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Colour Your Writing: The Case for Online Learning

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Abstract

Writing is feared not only by weak writers; but also good writers. This is because the process of writing involves many stages. The process of writing requires the writer to go through many drafts. A complete cycle of the writing process includes the planning stage, the translation stage and also the reviewing stage. Traditionally, writing instructors include the process of face-to-face writing conferences when discussing the changes to be made on the drafts. With the online mode, the teaching of writing has taken a new turn by settling with online teaching of writing with face-to-face writing conferences converted to online writing conferences. The process of learning to write may still bring fear to some writers especially now that the learning is done online. The use of colours in learning has a positive impact on the learners. If writing brings anxiety and fear to writers and colours help to reduce stress during learning, can colours be used to reduce fear in writing? This study is done to explore the use of colours in learning academic writing. Learner are exposed the learning of writing using colours via online. Findings showed that in online learning writers perceive using the coloured scaffolds as the most positive aspect of the activity. They also put high emphasis on the translating and review stage in their online academic writing. Writers also felt that they should spend minimum time for the planning of the essay. The findings in this study bear interesting pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of academic writing online. Specifically, this new approach can help reduce stress among both writing teachers by using colourful versions of the essay. This colourful approach can also aid future writing teachers to add more fun (colours) when doing writing conferences with writers online.

Keywords: Writing Process, Writers, Planning, Translation, Reviewing.

Introduction

Writing is feared not only by weak writers; but also good writers. This is because the process of writing involves many stages. According to Rahmat (2021), this fear can stem from many reasons. The fear of writing snowballs from their perceived difficulties on writing. The term "perceived" refers to the writers' recognition of the difficulties in writing. This is because

writers' fear can be influenced by the environment around them. This preconceived attitude towards writing is making writers fear writing (Carolan & Kyppo, 2015)

The process of writing requires the writer to go through many drafts. A complete cycle of the writing process includes the planning stage, the translation stage and also the reviewing stage (Diliduzgun, 2013). Traditionally, writing instructors include the process of face-to-face writing conferences when discussing the changes to be made on the drafts. Not meeting face-to-face makes it difficult for writing teachers to focus on one aspect at a time when suggesting improvements to the writer. Colour codes help both the writing teacher and the writer to focus on one aspect at a time in writing conferences.

With the online mode, the teaching of writing has taken a new turn by settling with online teaching of writing with face-to-face writing conferences converted to online writing conferences. In addition to that, for some writers, the face-to-face writing conferences were more stressful than the online writing conferences. So, by not meeting face-to-face and adding colours to online discussions, writers will not only be less stressful, but enjoy the colourful version of their essay.

Nevertheless, the process of learning to write may still bring fear to some writers. The use of colours in learning has a positive impact on the learners. According to Hall and Sidiq-Hall (1994), colours have been used to influence learners' perception of the learning process, for that of negative to a more positive view. Until today, colour has been said to improve learners' memory, and also helps in the retrieval process (Khan & Liu, 2020). If writing brings anxiety and fear to writers and colours help to reduce stress during learning, can colours be used to reduce fear in writing?

This study is done to explore the use of colours in learning academic writing via online mode. Learners are exposed to the learning of writing using colours via online. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How do writers perceive the Planning stage online?
- How do writers perceive the Translation online?
- How do writers perceive the Reviewing online?

Literature Review

This section discusses problems in the teaching of writing, past studies and also the conceptual framework of the study.

Problems in the Teaching Writing

A compilation of the different problems learners face when they write reveals three main umbrella points. According to Rahmat (2019), the problems that make writing difficult can be divided into three categories. The first is Linguistic Difficulty. Linguistic difficulties refer to aspects like grammar, vocabulary, language use and also choice of sentence in writing. Similarly, Bulqiyah et al (2021) also report that linguistic problems include problems with the area of lexico-grammar, vocabulary, and also the structure of the essay.

The second category of problem is Physiology Difficulty. This type of difficulty focuses on the writer's difficulty because there aren't direct interaction and feedback from the reader when they are writing. This difficulty more focuses on difficulty in developing written material or content of composition. Bulqiyah et al (2021) also found that affective problems can be caused by the students' attitude while learning how to write the Essay.

The third is cognitive difficulty. Writing has to be thought through formal instruction like spelling, punctuation, capitalization and paragraphing. Next Bulqiyah, Mahbub, & Nugraheni, (2021) labelled cognitive problems that are considered as the difficulties in the areas of writing viewpoint, transferring language, and the process of writing. Singh (2019) felt that students faced acute challenges in their academic reading and writing practices such as adhering to academic writing conventions and interpreting text in an English language instructional setting

Past Studies

Writing Process

The study by Bulqiyah et al (2021) investigated tertiary students' perspectives on writing difficulties. This explanatory research used both quantitative and qualitative data from a web-based questionnaire and also a semi-structured interview. 21 undergraduate students participated in this study. Findings showed that tertiary students' problems can be categorised into (a) affective problems that started from students' and lecturers' attitude while teaching and learning in the essay writing course. The next problem is (b) cognitive problems. These type of problems are considered as difficulties in the areas of writing viewpoint, transferring language and the process of writing. The third type of problem is linguistic problems. These refer to problems in the areas of lexico-grammar, vocabulary, and the structure of the essay.

Next, the study by Carolan & Kyppo (2015) explored students' acquisition of writing skills and the teacher's support practices in a digital writing environment. The study looked at writers' experiences related to various stages of process writing, their growing awareness of becoming good writers. The study also investigated the students' constant struggle with common writing problems. Findings showed that students had Preconceived attitudes towards the process of writing and this became obstacles for students to overcome in an interdisciplinary and intercultural learning environment. A writer often overcomes the barriers to effective writing by acquiring strategies for independent, self-directed learning.

Colour

Khan & Liu (2020) investigated on the significance of colour that captivates human attention in learning English in an educational setting. The sample was 30 South Asian ESL students of a local university in China. They were equally divided into the experimental and the control groups. All the participants were taught literal and context-based meanings of 30 English collocations for three consecutive days. 40 south Asian male students. A pre-test and a post-test were administered to assess the impact of colour on the students' working memory in learning English collocations. Prior to assessing the impact of colour on memory, the participants in the experimental group were exposed to the underlined collocations as written on colourful papers (yellow), while same collocations were imprinted on simple white colour papers for the controlled group. A t-test was administered for the statistical analysis of the data. Comparatively, in the post-test, the participants in the experimental group outperformed while retrieving English collocations and their meanings by the virtue of yellow colour.

Olurinola & Tayo (2015) paper provides an overview of research on colour and learning. The study looks at the effect of colour on attention, retention and memory performance, and relates these to the design of instructional materials. The respondents were graduate students of the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye. Thirty graduate students participated

in this study. The purpose of this research study was to determine if colour (in prints form) influence the learning process. The independent variable was colour at two levels: Congruent colours (colours corresponding to the words) and Incongruent colours (colours not related to the words). For the control, Achromatic colours (black and shades of grey) were used. The dependent variable was the retention rate i.e. number of words recalled. The research design was a posttest only design. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data and the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the number of words recalled based on colour. The groups exposed to congruent colours and achromatic colours performed better than those exposed to incongruent colours, although the group exposed to the congruent colour prints performed better than those of the other groups.

Nurdiansyah et al (2019) conducted Classroom Action Research(CAR)to explore the benefits of Color Coding technique in improving the ability of English vocabulary. They employed qualitative research design and pre experimental pretest-posttest. The result of the data showed the mean of pretest was 63.00, mean of posttest was 82.00, The result also show the score of t-observed was higher than t-table ($2.08 > 1.72$). This means color coding is effective to improve students' vocabulary ability.

The research by Rahmat (2018) explores yet an alternative method for writers to learn to write paragraphs using colour codes as scaffolds. This method is rooted from the concepts of Selective Attention embedding colour codes as scaffolds. Colour codes are used to focus the learners' attention during the learning of academic writing. Modelling is used so learners can imitate the expected behaviour by the teachers. Graphic organizers are used as scaffolds for learners to write their essay. After one semester of using the techniques such as modelling, and scaffolding in the writing classroom, learners were asked to respond to a survey. 32 students participated in this action research. They responded to a questionnaire to reveal what they feel about this approach to ESL academic writing. The findings of this study reveal how students perceive learning ESL academic writing using the selective attention writing approach

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in figure 1 below. The basic framework of Flower & Hayes (1981) is used to show the writing process; planning, translating and reviewing. The first stage is the planning stage where the writer generates ideas, organises and sets goals. The planning usually takes long time. Next, the writer translates his/her oral thoughts into written thoughts. Next, the writer reviews by evaluating and revising the draft. However, in the context of this study, the translation of ideas is done through the use of colour codes prepared for the writers. The colour codes symbolizes graphic organizers serve as scaffolds to organize ideas in essays. The use of graphic organizers facilitates chunking of information and help in learning. Colour codes act as scaffolds (templates) for writers to transfer the information from the graphic organizers into paragraphs. The whole act of scaffolding knowledge to form new knowledge provides a learning experience to the learner.

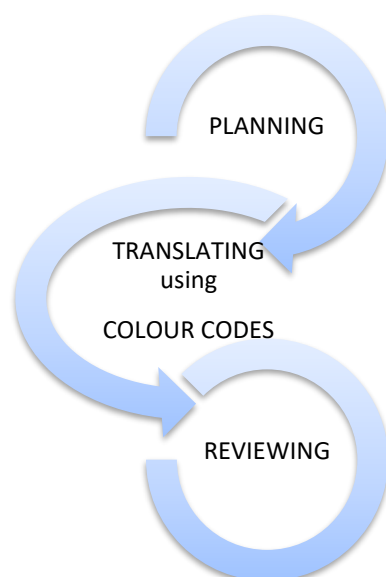


Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study- Online Academic Writing Using Colours

Methodology

This quantitative research is done to investigate how learn academic writing using colour codes. The instrument used is a survey adapted from Flower & Hayes (1981). 62 respondents were purposively chosen to answer the survey. The survey has 3 main sections. With reference to Table 1, section A has items on the demographic profile. Section B has 8 items on planning, section has 8 items on translating, section D has 7 items on reviewing, and section E has 13 items on colour codes.

Table 1

Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	STAGE	NO OF ITEMS
B	Planning	8
C	Translating	8
D	Reviewing	7
E	Colour Codes	13
Total number of Items		36

Table 2 presents the reliability statistics for the instrument. SPSS analysis revealed a Cronbach alpha of .798 thus showing a high internal reliability of the instrument used. Data is collected online via goggle form. Data is then analysed using SPSS version 26. Analysed data is presented in the form of percentages and mean scores to answer the 2 research questions.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.918	36

Findings

Findings for Demographic Profile

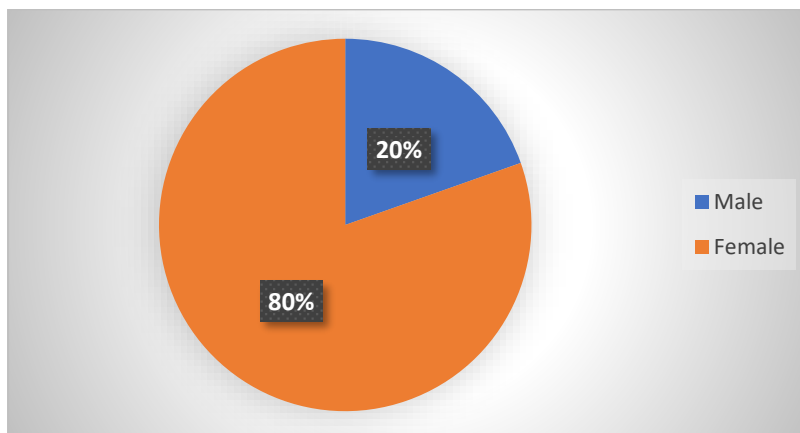


Figure 2- Percentage for Gender

The percentage for gender is presented in figure 2 above. 78% are male and 22 % are female participants.

Findings for Planning

This section presents findings to answer research question1: How do writers perceive the Planning stage online?

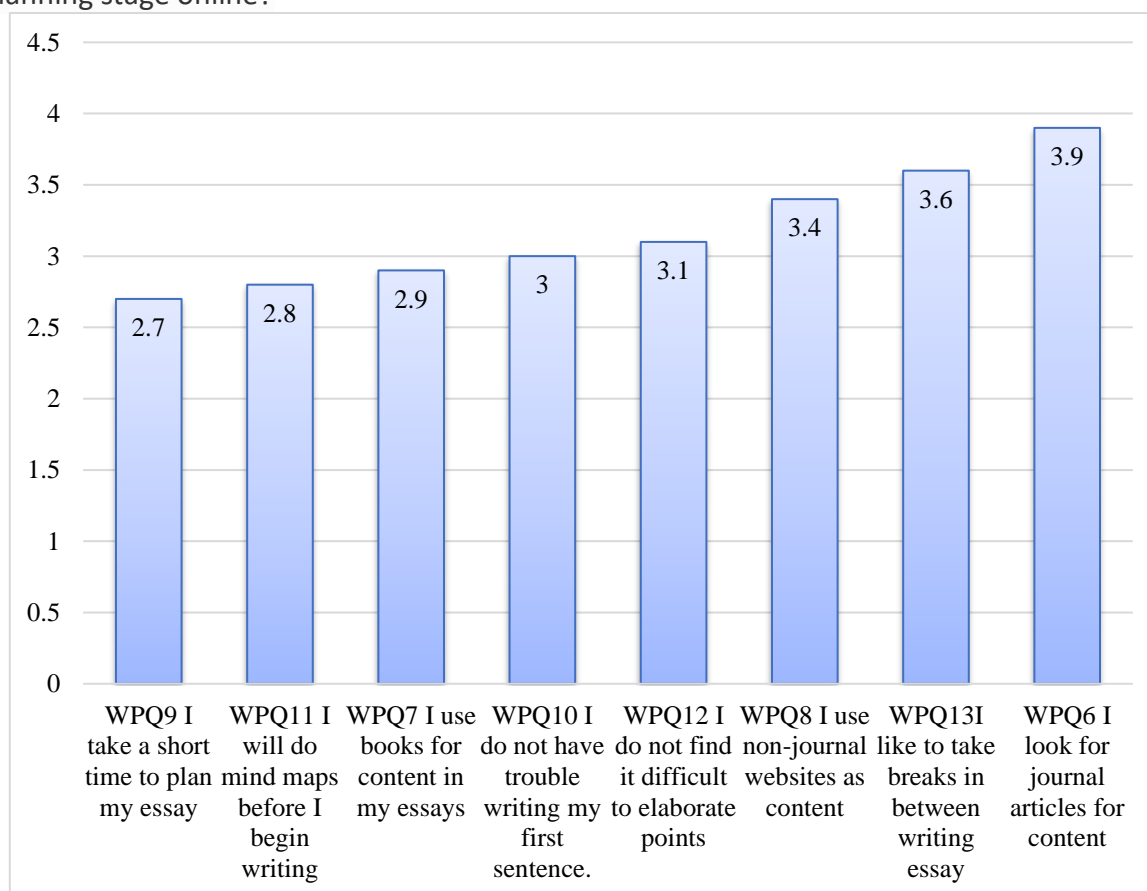


Figure 3- Mean for Planning

The findings for planning is presented in figure 3 above. The highest mean (3.9) is for “look for journal articles for content”. This is followed by a mean of 3.6 for “like to take breaks in

between writing essay” and a mean of 3.4 for “use non-journal websites as content”. Interestingly, the respondents reported the lowest mean (2.7) for “take a short time to plan my essay”.

Findings for Translating

This section answers research question 2: How do writers perceive Translation online? In the context of this study, this stage is done through (a) Translating form oral thought to written thoughts with the help of (b) colour codes.

(a) Translation

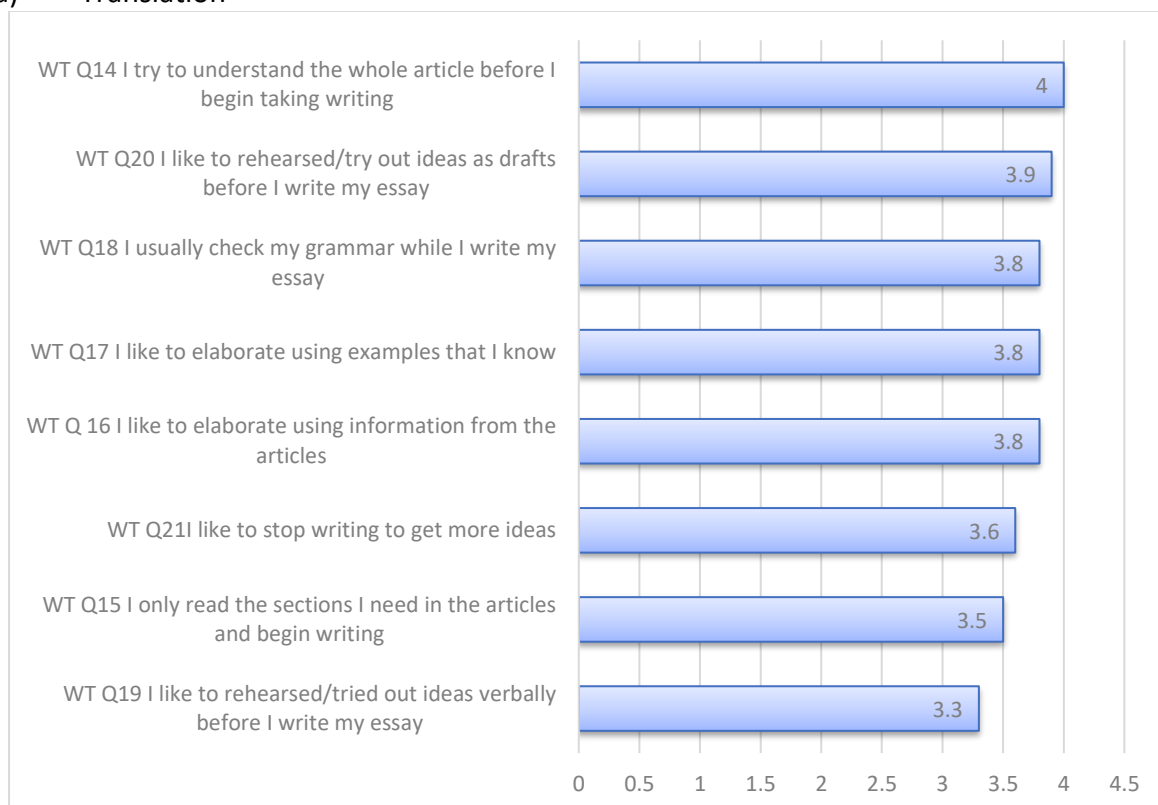


Figure 4- Mean for Translation

Figure 4 shows the mean for translation. The highest mean (4) is for “try to understand the whole article before I begin taking writing”. This is followed by a mean of 3.9 for “like to rehearsed/try out ideas as drafts before I write my essay”. Three items share the same mean of 3.8 and they are “like to elaborate using information from the articles”, “like to elaborate using examples that I know”, and “usually check my grammar while I write my essay”.

(b) Using Colour Codes

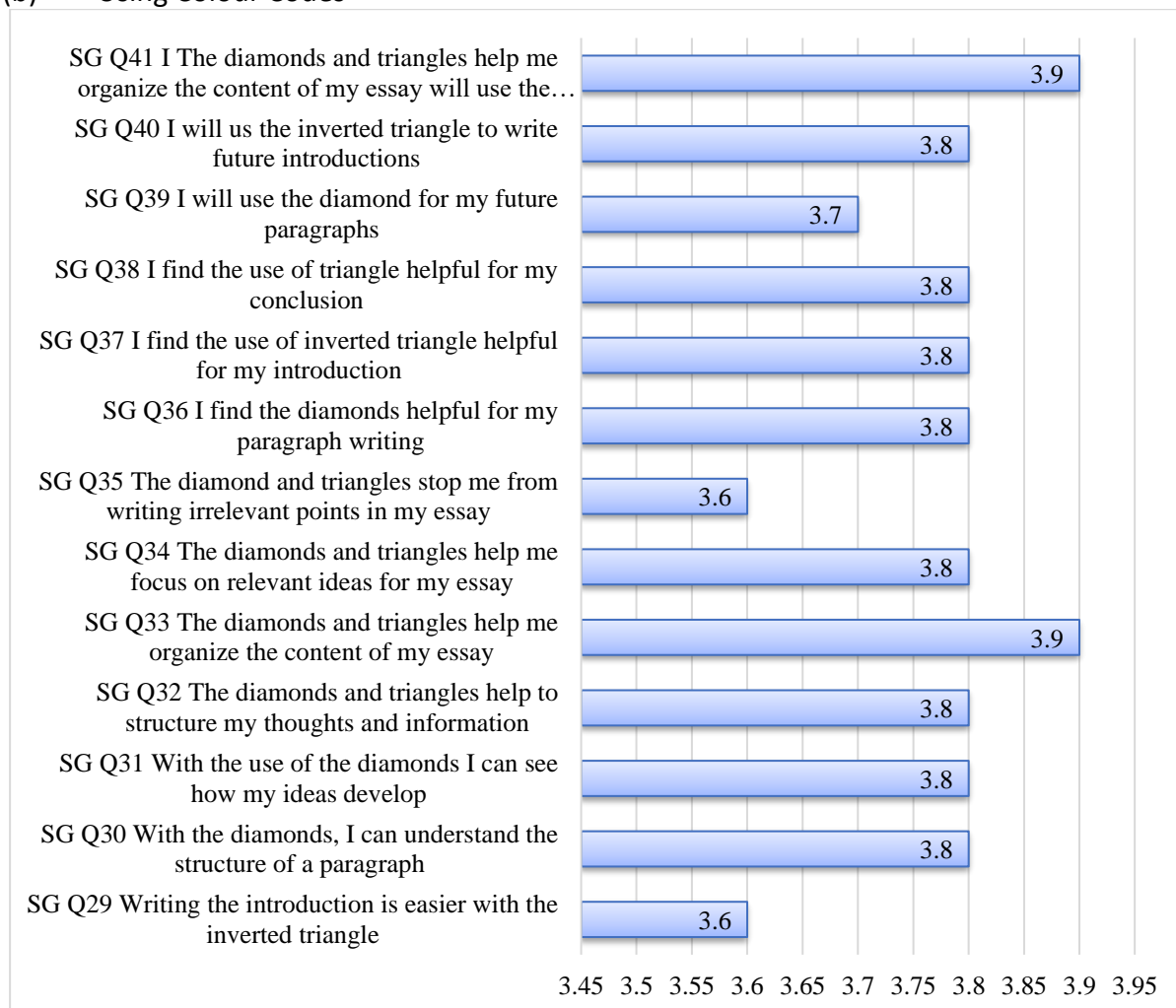


Figure 5- Mean for Using Colour Codes

Findings for the use of colour codes is presented in figure 5. Two items share the highest mean of 3.9 and they are “The diamonds and triangles help me organize the content of my essay”, and “The diamonds and triangles help me organize the content of my essay”. This is followed by 8 items with a mean of 3.8 and they are “ With the diamonds, I can understand the structure of a paragraph”, “With the use of the diamonds I can see how my ideas develop”, “The diamonds and triangles help to structure my thoughts and information”, “ The diamonds and triangles help me focus on relevant ideas for my essay”, “find the diamonds helpful for my paragraph writing”, “find the use of inverted triangle helpful for my introduction”, “find the use of triangle helpful for my conclusion”, and also “will us the inverted triangle to write future introductions”.

Findings for Reviewing

This section presents findings to answer research question 3: How do writers perceive the Reviewing online?

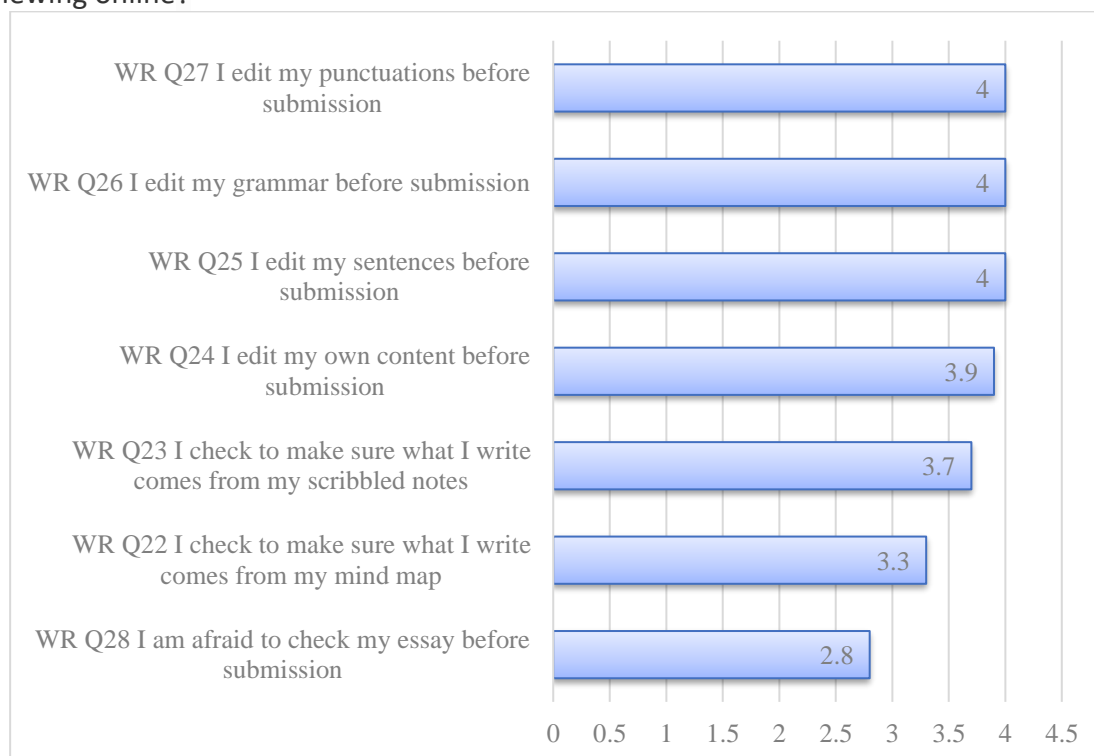


Figure 6- Mean for Reviewing

Figure 6 presents the mean for reviewing. Three items share the highest mean of 4 and they are “edit my sentences before submission”, “edit my grammar before submission”, and “edit my punctuations before submission”. This is followed by a mean of 3.9 for “edit my own content before submission”. Respondents also reported that they “check to make sure what I write comes from my scribbled notes” (mean=3.7).

Conclusion

Summary and Discussions

A summary of findings reveal interesting information about planning, translation and reviewing during online writing.

Planning

During planning, writers used the online platform to look for journal and non-journal articles for essay content. They also breaks in between writing essay. Writers admitted to taking a long time to plan for the essay. Flower & Hayes (1981) also state that planning in essays takes long time.

Next, when it comes to translation, writers rehearsed the ideas before they wrote. They elaborated ideas using information from the articles by using examples they knew. They also checked their grammar while they wrote. The study by Rahmat (2020) reported that writers transformed knowledge when they wrote. This transformation usually leads to their own version of the information assessed.

This study explored the use of scaffolded colour codes in learning academic writing online. Writers reported that they found the coloured scaffolds helped them organize the content.

The scaffolds also helped writers structure their paragraphs. The coloured scaffolds helped the see how to develop their ideas. The study by Khan & Liu (2020) reports that colours captivates attention. Colours also help writers to be focussed on what they need to (Olurinola & Tayo, 2015).

When it comes to reviewing, writers edited their grammar and punctuations before submission. They also reported that they did use the scribbled notes that they made in the planning stage. The study by Bulqiyah et al (2021); Rahmat (2019) reported that writers put emphasis on linguistic details during the reviewing stage.

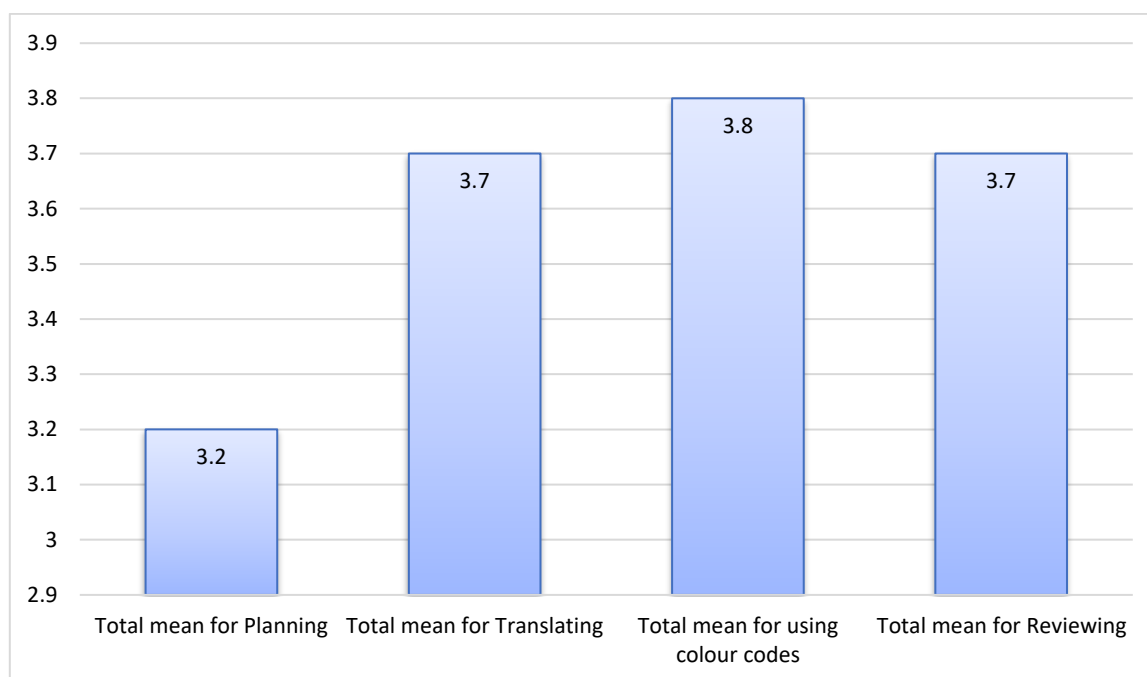


Figure 7- Total Mean for Planning, Translating and Reviewing Stage

A comparison of all total mean for planning, translating and reviewing is shown in figure 7. The highest mean (3.8) is for using colour codes. This shows that writers had positive perception of the use of coloured scaffolds in the learning of academic writing. Writers also put high emphasis on the translating and review stage in their online academic writing. Writers also felt that they should spend minimum time for the planning of the essay.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The teaching of academic writing can be less stressful if the instructor improvised to make the activity less stressful. Nurdiansyah , Asyid and Parmawati (2019) successfully used colour to teach language skills. Rahmat (2018) has also introduced the used of colours as a form of selective attention for writers to focus on the ideas that they need to develop-one at a time. This study has shown that there need to be more innovations to teach academic writing via online. Future researchers could explore more interesting ways of teaching academic online. It would be interesting to explore what writers actual feel about learning academic writing alone compared to learning it face-to-face.

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