



WRITERS' BELIEFS AND EXPECTATIONS IN ACADEMIC WRITING: TOWARDS A MODEL OF WRITING PROPHECIES

Noor Hanim Rahmatⁱ

Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,
Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Shah Alam, Malaysia

Abstract:

Writers have mixed feelings about academic writing. Some hated academic writing. Some liked academic writing. Some liked but they get disheartened with low marks. Some like and are motivated to write better with good marks. The love-hate relationship that writers have towards writing can be depicted in the form of a writing prophecy. This study investigates how writing prophecies influence writers' own self-imposed belief and how this belief is affected by other imposed expectation and finally these impacted the results of the writing activity. This quantitative study is done using a survey with 5 likert scale. The categories in the survey are (a) Planning, (b) Translating and (c) Reviewing stages of writing. The independent variables like Type A writer, Type B writers and Type C writers are added in the survey. Type A refers to the perceived belief that the writer who has self-imposed negative perception will have a negative writing belief. Next, type B is when the writers have self-imposed perception, but they received negative other imposed expectation. This can still lead to positive beliefs as the writer is motivated. Type C refers to writers who have positive self-imposed perception and received positive other imposed expectation. This can lead to positive writing belief. Data is analysed using SPSS version to reveal frequency of responses and presented in mean scores.

Keywords: communication factors, motivation, confidence, apprehension, personality

1. Introduction

Academic writing is not a favourite among writers. Some writers like to write but they get disheartened with low grades from the writing submitted/evaluated. Why is that so? There can be many reasons for this. Firstly, the writing conventions and rules can be difficult to grasp. Next, some do not have enough content or background knowledge to be included in the writing. Others may not have mastered academic reading skill (Syed

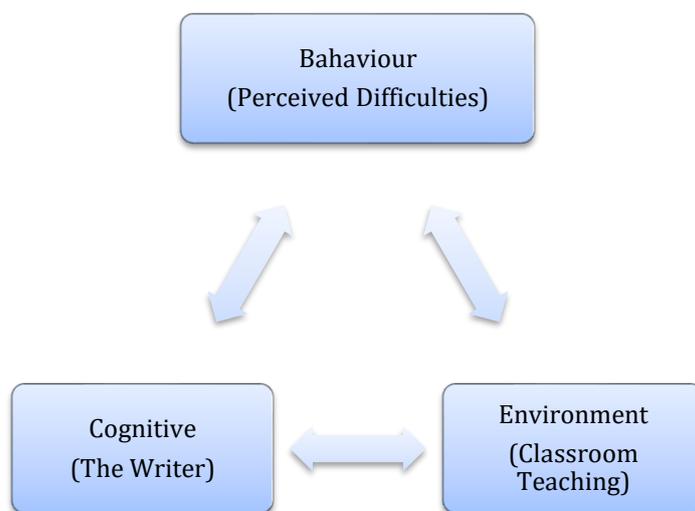
ⁱ Correspondence: email patanim@gmail.com, noorh763@salam.uitm.edu.my

Abdul Rahman, Mohd Yunos., Rahmat, Megat Abdul Rahim and Anuarudin,2021). Academic writing is difficult because writers need reading skills to understand academic texts to be used as citations in their writing. ESL learners face both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the text.

There are some who fear academic writing for several reasons. According to Haron & Rahmat (2020), some fear writing because they do not have enough content; while others fear because they feel they lack the necessary writing skills. Fear of writing can also be a perceived fear-the kind of fear that writers have based on their previous writing experiences and the fear if snowballed into future writing experience.

The study (figure 1) by Rahmat, Arepin, Mohd Yunos, Syed Abdul Rahman (2017) reported that perceived writing difficulties can be caused form the writer and also his/her writing environment-in this case the classroom teaching. Writer began with a perception that the writing activity is difficult. Then, the classroom environment may confirm/or deny his/her perception of writing difficulty. The classroom learning experience can in turn affect future writing activities.

Figure 1: Perceived Writing Difficulty



(Source: Rahmat, Arepin, Mohd Yunos, Syed Abdul Rahman (2017))

A person's thought will determine his/her actions. Negative thoughts lead to negative actions and vice versa. Merton (1948) coined the term "*self-fulfilling prophecy*" to describe "*a false definition of the situation evoking a behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true*" (Merton, 1948, p. 477). In a self-fulfilling prophecy (figure 2), a person's expectations about another person or situation will result in the other person or situation acting in ways that confirm the person's expectations.

Figure 2: Self-Fulfilling Prophecy



(Source: Merton, 1948)

Based on Figure 2 above, our beliefs about ourselves will influence our actions towards others. This in turn impacts how others' belief about us. This then causes how others act towards us and it is again reinforced by us ("i told you so!" moment). Nevertheless, there are two types of self-fulfilling prophecies: self-imposed and other-imposed (Adler, 2012). **Self-imposed prophecies** occur when your own expectations influence the actions of others. **Other-imposed prophecies** occur when others' expectations influence your behaviour. All opinions you value can cause this **prophecy**.

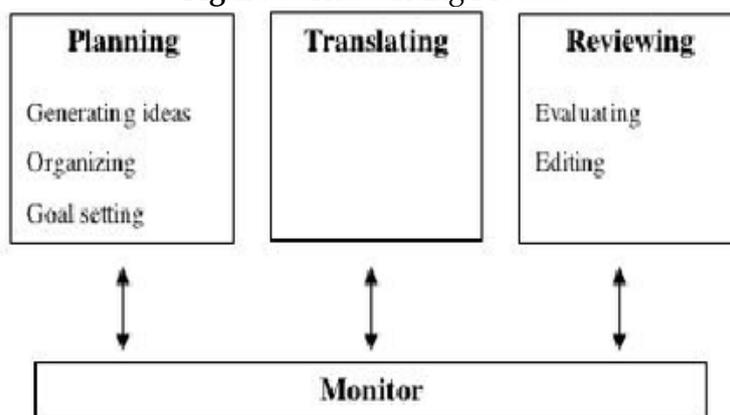
Hence, this study is done to investigate how self-fulfilling prophecy influence the writing process.

- 1) How does self- fulfilling prophecy influence planning in academic writing?
- 2) How does self- fulfilling prophecy influence translating in academic writing?
- 3) How does self- fulfilling prophecy influence reviewing in academic writing?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Writing Process and Fear of Writing

Figure 3: The Writing Process



(Source: Flower and Hayes, 1981)

According to Flower and Hayes (1981) in Figure 3, a writer goes through three stages when they write. Initially, the writers go through the planning stage. This is the stage where they generate ideas. This is also the stage where they organise their ideas and make more plans. They set their goals for writing at this stage. The second stage is known as the translating stage. This is the stage where the writer translates his oral thoughts into written thoughts (Aripin and Rahmat, 2020). For many writers, this is the first draft. The last stage is the reviewing stage where writers evaluate the draft and edit to make the draft better.

Writing is feared both by the good and weak writers. Their fear stems from many reasons. According to Rahmat (2019), the fear of writing snowballs from their perceived difficulties on writing. The term “perceived” refers to the writers’ recognition of the difficulties in writing. Writers’ fear is influenced by the environment and also the cognitive abilities of the writer.

Writers face difficulties when they write, and these difficulties may come from different reasons. According to Klimova (2014), when writers write, they find difficulties at different stages of their writing process. They claimed to experience difficulty in using pronouns and maintaining pronoun-antecedent. They made mistakes with subject-verb agreement and also made sentence fragments when they wrote.

2.2 Past Studies

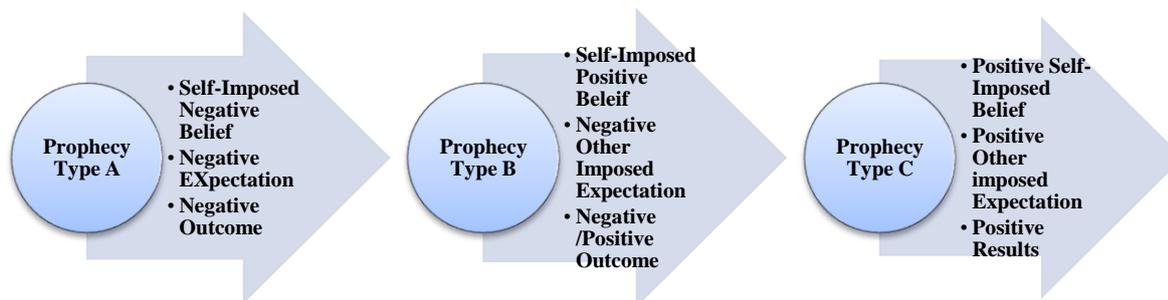
The study by Fadda (2012) was done to determine what difficulties King Saud University students encounter when learning to write academic English. The sample consisted of 50 postgraduate students who enrolled in King Saud University. Findings revealed that English as a second language (ESL) students face many difficulties in their academic writing. They have difficulty distinguishing between spoken and written English. They found it difficult to make an outline before writing a draft. They find it difficult to identify the skills needed for successful writing.

Another study was done by Toh and Rahmat (2021). They investigated the level, types, and causes of writing anxiety among the students in a Chinese Independent Middle School. 30 Chinese Independent Middle School students were purposely chosen to participate in this study. The instrument used was a questionnaire. The findings revealed that students experience a high level of cognitive anxiety, moderate level of somatic anxiety, and low level of avoidance behaviour. Students were afraid of writing tests and they felt worried to write under time constraints.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 4 presents the conceptual framework of the study. The framework is based on two main categories of self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton (1948)). The first category is self-imposed prophecy, and the second category is other imposed expectations.

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of The Study: Categories of Writers' Prophecies



(Source: Merton, 1948)

The framework differentiates perceived writing beliefs as Type A, B or C. Type A refers to the perceived belief that the writer who has self-imposed negative perception will have a negative writing belief. Next, type B is when the writers have self-imposed perception but they received negative other imposed expectation. This can still lead to positive beliefs as the writer is motivated. Type C refers to writers who have positive self-imposed perception and received positive other imposed expectation. This can lead to positive writing belief.

3. Methodology

62 respondents participated in this quantitative research. The instrument is a survey using 5 Likert scale. There are 24 items in the survey; 8 items on planning, 8 items on Translating and 8 items on reviewing. SPSS analysis revealed that the instrument has Cronbach alpha of .791 thus revealing that the instrument is reliable (Table 1).

Reliability Statistics

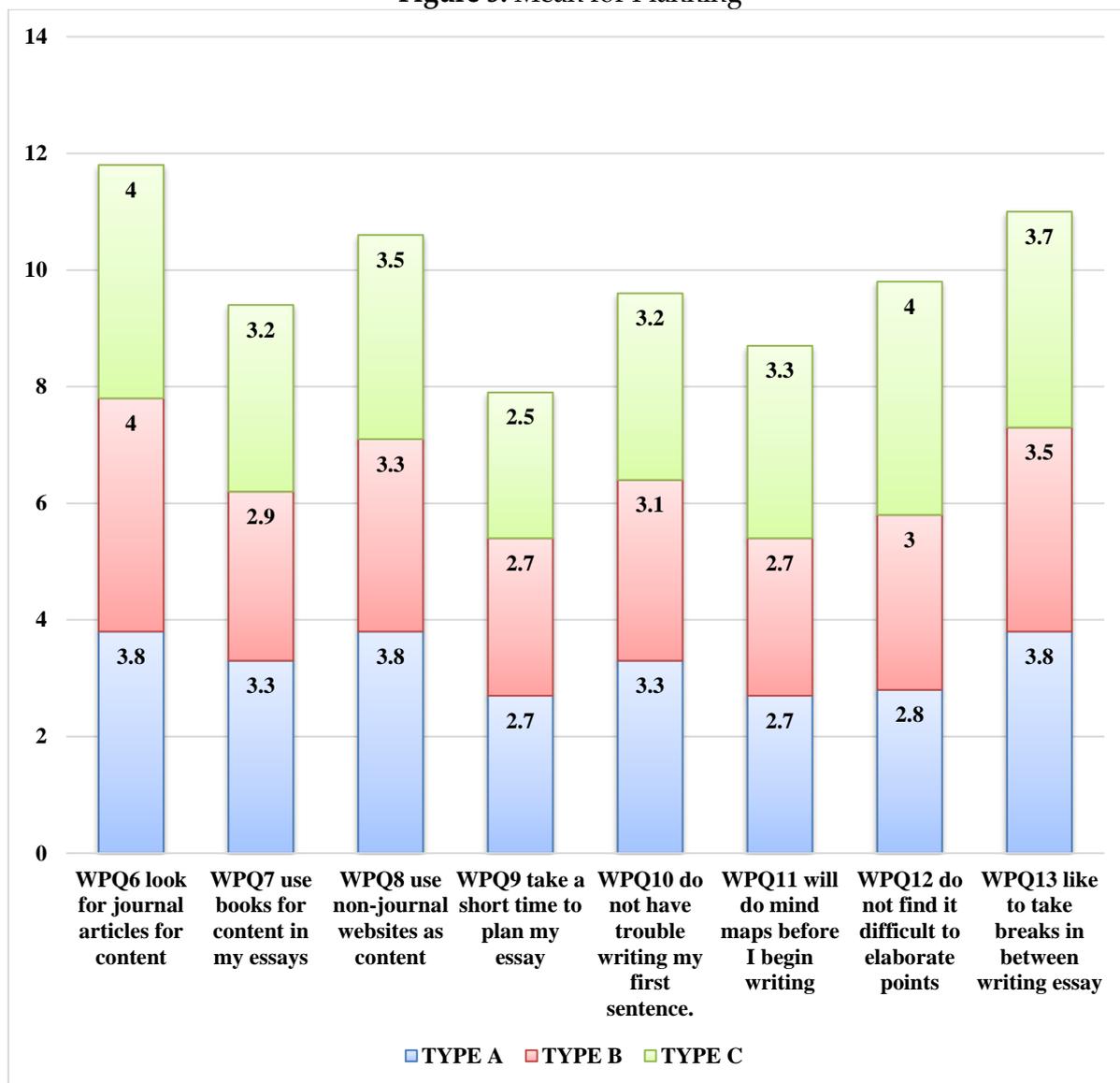
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.791	23

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of Instrument

4. Findings

4.1 Findings for Planning

Figure 5: Mean for Planning



The writers in Type A have negative self-imposed belief of writing activity. They have negative expectations and therefore ends with a negative writing result. Figure 5 shows writers from Type A had low mean score when it comes to “planning their essay” and also “doing mind maps”(2.7). Writers in Type A values highly searching for “journal articles for content” (3.8), and also “non-journal articles” (3.8) for content, as well as took “breaks in between writing”.

Writers in Type B have positive self-imposed belief about writing activity. Unfortunately, they get negative other imposed expectations. The result can be both positive and negative-depending on the situation. They also had low mean score when it

comes to “planning” (2.7) and making “mind maps” (2.7). Their highest mean is for using “journal articles for content” (4).

Writers in Type C have positive self-imposed belief about writing activity. They also get positive other imposed expectations. The result is positive. They value most looking “for journal articles” (4) and “taking breaks” (3.7). They also do not find it difficult to “elaborate points” (4).

4.2 Translation

Figure 6: Mean for Translation

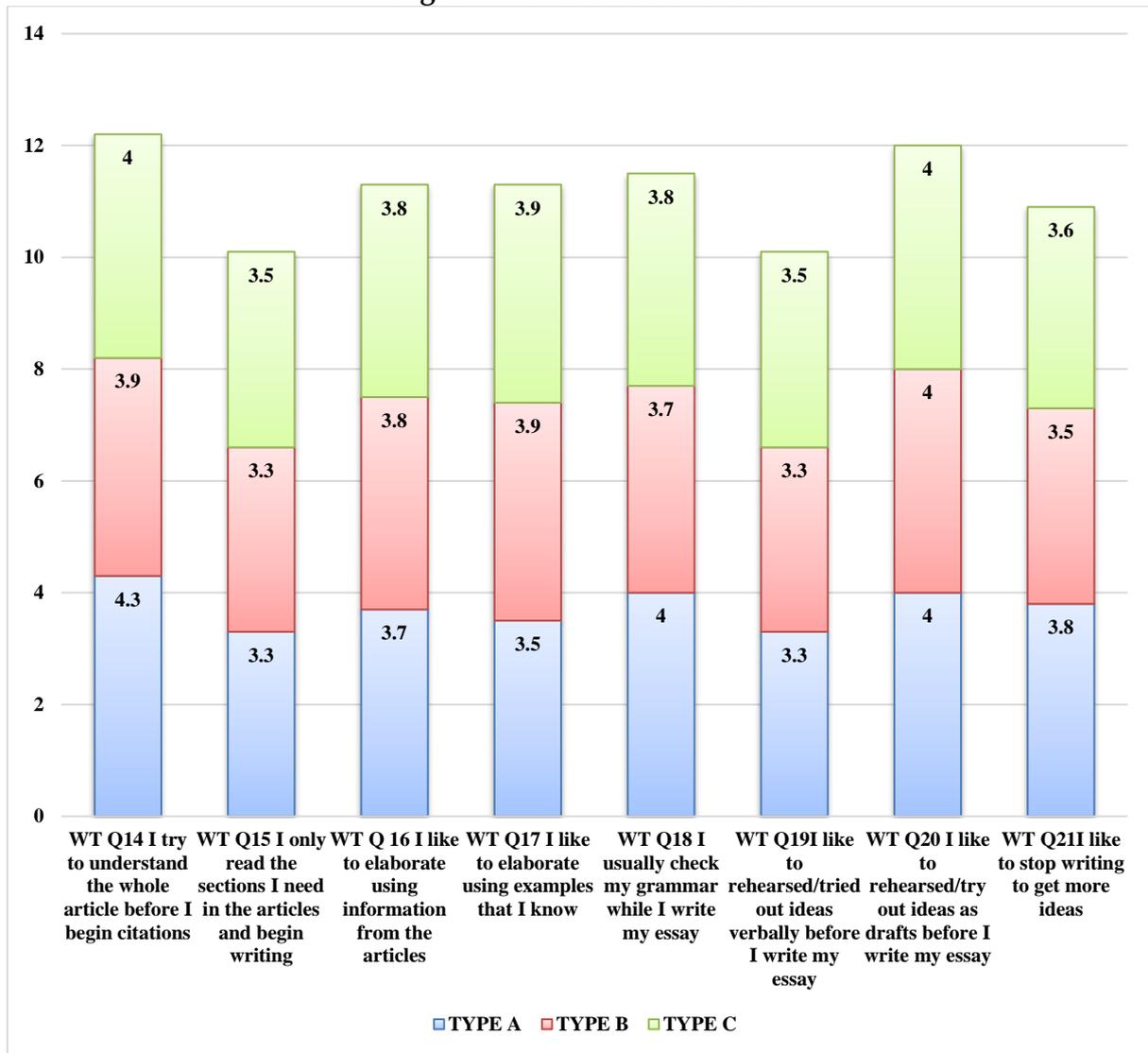


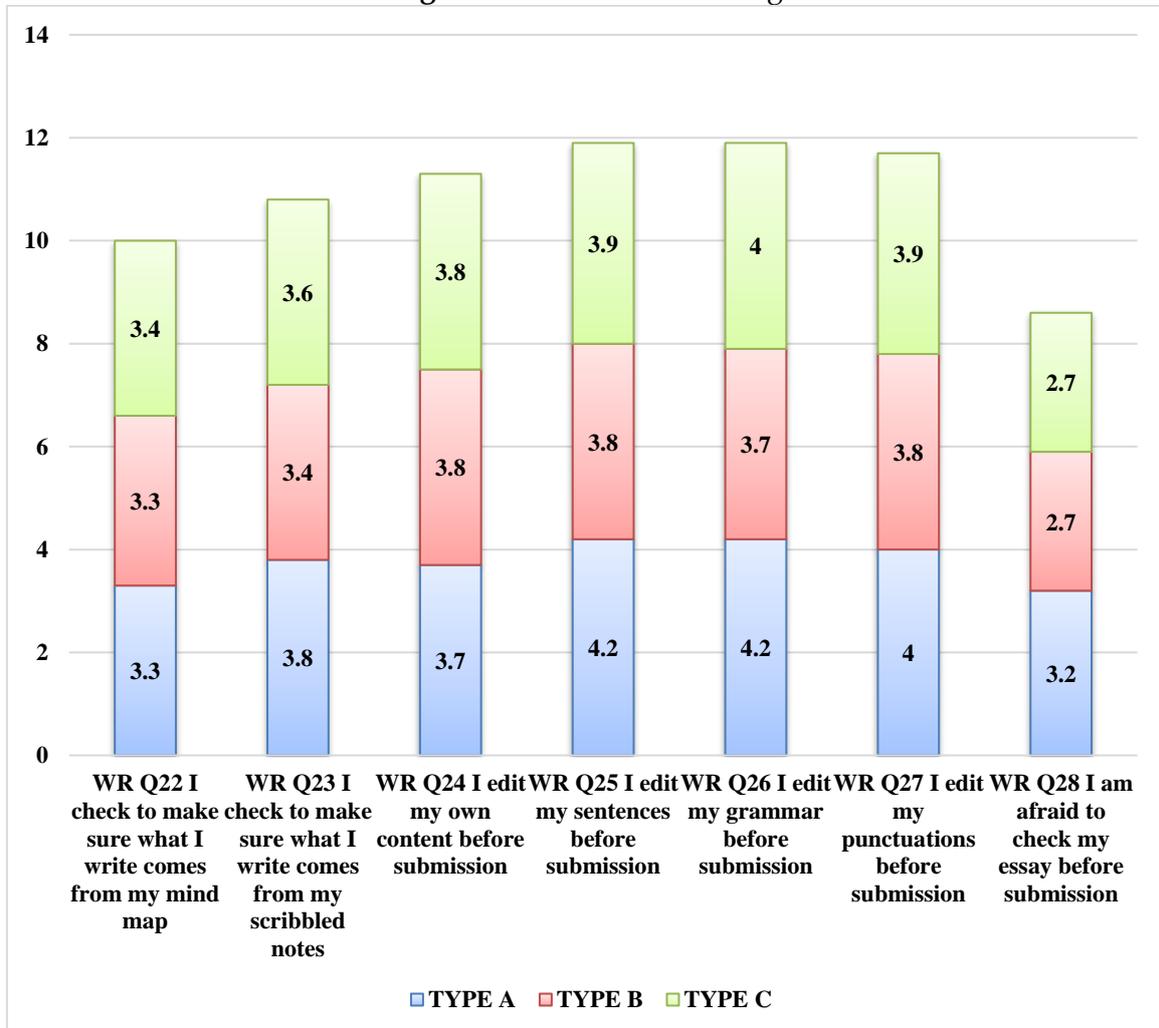
Figure 6 shows the mean for translation. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), this is the stage where the writers translate their oral thoughts into written thoughts. For many writers, this is the first draft. Writers in Type A have negative self-imposed belief of writing activity. They have negative expectations and therefore ends with a negative writing result. Writers in this category value most understanding “the whole article

before citations” (4.3). Next, the value rehearsing “ideas as drafts before writing” (4) and they also “checked their grammar while writing”(4).

Writers in Type B have positive self-imposed belief about writing activity. Unfortunately, they get negative other imposed expectations. The result can be both positive and negative-depending on the situation. On the other hand, Writers in Type C have positive self-imposed belief about writing activity and they get positive result. Type B and C value most the same things in writing. Type B and Type C writers value most “rehearsing ideas” (4), “understanding the whole article” (3.9) and also “elaborating using example” (3.9).

4.3 Reviewing

Figure 7: Mean for Reviewing



According to Flower and Hayes (1981), the last stage is the reviewing stage where writers evaluate the draft and edit to make the draft better. With reference to figure 7 above, Type A writers have negative self-imposed belief of writing activity. They have negative

expectations and therefore ends with a negative writing result. Type A writers value most “editing sentences” (4.2), “editing grammar”(4.2) and “editing punctuations” (4).

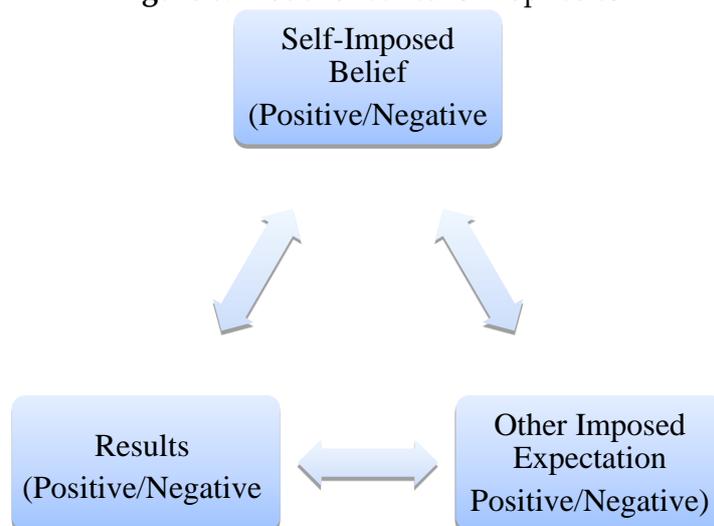
Writers in Type B have positive self-imposed belief about writing activity. Unfortunately, they get negative other imposed expectations. The result can be both positive and negative-depending on the situation. Writers in Type C have positive self-imposed belief about writing activity. They also get positive other imposed expectations. The result is positive. Both types B and C writers value the same aspects in writing when it comes to reviewing. They edit grammar” (Type B-3.7 and Type C-4). They both “edit punctuations” (Type B-3.8 and Type C-3.9). They also both “edit sentences “ (Type B-3.8 and Type C-3.9). Finally, they both “edit content” (Type B and C – 3.8).

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings and Discussion

This study has revealed that Type A, B and C put emphasis on different aspects of writing in the whole writing process. Similarly, Klimova (2014) also found that when writers write, they find difficulties at different stages of their writing process. Writers from Type A, B and C emphasized on expanding ideas and using reading materials for their content. According to Syed Abdul Rahman, Mohd Yunus, Rahmat, Megat Abdul Rahim and Anuarudin, 2021), academic writing is difficult because writers need reading skills to understand academic texts to be used as citations in their writing. ESL learners face both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the text. Academic writing is not liked by many for many reasons. Based on figure 8, The self-imposed belief (positive or negative) is dependent on other imposed expectations (positive or negative) and this in turn affects the end result of the writing assignment.

Figure 8: Model of Writer’s Prophecies



5.2 Pedagogical Implication

Picking from the fact that writers from Type B can end up with positive results, a few things can be altered. 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 a reason further than evaluation—perhaps for publication level. Publication can be at many levels, newspaper, journals, websites or just a blog. Future research could focus on interviewing the three types of writers and get their views for every stage of the writing process.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interests in the subject matter or materials discussed in the manuscript.

About the Author

Noor Hanim Rahmat is an Associate Professor at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia. She has a PhD in Education (TESL). She is a holder of two masters (Masters of Education-TEFL and Masters of Sports Science), has a Bachelor of Education (TESL) and a Certificate in Education. Her research interests include TESL Methodology, Educational Psychology, Theories of Education, Theories of Learning and Academic Writing.

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