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Siti Aishah Taib, Noor Hanim Rahmat, Mok Soon Sim, Siti Mariam Mohammad Iliyas, Nadzrah Sa'adan, Norhisyam Jenal

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Processing Academic Writing Online: The Case For Process Approach

Siti Aishah Taib¹, Noor Hanim Rahmat², Mok Soon Sim³, Siti
Mariam Mohammad Iliyas⁴, Nadzrah Sa'adan⁵, Norhisyam
Jenal⁶

^{1,2,4,5}Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor,
Kampus Pasir Gudang, ³Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam,
Selangor, Malaysia, ⁶Kolej Pengajian Kejuruteraan, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan
Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang

Email: aishah711@uitm.edu.my, noorh763@uitm.edu.my, moksoon@uitm.edu.my,
sitim364@uitm.edu.my, nadzr210@uitm.edu.my, hisyam0324@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The learning process of academic writing is already difficult for many students. The online environment can either hinder or facilitate learning online academic writing. The writing process is seen as cyclical. In the context of this study, the writer starts with planning stage. Once the planning is done, the writer translates the ideas into written form in the form of a draft. The writer then reviews the draft. If the writer is unhappy with the draft, he/she makes plans to repair, and the writing process resumes in the circle. This quantitative research is done to investigate how learners use cognitive and meta cognitive strategies when they learn French as a foreign language. The instrument used is a survey with 4 sections. With reference to Table 1, section A has 1 item on the demographic profile. Section B has 8 items on planning, section C has 8 items on translating, and section D has 7 items on reviewing. 63 respondents were purposively chosen to answer the survey. General findings revealed that writers' motivation for online writing was during the translation and reviewing stages. Findings of this study bear interesting implications for the teaching and learning of writing using the process writing via online mode.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Process Approach, Online, Planning, Translating

Introduction

Online learning environment has helped set the scene for independent learning. The study by Rosyada & Sundari (2021) reported that students were satisfied with online applications to help in their academic writing. Nevertheless, the study by Rahmat (2019) found that there are some problems that writers face in academic writing. The first is a rhetorical situation and this involves the writers worrying about the assignment and the audience. Writers also face problems with their own goals involving the readers, creating a voice for the writing, building meaning, and even producing a formal text. How are academic writers coping with the writing process via online mode? This study is done to explore the perceptions of learners learning

the writing process via online mode. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions:

- How is Planning in writing done online?
- How is Translating in writing done online?
- How is Reviewing in writing done online?

Thus, the research objectives are:

- To explore the Planning stage in online writing
- To explore the Translating stage in online writing
- To explore the Reviewing stage in online writing.

Literature Review

Writing Process Online

With reference to figure 1, according to Flower & Hayes (1981), when writers compose, they go through the writing process. The first stage is the planning stage where the writer generates ideas, organises, and sets goals. Next, the writer translates his/her oral thoughts into written thoughts. After that, the writer reviews by evaluating and revising the draft.

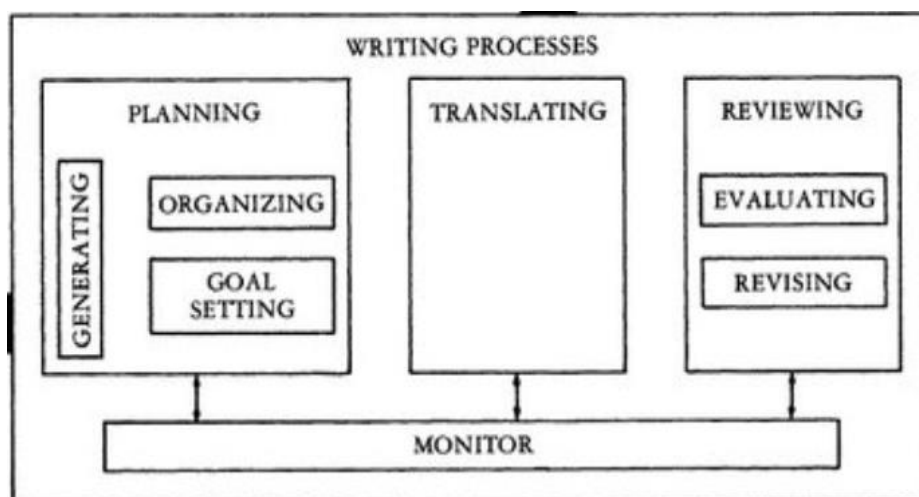


Figure 1- The Writing Process (source: Flower & Hayes, 1981)

In the teaching of writing, the teacher can use different approaches. One good approach is the process approach. The process approach to writing focusses on the series of tasks that the learners go through to complete an essay. Figure 2 shows the six stages in the process approach. According to White & Arndt (1991), the writing activity begins with the generating ideas. During the generating stage, the writer structures the ideas to link with the title of the writing assignment. The writer then evaluates the ideas. In order to focus the writer's plan to refer to the written assignment, he /she reviews the plan. The writer then begins the draft. During the draft state, the writer goes back and forth to review the writing done so far before submitting it as the finished written product ready for publication/submission.

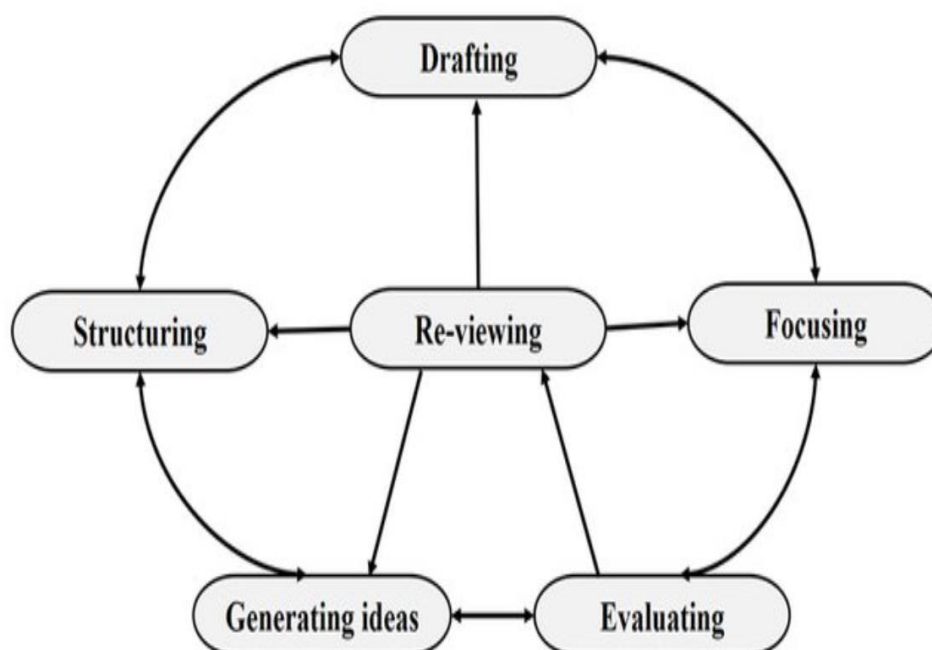


Figure 2-Process Approach to Writing (Source: White & Arndt,1991)

Nevertheless, the process approach to writing is usually carried out as group activities. Group writing, just like any group activity, can pose problems. Some learners had to learn to cope with interactions with the group and then interact via online mode (Rahmat et al., 2021). Another reason why online writing is challenging is the need to have online presence. According to Garrison & Arbaugh (2007), there are three types of online presence, and they are cognitive presence, social presence, and teacher presence.

Writing academic essays online can be challenging. According to Rahmat, et.al (2022), in online writing learners need to feel the cognitive presence. This cognitive presence is needed to sustain communication among writers (especially if it is group writing). This presence is also needed for writers to construct meaning and apply the ideas discussed. Cognitive presence also allows writers to use their critical thinking skills to evaluate their own writing.

Past Studies

The study by Carolan & Kyppoo (2015) was done to explore students' acquisition of writing skills and the teacher's support practices in a digital writing environment. The writing environment presents writers' experiences related to various stages of process writing. The digital writing environment encourages students to become good writers but also the constant struggle with common writing problems. Findings reveal that writers often overcome the barriers to effective writing by acquiring strategies for independent, self-directed learning.

Jee & Aziz (2021) investigated the use of process-based writing approach in enhancing the Form six learners' writing skills. The action research used process-based writing approach.

This research was conducted in a suburban secondary school of Mukah district in Sarawak, Malaysia. Twenty-three of the Upper six learners with average to below average language proficiency were selected as the research participants. Two data collection instruments which were the pre and post tests were analysed to obtain research findings. Findings proved that the process-based approach had successfully assisted the learners in writing an argumentative essay.

Next, Zhang (2019) reported a study on how the use of online resources based on systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The qualitative study was done to investigate how SFL influence college students' emotional alignment and writing practices. Findings of this the case study show that the students were able to overcome their fears with writing construction associated with their dearth of effective knowledge. More importantly, they could utilize the knowledge imparted through online resources, actively and confidently participating in unpacking written discourse, and effectively constructing their own writing. The study concludes the importance of using online resources that are effectively designed and linguistically grounded.

Finally, Rosyada & Sundari (2021) explored the practices of Google Classroom in facilitating the Academic Writing course of English for Foreign Language undergraduates. 96 participants from third-year students in the English Education Program participated in the study. The instrument was a set of questionnaires. The findings indicated a significant correlation between using Google Classroom and the students' writing performance. Students expressed their satisfaction with Google Classroom's practical features to be used in the academic writing course.

Conceptual Framework

This study is rooted from the writing process by Flower & Hayes (1981). With reference to figure 3, when writers compose, they go through the writing process. The process is cyclical. In the context of this study, the writer starts with the planning stage. Once the planning is done, the writer translates the ideas into written form in the form of a draft. The writer then reviews the draft. If the writer is unhappy with the draft, he/she makes plans to repair it, and the writing process resumes in the circle



Figure 3- Conceptual Framework of the Study: Writing Process Online (Source: Flower & Hayes, 1981)

Methodology

This quantitative research is done to investigate how learners use cognitive and metacognitive strategies when they learn French as a foreign language. The instrument used is a survey adapted from (Flower & Hayes, 1981). 63 respondents were purposively chosen to answer the survey. The survey has 4 main sections. With reference to Table 1, section A has 1 item on the demographic profile. Section B has 8 items on planning, section C has 8 items on translating, and section D has 7 items on reviewing.

Table 1
Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	WRITING PROCESS	NO OF ITEMS
A	Demographic Profile	1
B	Planning	8
C	Translating	8
D	Reviewing	7
Total No. of Items (B+C+D)		23

Table 2
Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.798	23

Table 2 presents the reliability statistics for the instrument. SPSS analysis revealed a Cronbach's Alpha of .798 thus showing high internal reliability of the instrument used. Data

was collected online via Google Form. Data was then analysed using SPSS version 26. Analysed data was presented in the form of percentages and mean scores to answer the 3 research questions.

Findings

Findings for Demographic Profile

The following is a questionnaire on learning Writing using Colour Codes.

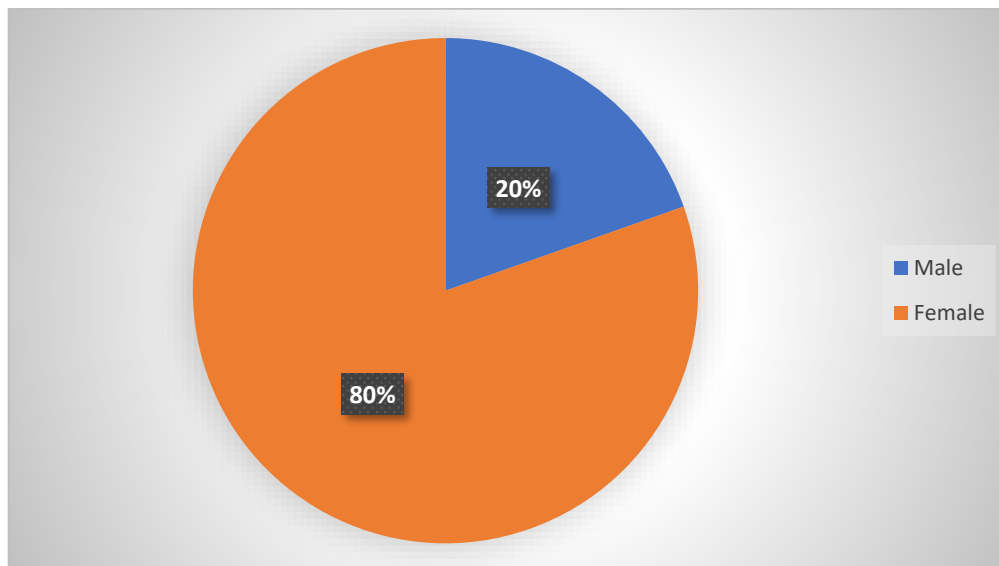


Figure 4-Percentage for Gender

Figure 4 presents the percentage for gender. 78% are male and 22 % are female.

Findings for Planning

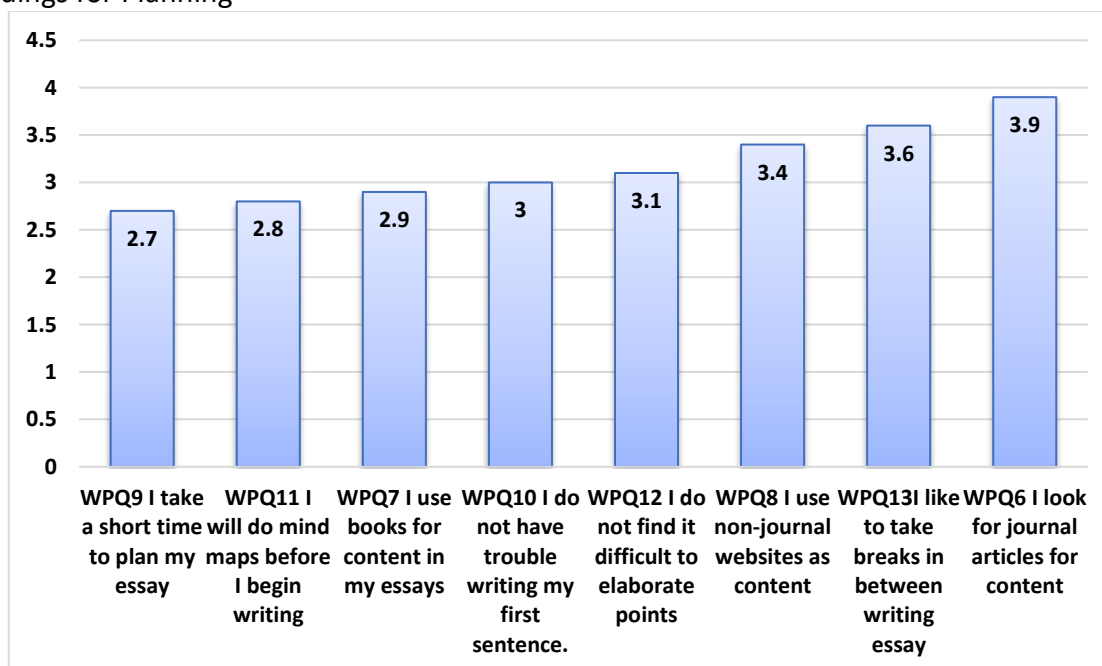


Figure 5-Mean for Planning

Figure 5 presents the mean for Planning. The highest mean (3.9) is for “look for journals for content”. Next, writers reported (mean=3.6) that they liked “to take breaks in between

writing essay”. Writers also reported a mean of 3.4 for “like to take breaks in between writing essay”. The lowest mean of 2.7 is “take a short time to plan essay”.

Findings for Translating

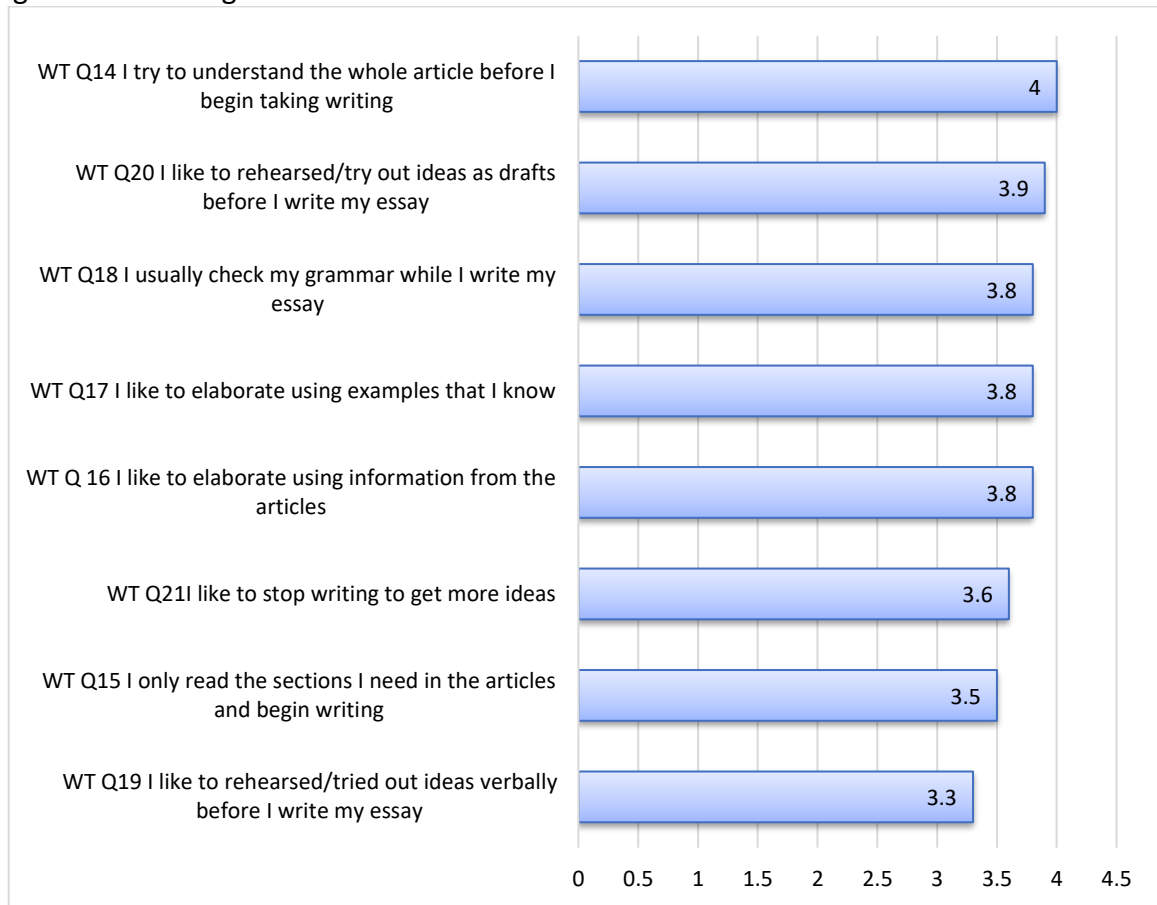


Figure 6-Mean for Translating

Figure 6 shows the mean for Translating. The highest mean at 4 is for “try to understand the whole article before I begin taking writing”. Next, the mean for 3.9 is for “rehearse/try out ideas as drafts before I write my essay”. Three items have the same mean (3.8) which are for “elaborate using information from the articles”, “elaborate using examples that I know”, and also “usually check my grammar while I write my essay”. The lowest mean at 3.3 is for “to rehearse/try out ideas verbally before I write my essay”.

Findings for Reviewing

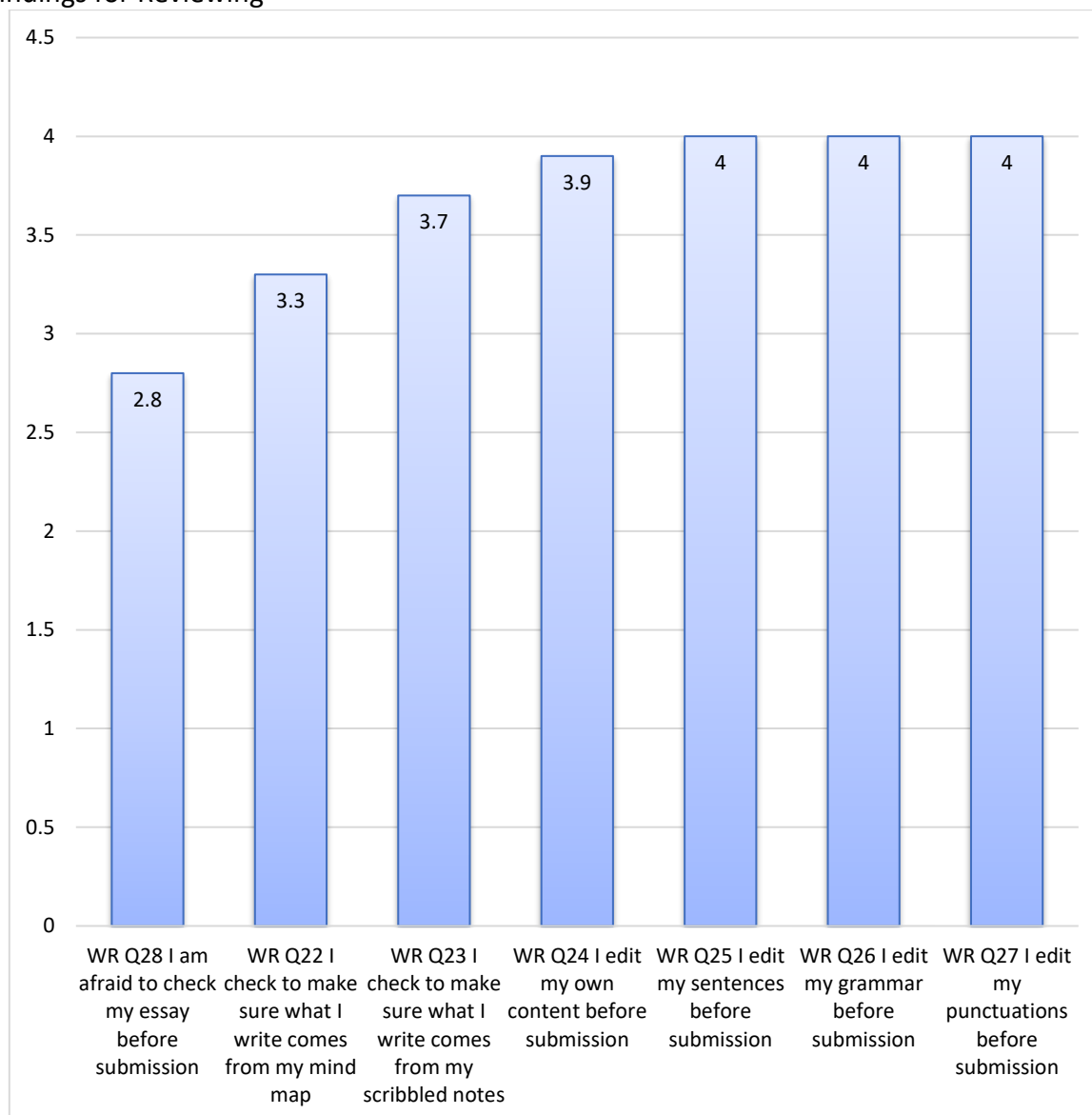


Figure 7-Mean for Reviewing

Figure 7 reveals the mean for Reviewing. Three items have the same mean of 4 and they are “edit my sentences before submission”, “edit my grammar before submission”, and “edit my punctuations before submission”. Next is for “edit my own content before submission” (mean=3.9).

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussions

This study was done to investigate how learners perceive learning writing using the process approach via online platforms. This section summarises the findings by making reference to the 3 research questions.

- How is Planning in writing done online?
- How is Translating in writing done online?
- How is Reviewing in writing done online?

When it comes to Planning, learners used online platforms to look for materials to be used in their reading before the writing stage. It is interesting to note that writers preferred not to take breaks on online platforms. The study by Rosyada & Sundari (2021); Zhang (2019) showed that learners expressed satisfaction with the online platform that the instructor chose.

Next, when it comes to Translating, writers reported that they tried to understand the chosen articles. In addition to that, some writers rehearsed ideas as drafts before they wrote the essays. Respondents also elaborated their writing using the information from the articles. Jee & Aziz (2021) reported that the process approach to writing assisted writers in their argumentative essays.

Finally, when it comes to Reviewing, writers reported that they used the online platform to proofread and edit their drafts. The study by Carolan & Kyppö (2015) found that online platforms allow writers to be more independent and self-directed than face-to-face classes.

Figure 8 shows the total mean scores for all writing stages. In the context of this study, the highest mean scores (3.7) were for Translating and Reviewing stage. Learners reported that online platforms helped them the most in their translating and reviewing stages. Zhang (2019) also reported that online platforms effectively helped writers linguistically. Interestingly, the planning stage was not rated with the highest mean, perhaps for many writers, planning would mean scribbling and brainstorming and that was usually done on paper and not online.

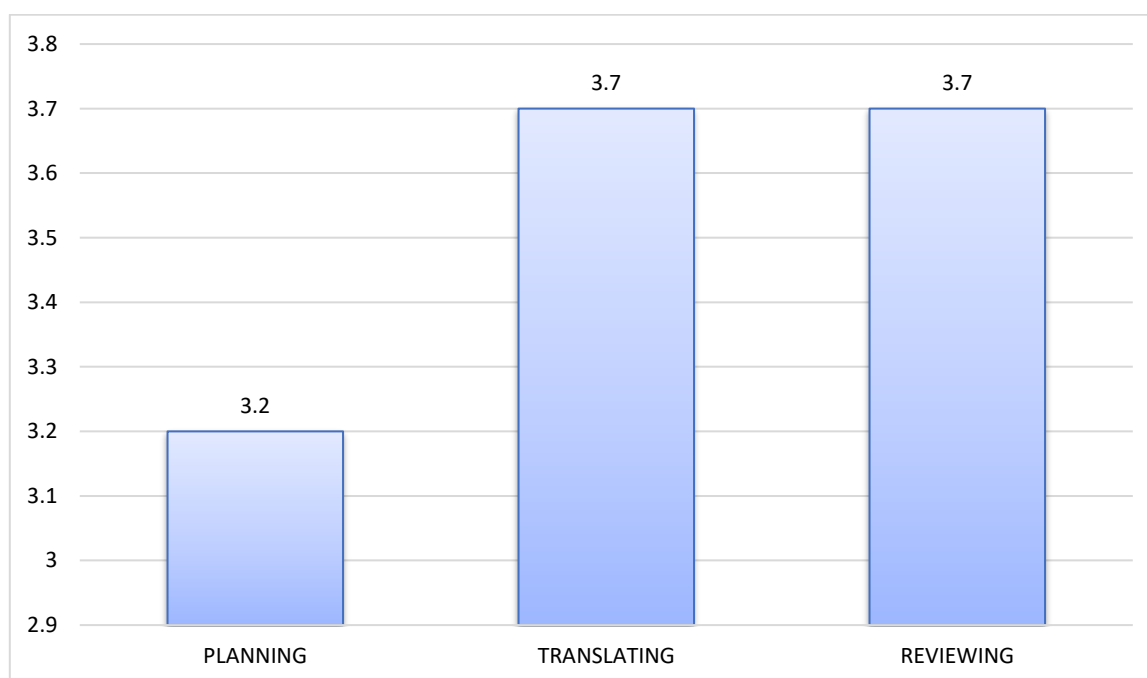


Figure 8- Total Mean for all Writing Stages.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has shown the different stages in writing done online. When it comes to online writing, it is important for instructors to make use of the related online platforms that can be accessed for free by the students. In order for the instructors to do this, they must first explore the online writing tools themselves and later suggest the tools to the students. The instructors must also be free from the conventional writing practised in the face to face classroom and avoid from being rigid in the writing process in this post Covid-19 era.

For writing instructors, more creative, guided activities need to be included to sustain learners' motivation. Writing instructions need to include the importance of writing beyond the course taken. According to Rahmat (2021), if the writer is positive about the motive to write, then the circumstances of whether it is positive or negative may come in secondary. Perhaps at different levels of the writing process in the classroom, the end product may not be the evaluation by the teacher and just marks. The writing could be done for reasons further than evaluation-perhaps for publication level.

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