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## **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AUDIENCE AWARENESS IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS: THE CASE FOR NOVICE AND EXPERT WRITERS**

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### **Abstract**

*Writing is seen as a social cognitive process by the writer and teaching it will have to focus on the social context. Writers write so that their ideas can be conveyed and understood by their readers. This means writers write with the audience in mind-all the time. Different writers address their audience in different ways. The objective of this research is to explore the strategies used by different types of ESL writers to address their audience. Specifically, this case study focuses on the audience awareness strategies through the use of interactive and interactional discourse. Two writers were used as subjects in this qualitative study. Both*

*qualitative and quantitative data were analysed. Findings reveal different writers use different metadiscourse to communicate with their audience. Results of this study bear interesting implications in the teaching and learning of academic writing in the ESL classroom.*

### **Keywords**

Cognitive Process, ESL Writers, Academic Writing, Audience Awareness, Metadiscourse

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of Study**

Writing teachers would agree that teaching writing is a challenging task. Among some of the challenges are (a) the learners' perception of writing and (b) the teachers' focus in writing classrooms. Why do learners perceive academic writing as difficult? The study by Rahmat, Arepin, MohdYunos, and Syed Abdul Rahman,(2017), reports that learners perceive writing difficulty from different angles mainly; the essay content, (b) the writing assignment, and (c) the technical aspects of writing. In addition to that, Boon, Ismail, Shun, Marimuthu, Mohamed, and Teck (2017) and Mah & Khor (2015) reported that among some reasons for poor writing skills are writing anxiety, writing apprehension, writing process, and writing needs.

The study by Lei (2016) compared skilled and less skilled student writers' strategic use of mediating resources. The study revealed that although the two groups of students tend to use similar types of resources, internalisation of them differs significantly. Differences are mainly found in three sub-processes of internalisation, namely, noticing, imitating and goal setting. In addition to that, Galbraith (2009) reported that when writing academic essays, writers attempted to make connections between subsymbolic units stored in an implicit semantic memory system. Although this process can be prompted by higher level problem solving, the content produced by it will reveal the implicit organisation of content in semantic memory, rather than the explicit manipulation of content in working memory. In layman terms, this means what writers end up producing as a piece of text reveals what went on in their mind (whether they realise it or not).

According to Brown (1994), classroom writing involves two types and they are (a) real and (b) display writing. Students may find it fun to do real writing. Real writing involves activities like diary writing, note-taking, poetry-writing and many more activities that involve the writers writing for reasons other than just assessments (Spivey, 1990). On the other hand, display writing refers to the type of essays that are written for the teacher to assess. Classroom writing usually involves display writing. However, in higher institutions of learning, the focus of academic writing is display type of information.

The focus of research in the teaching of writing changed after the 1990's and 2000's. Perhaps this shift was instigated from the previous focus on the social context of writing (Rahmat, 2016). Writing is seen as a social cognitive process by the writer and teaching it will have to focus on the social context. Writers write so that their ideas can be conveyed and understood by their readers. According to Deane , Odedahl, Fowled and Welsh, Bivens-Tatum (2008), writers need to address the needs of their audience when they write. Therefore, the focus of writing research and classroom teaching shifted to catering to the audience. Writing lessons were planned to focus on readers' expectation.

## **1.2 Objective of the Study**

The objective of this research is to explore the strategies used by different types of ESL writers to address their audience. Specifically, this study focus on the audience awareness strategies through the use of interactive and interactional discourse. This study is done to answer the following questions;

- (a) In what ways do novice and expert writers differ in their writing behaviour?
- (b) How do the use of interactive discourse differ across writers?
- (c) How do the use of interactional discourse differ across writers?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Behaviour of Novice vs Expert Writers**

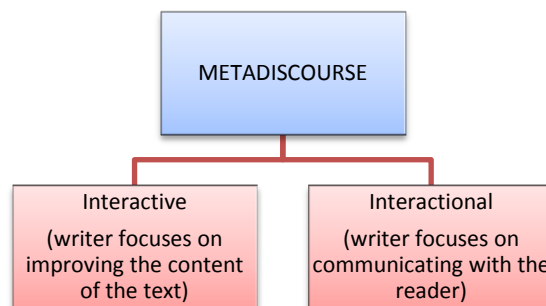
According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (2014), writers can be categorised into two types and they are (a) novice and (b) expert writers. Novice and expert writers display different writing behaviour. The novice writer produces much less elaborated pre-writing notes. They are primarily contented with generating the content during composing (instead of considering the goals, plans and problems). They are also seemingly incapable of making major revisions which would involve reorganisation of the content. Novice writers use less complex routes (no reference to goals, organizational, strategies, etc) for recalling the ideas used in their writing.

On the other hand, the expert writer begins the writing task by analysing the problem and setting goals. This goal and problem anticipation leads them to decode on the source of problems. They attempt to categorise problems into content generation, audience expectation, genre form, linguistic style, and organisational logic (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).. Expert writers sometimes see the resolution of one problem in writing as the beginning of yet another new one.

Longo (1994) studied how expert vs. novice writers use metadiscourse in their writing. The study used texts from mechanical engineering students and experts in the field. It analyzed the texts using fifteen different elements that express metadiscourse. The study found that expert writers use metadiscourse to enhance their writing and establish themselves as part of their discourse community, whereas the students rely on their own logic and persuasive power. Metadiscourse is thus a sign of mature writing (Lei, 2016).

## 2.2 Hyland Metadiscourse

Ramoroka (2017) reported that there is a shift in the way academic writing is perceived. Writing is no longer passive activity; not from the writer's point of view, nor the readers' point of view. The cognitive process of the writer is often seen through the way the writer puts forth his/her arguments in the essay. In addition to that, a piece of written text is said to interact with its reader and this is done through metadiscourse. Metadiscourse deals with the relationship between writers of the texts and their texts as well as texts' authors and their readers (Mirsharhsi and Allami, 2013). The use of metadiscourse in writing helps the writer engage with his/her readers. Writers use metadiscourse devices to convey messages in the written text. Often the use of metadiscourse can provide personality to the text. Metadiscourse devices helps readers organize, interpret, and evaluate the information presented in the text to make communication between the writer and reader clear. According to Alyousef (2015), metadiscourse analysis reveals the way writers engage with different texts and communicate with each other.



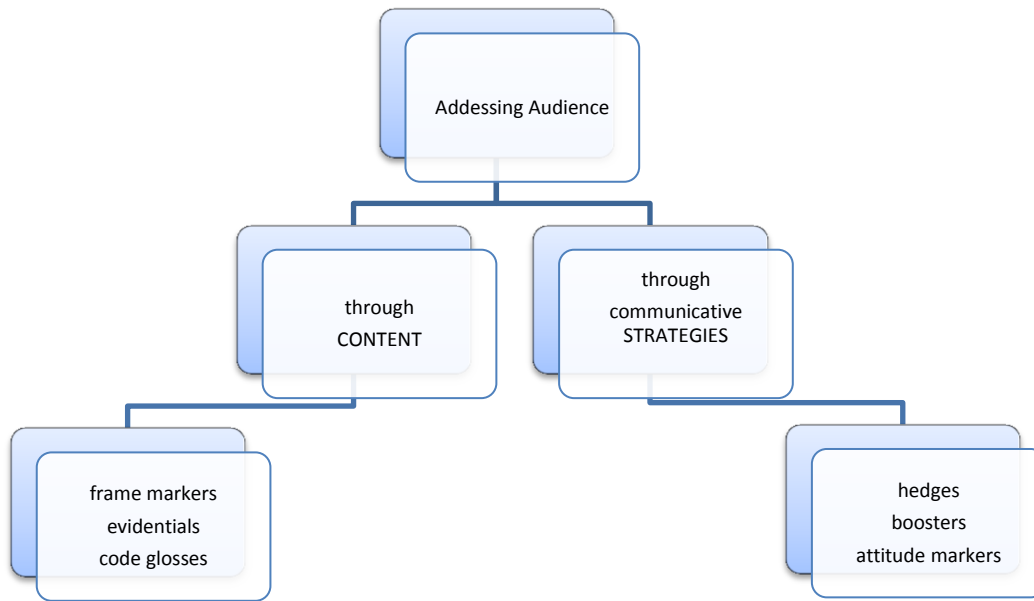
**Figure 1:** *Two Categories in Metadiscourse*

According to Hyland (2005), metadiscourse devices can be used in two different ways in writing (Figure 1.1). The first is interactive discourse and it allows the writer to manage the information flow to reveal his/her preferred interpretation. In using interactive discourse, the writer can use a combination of any of the interactive discourse patterns and they include transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses. Next, interactional

discourse focuses on the readers of the interactions. This type of discourse shows the writer's persona. According to Blagojevic (2004), different types of writers use different types of interactional discourse. Interactional discourse is therefore used by the writer to signal their understanding of the material. It is also used by writers to reach out to their audience through their different uses of discourse patterns. Wei, Li, Zhou and Gong(2016) metadiscourse -The ability of writers to use metadiscourse effectively, to control the level of personality in their texts by offering a credible representation of themselves and their ideas and is thus an indication of expert writers.

### **2.3 Audience**

Bereiter & Scardamalia (2014) used the term “psychological constructivism”, to indicate that learners build their own knowledge. Writers communicate with their audience through their essays. Readers reading the message will form their meaning through cues from the content and strategies used by the writer. With reference to Hyland (2005) Fig 1, the idea of audience is made clear through discourse studies. Discourse analysis helps researchers explore the notion that the audience gave the writer a sense of direction. This direction helps make the communication between the writer and reader more effective. The study by Kuhl, Asadollahfam and Amin (2014) found that audience awareness would also include the writer ensuring that the information is in accordance with the audience's expectations on content and strategies. Kuhl, Asadollahfam and Amin (2014) conducted a study on twenty EFL learners studying at Maravia Institute in Maragheh (placed at upper-intermediate levels of English language proficiency). The respondents were chosen because they agreed to participate in an Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The participants were divided into two groups - experimental and control. Both groups were given instruction on writing for seven sessions. The instruction given was the same for each group. One group had seven modes of development in essay writing. This group was taught Narration, Description, Example, Classification & Division, Compare & Contrast, Process, and Cause & Effect) The students were taught Metadiscourse markers. The audience awareness was highlighted in the writing assignments of the experimental group. This is done by specifying a specific audience for each topic provided, while in the control group this awarenessraising was missing. Following Hyland's (2005) typology of metadiscourse, the collected data were analyzed based on the writers' use of metadiscourse markers. The findings revealed that the frequency of metadiscourse resources was different in two groups. The study indicates that raising audience awareness was influential in metadiscourse use of EFL learners.



**Figure 2:** *Theoretical Framework of the Study*

Figure 2 above shows the theoretical framework of the study. This study is rooted from Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse. Hyland's (2005) interactive and interactional discourse is translated in a different way. Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse analyses the way the writer addresses the audience. This is done through the writer's use of discourse to deliver the content (frame markers, evidentials, code glosses); as well as through the use of communicative (hedges, boosters, attitude markers) strategies. Hedges are used by writers to withhold the writer's full commitment towards the proposition. The writers uses words like "might", "perhaps", "possible", "about" and many more to show uncertainty. Boosters are used to emphasize force or the writer's certainty in proposition. Examples of boosters are "in fact", "definitely", "it is clear that", etc. Tang (2013) described hedges as "fuzziness" in human language. He also said that hedges are the core of fuzzy language and its analysis contributes to the understanding of the essence of language (Zhao & Hirvela, 201). On the other hand, hedges can also be used to show the writer's weak commitment towards the written text. Serholt(2012) also reported that writers use hedges to enable them to withdraw their statements later. Mameghani and Ebrahimi (2017) studied the use of attitude and engagement makers in students' presentations. They reported that learners use attitude and engagement markers to convey their feelings or feedbacks to the propositional content and also as attempts to build personal relationships with the audience.

### **3. Methodology**

This case study uses mixed method approach. Qualitative data will be used to explore the metadiscourse used by ESL writers in expository essays. 2 writers are purposely chosen from writing for academic purpose class. The two writers had average writing abilities. They were categorised as novice writers at the start of the study because they had not undergone lessons on how to write academic essays that required them to synthesise information from given articles. At the end of the semester, their essays showed they used proper academic writing strategies and was thus categorised as expert writers.

At the start of the semester, they were asked to write an expository essay using 4 given articles. They had no prior lessons on how to write the essay. The researcher used this essay samples and labelled them as essays written by novice writers. At the end of the semester, they were given the same essay to do. Throughout the semester they were taught proper essay writing skills. These essays are now labelled as essays written by expert writers. Thematic analysis will be done on the essays written by the students. The themes will be based on the metadiscourse categories for interactive and interactional discourse adapted from Hyland (2005).

Data analysis will be done on two levels. Firstly, the occurrence of the coded data in individual essays will be described qualitatively; next the coded data undergo quantifying where the qualitative data will be presented in quantitative form. The researcher will calculate the frequency of the metadiscourse used by individual writers. Raw scores will be used in the presentation of data.

### **4. Discussion of Findings**

This section discusses the findings based on the research questions.

**4.1 Research Question 1** - In what ways do novice and expert writers differ in their writing behaviour?

#### **4.1.1 Behaviour of Novice Writer**

Writer 1 and writer 2 were labelled as novice writers because they were not exposed to academic writing style. They were asked to write an academic essay without any prior teaching.

Writer1-Before (Novice Writer)

Note-taking written by Writer 1 was in the form of underlining of points. Points were, however, numbered. However, no main ideas were written as notes. The condition of notes made on the articles indicated that the planning was done quickly. This essay by Writer 1 had 4 paragraphs. The concluding paragraph had only one sentence. Thesis statement was general-not

specifically mentioning the main ideas of the essay. Attempted to do in-text citation but was incorrect. The topic sentences in each paragraph were not clearly written. Both developmental paragraphs were not well-developed. Points were not focused to specific main ideas in each paragraph.

Writer2-Before (Novice Writer)

Writer 2's note-taking was brief. Some points were circled, some were put in parenthesis. The essay had 4 paragraphs. No main ideas were written in each paragraph. The developmental paragraphs lacked details. The paragraphs were "touch-and-go" and were not in depth. The mind map showed all main ideas and supporting details-but some supporting details had no in-text-citation.

Analysis of writing behavior of both writers before the lessons begun showed the same description of novice writers by Bereiter and Scardamalia(2014). According to Bereiter and Scardamalia(2014), novice writers produced much less elaborated pre-writing notes. They also used less complex routes (no reference to goals, organizational, strategies, etc) for recalling ideas used in their writing. They did not make use of main ideas in their writing as guides for planning and integrating information

#### **4.1.2 Behaviour of Expert Writers**

Both writers were asked to write the same academic essay at the end of the semester. Data from their essay does indicate some characteristics of expert writers.

WRITER 1-After (Expert Writer)

Note-taking by Writer 1 was in the form of mind-map. The mind map had clear main ideas and supporting details. Each supporting detail showed the use in-text citation clearly. The essay had one introduction, one conclusion, one transition paragraph and 4 developmental paragraphs. Each paragraph had topic sentences. The main ideas were elaborated with supporting details and in-text citations thus showing an attempt of content integration (Bereiter and Scardamalia; 2061). The behaviour of Writer 1 is in accordance with the behaviour of expert writers by Bereiter and Scardamalia (2016). According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (2016), the writing task by the expert showed the writer's ability to lead directly to problem analysis and goal setting. The introduction written by Writer 1 showed a progression from broad to specific dsicussion of the topic. This writer showed good intention by haing a clear thesis statemnet and clear topic sentences. There were minimal language errors bythis writer.

WRITER 2-After (Expert Writer)



The note-taking took the form of a mind map. Mind-map had main ideas and supporting details. However, some details had no accompanying in-text citations; however, the expansion of the main ideas indicated the evidence of content integration (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 2016). The essay had 8 paragraphs -with a transition paragraph. Organisational logic is therefore evident.

#### **4.2 Research Question 2-** How do the use of interactive discourse differ across writers?

Generally raw score revealed an increase in the use of interactive discourse among both writers. Figure 4.1 showed mean scores for the use of interactive discourse during the novice and expert stages respectively. A detailed description of interactive discourse for both writers is presented below.

##### **4.2.1 Transitions**

Both writers used less transition during the novice stage. Writer 1 used transitions such as “as well as”, “first cause”, “in addition”, and “first prevention” during the expert stage. Writer 2 used transitions such as “first cause”, “next”, “third”, and “thus”.

##### **4.2.2 Frame Markers**

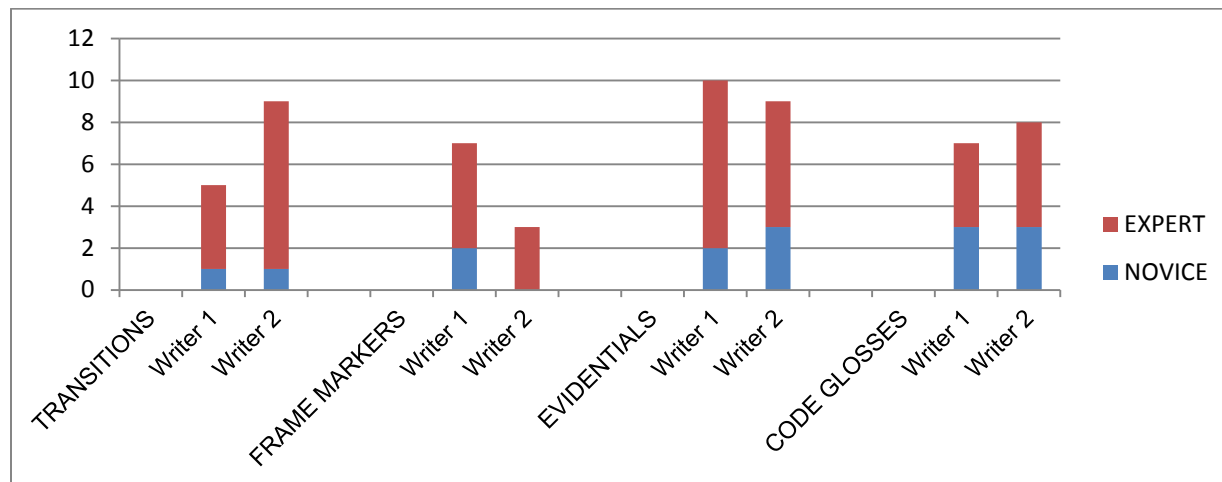
Writer 1 used more frame markers in the expert stage while writer 2 only had frame markers during the expert stage. Among some frame markers used by Writer 2 are “so”, and “in a nutshell”. Writer 2 used frame markers such as “so”, “hence” and “in a nutshell”.

##### **4.2.3 Evidentials**

There was an obvious increase in the use of evidentials for both writers. This was because the use of in-text and end-of-text were taught throughout the semester. The use of in-text-citations was found to be incorrect for both writers during the novice stage.

##### **4.2.4 Code Glosses**

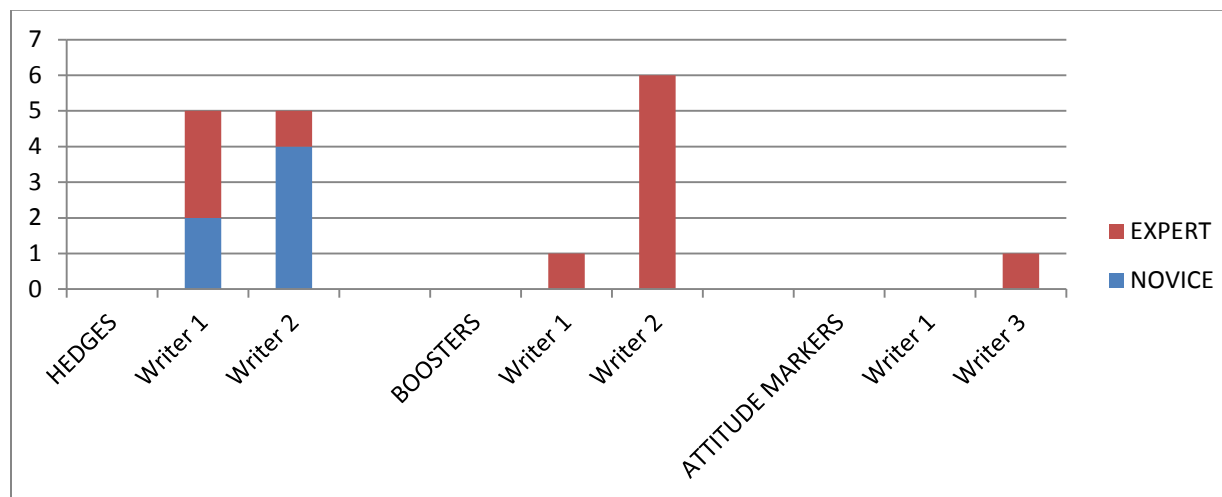
There was a slight increase in the use of code glosses for both writers. Among some examples of code glosses for Writer 1 are “moreover”, “other than that” and “however”, while Writer 3 used “moreover” and “on top of that”.



**Figure 3:** Raw Score for Frequency of Interactive Discourse used

### 4.3 Research Question 3- How do the use of interactional discourse differ across writers?

There is an overall increase in the use of interactional discourse from the novice stage to expert stage for both writers (figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Raw Score for Frequency of Interactional Discourse

#### 4.3.1 Hedges

Interestingly, the use of hedges increased for Writer 1 and decreased for Writer 2. Among some hedges used by both writers were “seems”, “could”, and “may”. According to Tang (2013), hedges are used by writers to withhold the writer’s full commitment towards the proposition. Writers used hedges to show uncertainty. Writer 1 showed more uncertainty in the expert stage while Writer 3 became more confident during the expert stage.

### **4.3.2 Boosters**

Both writers did not use boosters during the novice stage but used boosters such as “more likely”, “should”, “no longer”, and “no matter”. According to Serholt (2012), boosters are used to emphasize force or the writer’s certainty in proposition. Both writers used more boosters in the expert stage.

### **4.3.3 Attitude Markers**

Only Writer 2, used one attitude markers (“shockingly” in the expert stage. According to Mameghani and Ebrahimi (2017), writers use attitude and engagement markers to convey their feelings or feedbacks to the propositional content and also as attempts to build personal relationships with the audience.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has shown that novice and expert writers use metadiscourse in different ways in their writing. Generally, results reveal an increase in the use of metadiscourse from the novice stage to the expert stage. According to Longo (1994) and Lei (2016), the use of metadiscourse in essays is evident in expert compared to novice writers. The findings of this study also have certain implications for both teachers and syllabus designers. It demands foreign language teachers to make learners’ explicitly aware of their audiences’ needs and expectations. By doing this, they will enhance interactivity in their texts to meet their audiences’ needs and as a result they will not consider the teacher as the only reader. Syllabus designers can incorporate various kinds of tasks in their syllabuses to challenge the learners’ minds about their potential readers.

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