriptive report text is an important but challenging skill for vocational high school students because it requires accurate presentation of technical texts and systematic communication according to the field of expertise. This study aims to analyze the effect of the Role, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) strategy on report text writing skills and the percentage of improvement in each writing aspect. This quantitative study with a one-group pretest-posttest design involved 36 grade XI DPIB students at a state vocational high school in Sidoarjo through three treatment sessions. Data were obtained from writing assignments validated as pretests and posttests by two independent assessors, then analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired sample t-tests, and repeated measures ANOVA. The results showed that the posttest average (74.57) was higher than the pretest (66.33), with a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) and a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.93$). Repeated measures ANOVA analysis showed significant improvements in all aspects of writing, with the highest improvement in content (10.00%), followed by vocabulary (7.64%), organization (7.56%), language use (7.33%), and mechanics (7.22%). Thus, the RAFT strategy effectively improves vocational high school students' descriptive report writing skills and supports their readiness to communicate professionally in the workplace.



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INTRODUCTION

English has become a crucial skill for vocational school due to its increasing need in many industries. Unlike general high schools, which emphasize theoretical and academic knowledge, English learning in vocational school focuses on developing workplace-oriented texts related to students' field (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2025). Among the four language skills, writing plays an important role for vocational students as effective English writing is recognized as a critical workplace skill in professional settings (Lee & Schmidgall, 2020). Furthermore, Schmidgall & Powers (2020) reported that nearly 80% of professionals consider English writing essential to their jobs. Among the writing genres required in vocational contexts, descriptive report text stands out as a text that is essential for workplace communication. According to Derewianka & Jones (2016), descriptive report texts present factual information in an organized and objective manner. Likewise, well-organized reports targeted to various audiences are essential to achieve effective written communication (Herawati, 2024). Therefore, mastering this genre can serve as a bridge between workplace demand and graduates' expectations.

Despite its importance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for vocational students (Siregar et al., 2022; Datu & Sulindra, 2025). This is partly because writing is multidimensional, requiring students to simultaneously manage content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Jacobs et al., 1981). Given these demands, many vocational students often struggle to generate and organize ideas, apply proper structure and language features, and identify their intended audience and writing purpose (Siregar et al., 2022; Riadil et al., 2023). These challenges may contribute to the gap between graduates' English competence and workplace expectations, as many vocational graduates still fail to meet employers' expected English writing qualifications across various industries (Safira & Azzahra, 2022).

A similar situation was identified at a public vocational school in Sidoarjo. Based on the English teacher's classroom records, eleventh-grade students in the Building Design and Information Modeling (DPIB) program obtained an average writing score of 67, below the school's minimum passing grade of 75. Most students experienced difficulties in exploring and organizing ideas, used limited vocabulary, and frequently included unrelated information that deviated from the topic. These findings highlight the need for a more structured and contextualized instructional strategy to support vocational students' writing development.

The RAFT (Role, Audience, Format, Topic) strategy (Buehl, 2014) offers a promising solution to these challenges. RAFT encourages students to write with a positive experience from different viewpoints by choosing their specific role, audience, format, and topic (Buehl, 2014). Through establishing a specific role (e.g., audio consultant, technician), students learn to customize their vocabulary and tone to structure reports in professional identity. The audience element instructs to consider the readers' expectations, which promotes contextual awareness and suitable language use in writing report text. The format guides students with a structural framework that facilitates in creating well-structured and coherent descriptive report text. Lastly, the topic assists students to remain focus on writing according to the information being conveyed and set boundaries to prevent deviation from the intended content. This strategy is suitable for teaching descriptive report text writing, as it mirrors the requirements of workplace documentation where the clarity, audience awareness, and structured content are essential.

The suitability of RAFT strategy is further supported by three theoretical frameworks. First, Rhetorical Problem Theory (Flower & Hayes, 1981) emphasizes that effective writing begins with awareness of the topic, audience, purpose, and rhetorical context, reflecting RAFT's emphasis on determining role, audience, format, and topic before writing. Second, Scaffolding Theory (Bruner, 1960) highlights the importance of gradual and structured guidance in learning, supporting the use of RAFT throughout the writing process. Third, Modeling Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that learners develop skills through observation and imitation, which is reflected in the use of model texts before students begin writing.

Previous studies have reported positive outcomes of RAFT implementation. Alshehri (2025) found that RAFT enhanced informative writing among first-grade high school students in Saudi Arabia. Seliem et al. (2020) reported that RAFT promoted creativity in creative writing among Egyptian preparatory students. Kabigting (2020) demonstrated RAFT's effectiveness in improving argumentative

essays among Filipino ESL learners. In Indonesia, Novianti et al. (2024) found that RAFT enhanced greeting card writing among ninth-grade junior high school students, while Pratiwi et al. (2024) reported improvements in personal letter writing among fifth-grade elementary school students. In the vocational school context, Swasti (2018) revealed that RAFT improved recount text writing among tenth-grade students in the Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ) major. However, previous studies have primarily focused on different educational levels, majors, and text genres, with limited attention to descriptive report writing in vocational schools, particularly in the DPIB major. Furthermore, in terms of writing assessment, previous studies have largely reported overall scores, with limited insight into improvement across individual writing components. Considering the writing challenges faced by vocational students and the industry demands, there is a substantial need to address the existing contextual and analytical gaps. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of RAFT strategy in descriptive report writing among vocational students majoring Building Design and Modeling (DPIB) and examine percentage gains across each writing component.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. This design was adopted due to the school's constraint of permitting research in only one class. The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at a public vocational school in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia.

Participants

The population consisted of 475 eleventh-grade students across seven study programs at the school. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample based on the criteria two criteria: the students who had not yet learned descriptive report text writing and had obtained the lowest average writing score among the parallel classes. Accordingly, class XI-1 of the Building Design and Information Modeling (DPIB) program, consisting of 36 students, was selected as the sample.

Instruments and Procedures

Two instruments were employed in this study: a writing task (serving as both pre-test and post-test) and an analytical scoring rubric. The same writing prompt was used in both tests, with a hammer as the topic for the pre-test, and a wrench as the topic for the post-test. Both topics were selected because they represented familiar construction tools within the students' field and required comparable technical vocabulary, generic structures, and language features of descriptive report texts.

The analytical scoring rubric was modified from Jacobs et al. (1981) to align with the generic structure and language features proposed by Derewianka & Jones (2016). Specific quantitative benchmarks were added into the descriptions to ensure more objective and consistent scoring. The rubric was selected because it assesses five essential components and provides different weightings with performance levels (content: 13-30, organization: 7-20, vocabulary 7-20, language use 5-25, and mechanics 2-5), allowing a more comprehensive and objective scoring. Both instruments were validated by an English education lecturer and English teacher. The research procedure was then carried out in three stages:

1. Pre-test
Students produce a 100–150-word descriptive report text about a hammer within 80 minutes.
2. Treatment
Three meetings (160 minutes each) based on the writing process proposed by Tompkins (2019) (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing).
3. Post-test
Students produce a 100–150-word descriptive report text about a wrench within 80 minutes.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The following steps were part of the data analysis process:

1. Researcher and English teacher independently scored all writing tasks, and interrater reliability was examined using a two-way mixed-effects Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) interpreted following the criteria of Koo & Li (2016).
2. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum) were computed for both pre-test and post-test overall writing scores.
3. Given the sample size (N = 36), a Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess data normality.
4. As the data were normally distributed, a paired sample t-test was used to determine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant.
5. Effect size was calculated using Cohen's d, interpreted according to Cohen's (1988) criteria, to determine the practical significance of the improvement.
6. To compare improvement across aspects, descriptive statistics for each writing aspect were calculated. The raw mean scores for writing aspects were converted into percentage gains using the formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Mean Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100\%$$

This conversion was necessary as each aspect had a different maximum score, allowing for a fair comparison.

7. A repeated measures ANOVA was further conducted to examine changes in students' writing performance across the five writing aspects over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Interrater Reliability Using Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC)

Table 1. ICC of Pre-test and Post-test		
	Pre-test	Post-test
ICC (Single Measures)	0.949	0.969
95% CI Lower Bound	0.884	0.911
95% CI Upper Bound	0.976	0.986
df1	35	35
df2	35	35
p	< 0.001	< 0.001

The ICC value showed excellent agreement between the two raters, with ICC values of 0.949 (95% CI [0.884, 0.976], $p < .001$) for the pre-test and 0.969 (95% CI [0.911, 0.986], $p < .001$) for the post-test, indicating that the scoring was highly consistent.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis for Overall Writing Scores

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Overall Writing Scores					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Pre-test	36	50.5	84	66.333	8.0906
Total Post-test	36	51.5	97	74.569	11.0803

Descriptive statistics showed an increase in students' writing performance following the treatment, with the mean score rising from 66.33 (SD = 8.09) in the pre-test to 74.57 (SD = 11.08) in the post-test, a gain of 8.24 points.

Normality test

Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test			
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total Pre-test	0.985	36	0.908
Total Post-test	0.982	36	0.806

The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed that both pre-test ($p = .908$) and post-test ($p = .806$) scores were normally distributed, indicating that parametric tests were appropriate for data analysis.

Paired-Sample T-Test

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test

	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Total Post – Total Pre	8.236	8.851	1.475	5.241	11.231	5.583	35	< 0.001

The paired sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ($t(35) = 5.583$, $p < 0.001$), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 5.24 to 11.23. This indicated that the improvement in students' writing performance after the RAFT strategy was statistically significant and unlikely to have taken place by coincidence.

Effect Size Analysis

Table 5. Effect Size

	Standardizer	Point Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Cohen's d	8.851	0.931	0.534	1.318

The result revealed that the Cohen's d value was 0.931, indicating a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). This demonstrates that the improvement was not only statistically significant, but also practically meaningful.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis for Writing Aspects

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Writing Aspects

Aspect	Test	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Content	Pre-test	36	15	25.5	19.722	2.480
	Post-test		15	28.5	22.722	3.257
Organization	Pre-test	36	10	16.5	13.306	1.614
	Post-test		10	20	14.819	2.464
Vocabulary	Pre-test	36	10.5	16.5	13.500	1.690
	Post-test		10.5	20	15.028	2.351
Language Use	Pre-test	36	12	21.5	16.431	2.441
	Post-test		12.5	24.5	18.264	3.104
Mechanics	Pre-test	36	2	5	3.375	0.614
	Post-test		3	5	3.736	0.638

Based on the table above, all raw mean scores were converted into percentages to fairly compare results.

Table 7. Percentage Gains Across Writing Aspects

Aspect	Max Score	Test	Mean	Percentage (%)	Gain (%)
Content	30	Pre-test	19.722	65.74	+10.00
		Post-test	22.722	75.74	
Organization	20	Pre-test	13.306	66.53	+7.57
		Post-test	14.819	74.10	
Vocabulary	20	Pre-test	13.500	67.50	+7.64
		Post-test	15.028	75.14	
Language Use	25	Pre-test	16.431	65.72	+7.34
		Post-test	18.264	73.06	
Mechanics	5	Pre-test	3.375	67.50	+7.22
		Post-test	3.736	74.72	

The result indicated that all five aspects of descriptive report text writing improved from the pre-test to post-test after the implementation of the RAFT strategy. Among all these aspects, content showed the greatest mean gain (+10%), followed by vocabulary (+7.64%), organization (+7.57%), language use (+7.34%), and mechanics (+7.22%).

Repeated Measures ANOVA

Table 8. Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source		df (Effect)	df (Error)	F	Sig.	Partial η^2
Time	Sphericity Assumed	1	35	31.174	< 0.001	0.471
Aspect	Greenhouse-Geisser	2.337	81.780	1210.983	< 0.001	0.972
Time x aspect	Greenhouse-Geisser	2.153	75.360	27.845	< 0.001	0.443

A repeated measures ANOVA (with Greenhouse-Geisser correction, as Mauchly's test indicated a violation of sphericity for aspect and time $\times$ aspect) confirmed a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 35) = 31.174$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .471$, and a significant time $\times$ aspect interaction, $F(2.153, 75.360) = 27.845$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .443$, indicating that the degree of improvement differed significantly across the five writing aspects.

Discussion

The findings demonstrated that the RAFT strategy produced a statistically significant ($p < .001$) and practically meaningful improvement ($d = 0.931$) in students' descriptive report text writing performance. These results are consistent with three theoretical frameworks. First, the findings support Flower and Hayes' (1981) Rhetorical Problem Theory, which emphasizes that effective writing begins with awareness of audience, purpose, and rhetorical context. By requiring students to determine their role, audience, format, and topic before drafting, the RAFT strategy encouraged more purposeful and contextually appropriate writing. Second, the results are consistent with Bruner's (1960) scaffolding theory, as students received structured guidance throughout the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing activities. Third, the use of model texts before independent writing reflects Bandura's (1977) Modeling Theory, which proposes that learners develop new skills through observation before applying them independently.

The present findings are generally consistent with previous studies. Alshehri (2025) found a significant result in informative writing among high school students in Saudi Arabia, reporting a large effect based on an adapted Cohen's standard ($d = 0.079$). Seliem et al. (2020) reported a large effect ($d = 0.99$) in creative writing, while Patmala et al. (2025) found a very large effect ($d = 1.52$) in descriptive writing. Similarly, Nurlia & Ardini (2024) documented a large effect ($\eta^2 = 0.479$) in personal letter writing, and Swasti (2018) reported that 97.14% of vocational students achieved classical mastery.

Regarding improvement across writing aspects, Repeated Measures ANOVA revealed that all five writing aspects improved significantly with varying magnitudes of improvement. This pattern is consistent with Jacobs et al. (1981), who view writing as a multidimensional skill comprising interrelated yet distinct components that may develop at different rates. Content showed the greatest percentage gain, consistent with the RAFT strategy's core mechanism of directing students' attention to role- and audience-relevant information before drafting. During the pre-writing stage of each treatment session, students in the DPIB program completed a RAFT planning table specifying their role and audience based on their future workplace, which helped them focus on including technically relevant content and eliminating off-topic information. This finding aligns with Pratiwi et al. (2024) and Seliem et al. (2020), who similarly reported content as the most improved aspect. It is also consistent with Flower and Hayes's (1981) Rhetorical Problem Theory which posits that purposeful writing is driven by writers' awareness of goals, audience, and communicative context, as well as Bruner's (1960) scaffolding theory, which holds that gradual, systematic guidance yields positive learning outcomes.

Vocabulary showed the second-highest gain, reflecting Bandura's (1977) Modeling Theory, as repeated exposure to model texts helped students internalize technical vocabulary. This comparative analysis activity appeared to heighten students' awareness of how vocabulary choices differ according to role, audience, and communicative purpose. Additionally, students' prior vocational knowledge of construction terminology may have been activated by the clear communicative context established through the RAFT planning process. Buehl (2014) similarly noted that the four components of RAFT influence the formality of language and the types of vocabulary selected. Organization ranked third, as

the format component provided structural guidance, but improvement remained limited which may reflect the fact that the RAFT format component does not provide explicit guidance on establishing logical relationships between ideas or maintaining coherence across sentences and paragraphs.

Language use and mechanics exhibited the lowest percentage gains. It reflects the fact that RAFT is fundamentally a planning and contextual strategy rather than a tool for explicitly grammar or mechanics instruction. Although teacher feedback and model texts provided indirect support, improvements in grammatical accuracy, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization generally require sustained practice and explicit instruction over a longer period.

In summary, all five writing aspects demonstrated statistically significant improvement following the implementation of the RAFT strategy, with content achieving the greatest gain and mechanics the least. This pattern indicates that the RAFT strategy is particularly effective in developing content development and purposeful vocabulary selection. To achieve more equitable and comprehensive development across all five writing components, the strategy should be combined with explicit instruction in grammar, mechanics, and text coherence, along with a longer implementation period that allows for deeper and more sustained writing practice. However, comparisons across studies must be made cautiously due to differences in research design, assessment criteria and weights, and treatment duration. Unlike Alshehri (2025), Seliem et al. (2020), and Patmala et al. (2025), who employed quasi-experimental designs with control groups, this study used a one-group design; therefore, its evidence is comparatively weaker and cannot be generalized, although the large effect size suggests a practically meaningful improvement. Variations in components, weights, and scoring scales may have also affected the precision of measurement, which may partly account for the variation in effect sizes across studies. Moreover, with only three sessions, the present study may not have provided sufficient time for students to fully internalize and apply all stages of the writing process, which may have limited the magnitude of the observed effect.

CONCLUSION

This study found a statistically significant improvement following the implementation of RAFT strategy on eleventh-grade vocational students' descriptive report text writing performance through pre-experimental methodology. The scores of post-tests were significantly higher than pre-tests, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.93$). Repeated-measures ANOVA also showed that overall students' writing performance improved over time, with the amount of varied progress in each writing aspect. Content showed the greatest percentage gain, followed by vocabulary and organization, while language use and mechanics improved more moderately. Overall, these findings suggest that the RAFT strategy has the potential to be an effective instructional approach for eleventh-grade vocational students to improve their descriptive report text writing performance. However, these results should be viewed with caution given the study's limitations, especially the absence of a control group which restricts generalizability.

Based on the present study's limitation, future research is encouraged to employ quasi-experimental or true experimental designs with control groups and larger, more diverse samples to strengthen causal claims and improve the generalizability of the findings. In addition, establishing the equivalence of pre-test and post-test topics through pilot testing and implementing the RAFT strategy over a longer treatment period may provide stronger evidence of its effectiveness.

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