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EFL Learners' Use of Metacognitive Writing Strategies in Türkiye: A Descriptive Study*

Türkiye'de Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce Öğrenenlerin Üst Bilişsel Yazma Stratejileri Kullanımları: Betimsel Bir Çalışma*

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ABSTRACT

With a great emphasis on 21st century skills in education, the association between strategies involved in metacognitive awareness and second language learning and teaching has gained importance. To this end, strategy use, also part of metacognitive awareness and commonly associated with high level of language proficiency, has been an interest in second language learning research due to multi-faceted nature of learning a language and improving skills. One of those skills requiring use of cognitive skills and awareness is writing. Thus, this paper presents a mixed-methods study the aim of which is to examine Turkish English as a foreign language learners' metacognitive writing strategy use. The participants were 110 EFL learners at tertiary level with advanced level of proficiency in a Turkish context. In line with explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire addressing the variables while the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that the level of these learners' metacognitive awareness about writing strategy use was high but differed with respect to sub-categories of metacognitive awareness. Based on the findings, the paper suggests several educational implications to promote metacognitive awareness of language learners.

Keywords: Metacognitive awareness, L2 writing, Strategy use, Language proficiency

ÖZ

Eğitimde 21. yüzyıl becerilerinin ön plana çıkmasıyla birlikte üst bilişsel farkındalık ve ikinci yabancı dil öğrenimi ve öğretiminde yer alan kavramlar arasındaki ilişki önem kazanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, üst bilişsel farkındalık kapsamında da yer alan ve genellikle üst düzey dil yetkinliğiyle ilişkilendirilen strateji kullanımı, dil öğrenmenin ve dil becerilerinin geliştirilmesinin çok yönlü olmasından dolayı ikinci dil edinimi araştırmalarında ilgi duyulan bir konu olmuştur. Bilişsel becerilerin kullanımını ve farkındalığını gerektiren söz konusu dil becerilerinden biri yazma becerisidir. Buna göre, bu makale, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerinin üst bilişsel yazma stratejileri kullanımlarını inceleyen bir karma yöntem çalışmasını sunmaktadır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları, Türkiye'de bir üniversitede yabancı dil olarak ileri düzeyde İngilizce eğitimi almakta olan 110 öğrencidir. Açıklayıcı sıralı karma yöntem desenine uygun biçimde tasarlanan bu çalışmanın nicel verisi çalışmanın değişkenleriyle ilgili bir anketin uygulanmasıyla toplanırken, nicel verisi yarı yapılandırılmış

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görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, katılımcıların üst bilişsel yazma stratejileri kullanım düzeylerinin yüksek olduğunu fakat bu düzeylerin kavramın alt bileşenleri kapsamında farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, bu makalede dil öğrenenlerin üst bilişsel farkındalık düzeylerini artırmaya yönelik birtakım önerilere yer verilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Üst bilişsel farkındalık; İkinci yabancı dil yazma becerisi, Strateji kullanımı, Dil yetkinliği

INTRODUCTION

Writing is regarded as a complex, demanding and challenging skill for L2 learners (e.g., Mitchell, McMillan & Rabbani, 2019; Sun & Wang, 2020; Sun, Wang, Lambert & Liu, 2021; Teng, Sun & Xu, 2018). To this end, it requires cognitive skills such as planning, problem solving, decision making and evaluating/reflecting to generate ideas, working memory, also communicative skills such as help seeking and asking for feedback (Mitchell et al., 2019) as well as a satisfactory level of linguistic knowledge (e.g., Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, Zumbrunn, 2013; Sun et al., 2021). Specifically, academic writing poses challenges to L2 learners, particularly for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, because of their language proficiency level, limited language input, and exam-oriented language learning experience (Teng & Yue, 2023).

Due to its complex and multi-dimensional nature, L2 writing is commonly associated with psychological concepts such as self-efficacy, motivation, and anxiety, in turn, affecting writing performance (e.g., Kormos, 2012; Papi, 2021; Raoofi & Maroofi, 2017). In this sense, the research on L2 writing has uncovered a positive connection between L2 writing and second language acquisition (SLA) concepts. Among these concepts, metacognition (or metacognitive awareness) defined as being aware of cognitive processes is likely to take the lead as writing entails "applied metacognitive monitoring and control" (Hacker et al., 2009, p. 160), which is entailed in writing strategies. In this sense, Teng, Wang and Zhang (2022) asserted that it is necessary for students to learn writing strategies such as planning, drafting, evaluating, and revising to overcome challenges of writing process.

In the literature, research focusing on the connection between metacognitive awareness and the writing skill in EFL context has explored if writing strategies are used by language learners. Despite being limited, the related research offers findings that highlight a positive relationship between metacognitive strategy use and writing performance (e.g., Ramadhanti & Yanda, 2021; Teng, 2020; Teng & Yue, 2023). Even though much attention has been given to metacognitive awareness in learning, as stated in recent papers, metacognition in L2 writing is underrepresented and scarce, and the studies are dominantly in Chinese context (Sun et al., 2021; Sun, Pan, & Zhan, 2023; Sun & Zhang, 2023). Moreover, there is discrepancy in the findings of existing research on the possible effect of proficiency or the related research focused on writing strategy use in general sense rather than specifically focusing on metacognitive writing strategies in academic writing genres which involve complex cognitive processes. However, regarding the nature of writing and the metacognitive skills, investigating whether language learners use any metacognitive strategies in writing could contribute to find ways to improve that skill, thus, making it the focus of the current paper. Therefore, this study aims to provide insights into Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive writing strategies use by involving sub-categories of metacognition and the demographic factor of language proficiency, so the following research question and sub-questions are addressed:

1. Do Turkish EFL learners use metacognitive writing strategies in academic writing?

a) To what extent are they aware of their strategy use in the stages of writing (before, while and after writing)?

b) Does proficiency level influence their metacognitive writing strategy use?

REVIEW of the LITERATURE

Metacognitive Awareness

One of the concepts related to cognition, metacognitive awareness (or metacognition) is commonly defined as being aware of one's own thinking processes (e.g., Flavell, 1976; Jaleel & Premachandran, 2016; Schraw, 1998; Song, Loyal & Lond, 2021). In other words, it refers to an awareness about how a person thinks and an ability to reflect upon this awareness. Metacognition has two main components: metacognitive knowledge (declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge) and metacognitive regulation (planning, monitoring and strategy use) (e.g., Akın, Abacı & Çetin, 2007; Efklides, 2008; Flavell, 1987; Schraw & Dennison, 1994). More precisely, while the component of *knowledge* includes knowledge about effective factors on one's performance (declarative knowledge; knowledge about what), how to perform specific tasks (procedural knowledge; knowledge about how) and when and why to use this knowledge (conditional knowledge; knowledge of when), the component of *regulation* involves cognitive practices to regulate knowledge (Schraw, 1998). According to Livingston (2003), a student's choice of studying at a library rather than at home because of distractions, and his or her awareness that reading and understanding a science text takes more time than a novel are demonstration of how metacognitive awareness works.

In the related literature, it seems that research on metacognitive awareness tends to set forth findings and implications about the practical component of it: *metacognitive regulation.* To this end, it has been stated that the regulative practices of cognition such as planning and monitoring have directly facilitative effects on learning such as leading to academic achievement (e.g., Anderson, 2012; Efklides, 2002; Isaacson & Fujita, 2006; Narang & Saini, 2013; Schraw & Dennison, 1994; Schraw,

1998; Young & Fry, 2008; Zimmerman, 1990), learner autonomy and motivation (e.g., Sungur & Senler, 2009) and goal setting (eg., Ridley, Schutz, Glanz & Weinstein, 1992). Furthermore, metacognitively aware learners are suggested to perform better than learners with low level of awareness (e.g., Veenman, Wilhelm & Beishuizen, 2004). With this respect, self-regulated learning and strategy use have been the two most common concepts asserted to result in positive outcomes in learning (e.g., Oxford, 2003; Park & Yun, 2018; Zimmerman, 1990) as metacognitive awareness for strategy use has been indicated to help learners plan their studies, monitor the learning process and evaluate outcomes and effectiveness in the end (Zhang & Qin, 2018). Overall, metacognitive awareness is indicated to affect "…oral communication of information, oral persuasion, oral comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, language acquisition, attention, memory, problem solving, social cognition, and various types of self-control and self-instruction" (Flavell, 1979, p. 906), which are also applicable to L2 learning.

Specific to L2 research, studies have indicated that metacognitive awareness is related to positive learning outcomes (e.g., Jun Zhang, 2001; Negretti, 2012; Pintrich, 2002; Sungur & Senler, 2009). In the same vein, high level of metacognitive awareness (especially metacognitive regulation) has been suggested to play a pivotal role in improving language skills (reading; Pintrich, 2002; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001; Urban, Urban & Nietfeld, 2023, listening; Cross, 2010; Cross, & Vandergrift, 2018, and writing; Negretti, 2012; Zhang & Qin, 2018). Among these language skills, writing could be particularly associated with metacognitive awareness as it involves metacognitive processes; planning, monitoring, and evaluating, thus making it the focus of the present research to address metacognitive awareness.

Metacognitive Awareness in L2 Writing

Including cognitive aspects such as working memory, organizing ideas, and revising, writing is regarded as a challenging skill for L2 learners (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2019; Sun & Wang, 2020; Sun et al., 2021; Teng et al., 2018). Therefore, it has features connected to metacognitive awareness. Providing evidence for the connection, for example, Ruan (2014) explored Chinese EFL learners' metacognitive awareness in the writing skill and found out that the participants had high level of metacognitive awareness and used various strategies such as planning and revising in writing, which was found to lead to higher writing test scores in a later study (Sun, Zhang & Carter, 2021).

The connection between metacognitive awareness and the writing skill proposed in the literature raises expectations about positive outcomes in writing. Accordingly, language learners could benefit from using metacognitive writing strategies to achieve writing goals such as writing a well-organized academic paper by planning, drafting and revising (e.g., Ramadhanti & Yanda, 2021; Teng, 2020; Teng & Yue, 2023; Wei, Chen & Adawu, 2014; Zhang & Qin, 2018). For instance, on the positive effect of metacognitive awareness in academic writing, Teng and Yue (2023) stated that it led to higher level of critical thinking resulting in better performance in writing tasks. In addition, concerning regulation involved in it, metacognitive awareness is likely to be ascribed to self-regulated learners, and they have been reported to complete writing tasks without problems (e.g., Iwai, 2011; Teng, Qin, & Wang, 2022). To this end, Zhang and Qin (2018) examined if EFL learners in the Chinese context used metacognitive writing strategies, and they revealed that the participants of the study used strategies in each stage of writing (planning before writing, monitoring while writing and evaluating after writing). With respect to planning strategy, there has been research suggesting positive effect of it on fluency and accuracy in L2 writing (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). Similarly, strategies for generating texts and reflecting on that after writing were found to be effective in terms of better writing performance (e.g., De Silva, & Graham, 2015).

Additionally, research on metacognitive awareness in writing has discussed if language proficiency influences that awareness and achievement. For instance, Wei et al. (2014) investigated whether ESL learners with beginner level of language proficiency used metacognitive strategies in writing and concluded that through effective instruction on strategy use, language learners even with low level of language proficiency could perform better at writing tasks. Additionally, Guobing (2015) examined Chinese students' use of writing strategies considering their proficiency, and the analyses suggested no significant effect of writing proficiency. Concurring Guobing (2015), Mutar and Nimehchisalem (2017) probed any possible effects of proficiency on Iraqi students' writing strategy use, and they provided evidence for the fact that proficiency was not a factor leading to difference in strategy use. Providing more recent evidence for the discussion, Fajrina, Everatt and Sadeghi (2021) explored the use of writing strategies by 135 Indonesian EFL learners having different proficiency levels. Concurring the existing research, their study revealed that there was no significant difference in the use of metacognitive writing strategies among the participants.

Specific to sub-scales of metacognitive writing strategies, a limited number of studies have scrutinized how and to what extent L2 learners use planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies. For example, Huang and Zhang (2022) explored any potential effects of process-genre writing instruction on Chinese EFL learners' perceived use of metacognitive writing strategies through an experimental study design. While the findings suggested no significant differences between experimental and control groups in the use of any type of writing strategies, the researchers commented that the participants' perceptions about the use of planning strategies may have stemmed from their overconfidence about the use these strategies. Another assumption was that the participants thought that they used these strategies even if they generated random ideas, which was referred as "knowledge telling" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987 in Huang & Zhang, 2022, p. 13) and generally associated with low level of language proficiency.

Overall, the existing research on L2 learners' metacognitive awareness in writing have presented its unveiling aspects. The studies have commonly focused on the possible impact of lan-

guage proficiency on the use of metacognitive writing strategies. However, the studies were generally conducted in Chinese EFL context, so it is necessary to provide more empirical support for the discussion by conducting research in various contexts. This study seeks to focus on the gap by providing evidence on Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive writing strategies use in relation to their high language proficiency.

THE STUDY

Participants

In order to address the research questions, the data were collected based on purposeful sampling principles. The participants were 110 (73 female, 35 male, 2 prefer not to say) Turkish EFL learners with B2 level of proficiency (CEFR, 2001) who agreed to participate in the study after being explained the procedures and ethical issues at the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Türkiye. These learners would study at English Language and Literature Department and had a background in learning English at high school. The rationale behind choosing this specific group was that besides the main course, these learners had a separate academic writing course as part of the curriculum and practiced academic writing through various genres particularly essay types through the academic year. They did not take any explicit training on metacognitive strategy use except for the fact that they practiced brainstorming and making an outline as part of their coursework. As a result, it was eligible to search for their perceived metacognitive writing strategy use. Furthermore, one of the research purposes was to examine if language proficiency was a factor influencing strategy use. Since the group was the one with the highest proficiency among available study groups at the school, it was apt to that research purpose.

Study Design

The study was designed as explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014). In this research design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed. Then qualitative data are collected to explain the results in detail. The quantitative part was designed as a descriptive study. In this sense, the data were collected through a demographic information questionnaire and a questionnaire on language learners' metacognitive awareness in writing following its reliability analyses. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were collected through semi-structured interviews in which the participants responded open-ended questions about strategy use in writing. The questions addressed whether they used any strategies before writing, while writing and after writing. For instance, one question was "*Do you do any planning before starting to write your paragraphs and essays? If yes, what do you do*?" (before writing) or another question was "*Do you stop writing and check what you have written*?" (while writing) Also, *"Do you check what you have written before handing in your paper?"* was a question focusing on the last component of metacognitive writing strategies (after writing). All the questions addressed the participants' strategy use in each stage of writing.

Data Collection Procedures

Before data collection procedures, ethical issues were handled. Therefore, Ethical Committee of the university where the data were to be collected was applied for approval to conduct the study. Furthermore, the target group of participants were asked to participate in the study through a consent form explaining the ethical issues and procedures of the research.

Having handled ethical issues, the researcher(s), first, collected quantitative data in accordance with appropriate research methods. As a result of rigorous research, *The Questionnaire on Language Learners' Metacognitive Writing Strategies in Multimedia Environments (LLMWSIME)* developed by Zhang and Qin (2018) was found appropriate for the scope of the research since it included basic components of metacognitive awareness in writing and metacognitive writing strategies. To this end, it includes three factors with 6 Likert-scale response option from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*; planning before writing (6 items/strategies), monitoring during writing (12 items/strategies) and evaluating after writing (4 items/strategies), which are commonly suggested to be primary metacognitive writing strategies. Besides confirmatory factor analyses as indicator for validity of the questionnaire, internal reliability tests suggested that each of the sub-scales were obviously reliable in reference to Cronbach's alpha scores above .8 (planning; $\alpha = .91$; monitoring: $\alpha = .94$; evaluating: $\alpha = .88$). Yet, as the scale partly targeted multimedia environments, the items were adapted by only removing those words, so reliability analyses were conducted before the use. Furthermore, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish to make it easier to understand for the students, and in turn, to obtain reliable data. Thus, backward translation procedures were performed. As a result, for the adaptations made, a pilot study was carried out by administering the questionnaire to a sample group consisting of 45 EFL learners as part of reliability analyses. In line with reliability scores of the original questionnaire, it was found out that the questionnaire adapted was also reliable with Cronbach's Alpha scores of .93 for the whole questionnaire and with scores of the sub-scales (planning; $\alpha = .83$; monitoring: $\alpha = .89$; evaluating: $\alpha = .88$).

After the pilot-study and reliability analyses, the questionnaire was administered to the sample. When the missing responses were removed, the data ended up with 110 participants' responses. Subsequently, interviews including questions about the use of metacognitive writing strategies in each stage of writing were held with ten participants who agreed to participate in the qualitative phase of the research.

Data Analyses

In order to analyze quantitative data, statistical tests were performed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 throughout the process. Thus, reliability analyses and descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages) were conducted for sub-scales of the questionnaire. In addition, a content analysis was performed on the qualitative data, and it suggested several codes and themes. For the reliability of qualitative data analyses, the

same procedure was conducted by another researcher who has experience in content analysis. Findings that emerged based on these analyses are as follows:

FINDINGS

EFL Learners' Metacognitive Awareness in Writing

The extent of EFL learners' metacognitive writing strategy use in the stages of writing (before, while and after writing)

Having focused on components of metacognitive awareness in writing, the adapted version of *The Questionnaire on Language Learners' Metacognitive Writing Strategies in Multimedia Environments (LLMWSIME)* (Zhang & Qin, 2018) was used to collect quantitative data through a 6-point Likert-Scale. With respect to the types of strategies used, the analyses revealed that the participants were slightly less aware of strategies before starting to write than while or after writing. Of all the sub-scales, after writing strategies (evaluating) were the most commonly used strategies referring to mean and standard deviation values indicating that the learners were more aware of what strategies they use to check a writing task after completing. See Table 1 for the values.

Table 1: Sub-Scales of Metacognitive Writing Strategies

Sub-scales	Mean
Planning	4.09 (SD=.98)
Monitoring	4.59 (SD=.81)
Evaluating	4.59 (SD=1.16)

As demonstrated in Table 1, even though mean values are close to each other, the sub-scale of planning has a slightly lower score indicating that the participants were less aware of strategy use before starting to write. Regarding equal mean values of monitoring and evaluating, it could be indicated that the participants' awareness of strategy use after writing was more considering the variation in the responses, thus, the value of standard deviation. Specifically, the participants' responses to some of the items of the sub-scales are demonstrated in Tables below:

As seen in Table 2, the participants reported to be aware of their strategy use before writing. With respect to the items with the highest score, it emerged that they thought about the purpose of the writing task and had a plan in their mind. Furthermore, when the item with the lowest score was considered, it was found that the participants did not use specific strategies such as making an outline as many as the general ones. Nevertheless, making an outline was part of the coursework, and the participants had explicit instruction on how to make an outline with practice within the scope of academic writing course.

Not only did quantitative data analyses reveal, but also the qualitative data revealed the participants' relatively lower level of metacognitive awareness for strategy use before writing (planning). Indeed, the qualitative data were partially used to support the quantitative data as the number of the participants who provided detailed and explanatory responses was limited. The analyses of the interviews revealed reasons for it. See Table 3 for the codes and themes.

As seen in Table 3, the participants reported several reasons for not using as many strategies in the planning stage as in the other two stages, and most of them attributed it to difficulty in generating ideas. Examples of the related responses could be found below:

Table 2: Responses for Strategy Use in Planning

Before I started writing...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had a plan in my mind for how I was going to structure each paragraph in my essay. (M=4.73, SD=1.2)	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.6%)	14 (12.7%)	22 (20%)	32 (29.1%)	37 (33.6%)
I made an outline, including a list of the key points of views that I want to include in my essay. (M=3.87, SD=1.27)	4 (3.6%)	11 (10%)	26 (23.6%)	36 (32.7%)	20 (18.2%)	13 (11.8%)
I planned what language features I was going to use in my essay with reference to the writing topic. (M=3.85, SD=1.41)	9 (8.2%)	10 (9.1%)	23 (20.9%)	26 (23.6%)	30 (27.3%)	12 (10.9%)
I thought about the goal I wanted to achieve in my writing (e.g., to use a new word or a new sentence structure I have learned, to avoid a mistake I had made before, or to get a high score, etc.). (M=4.82, SD=1.09)	1 (0.9%)	3 (2.7%)	9 (8.2%)	21 (19.1%)	43 (39.1%)	33 (30%)
I thought about how much time I should spend on each part of the essay. (M=3.74, SD=1.47)	13 (11.8%)	9 (8.2%)	20 (18.2%)	30 (27.3%)	27 (24.5%)	11 (10%)

Table 3: Analysis of the Interviews

Themes and Codes
Problems in the planning stage (8)
Not making an outline (2)
Difficulty in generating ideas (4)
Time constraint (2)

S3

"When we started to the course, we learned how to make an outline, but instead of making it, I just make a plan in my mind and start writing quickly."

As demonstrated in this example, the participant reported that despite being taught, he or she did not make an outline. This quote supports the quantitative data revealing that the participants tended not to make an outline if they generated ideas. While both quantitative and qualitative data revealed the participants' less use of metacognitive writing strategies for planning, the interviews put forth reasons for it. One of the reasons reported was difficulty in generating ideas as demonstrated in the following quote:

S7

"I think what I need to improve is to come up with ideas easily as I find it difficult to find a topic to write about or when writing about a topic, I either write longer than the word limit or write simply and shortly. If I want to give any details, my writing piece gets too long, if I do not give details, vice versa…I think I have a problem with my Turkish to organize my ideas."

As seen in the participant's response, his or her problem was about generating ideas or making an elaborate plan before writing. He or she did not prefer making an outline, either, which resulted in difficulty in generating ideas.

Another problem reported related to planning stage of writing was time constraint. One of the participants said that he or she failed to complete a writing task in the allocated time. His or her quote is as follows:

S8

"When we started to the course, it was difficult for me to produce long and correct sentences in my paragraphs and I could not finish my papers in the allowed time. It is still a problem for me; one hour is not enough to complete a writing task. I write less than 250 words."

The participant's response suggested that the problem may have occurred due to lack of planning strategy use. As the participant focused on writing long and correct sentences rather than the basic elements such as content and organization, he or she could not have managed to generate ideas and organize them by planning.

Overall, regarding the participants' responses in the interviews, it emerged that there were problems in generating and organizing ideas in the allocated time. On the other hand, it seems that despite problems reported, they used metacognitive strategies to plan their paragraphs and essays as also emerged in the quantitative data on the first stage of writing (before writing/planning)

The second stage of writing (while writing) was focused on the questionnaire through items about monitoring. In other words, the participants reported about what metacognitive strategies they used while writing academic paragraphs and/or essays. The findings could be found in Table 4.

Table 4: Responses for Strategy Use in Monitoring

When I was writing…	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I tried to focus my attention on choosing appropriate words and phrases. (*M*=4.75, *SD*=1.13)	2 (1.8%)	1 (0.9%)	12 (10.9%)	25 (22.7%)	37 (33.6%)	33 (30%)
I tried to think about whether the arguments followed the instruction of the essay. (*M*=4.97, *SD*=.92)	0	0	7 (6.4%)	27 (24.5%)	38 (34.5%)	38 (34.5%)
I tried to think about how to connect different parts of my essay (e.g., using transitional words). (*M*=4.97, *SD*=1.01)	0	2 (1.8%)	8 (7.3%)	22 (20%)	37 (33.6%)	41 (37.3%)
I tried to think about how many arguments I should have in the essay. (*M*=4.91, *SD*=1.14)	2 (1.8%)	2 (1.8%)	9 (8.2%)	17 (15.5%)	40 (36.4%)	40 (36.4%)
I tried to seek help from a dictionary if I did not know how to express my own opinions. (*M*=4.94, *SD*=1.15)	2 (1.8%)	1 (0.9%)	10 (9.1%)	20 (18.2%)	32 (29.1%)	45 (40.9%)
I tried to think about what parts my essay should have. (*M*=4.9, *SD*=.93)	1 (0.9%)	0	7 (6.4%)	22 (20%)	50 (45.5%)	30 (27.3%)

As illustrated in Table 4, the participants were aware of their strategy use during writing. The table demonstrates six items with the highest scores in the section. All the items related to monitoring strategies suggested that the participants checked their progress while writing. While the scores were slightly different from each other, the items with the highest scores emerged to be participants' thinking about the number of the paragraphs to write and arguments to include. Besides, all participants interviewed (*N*=10) reported use of metacognitive writing strategies to monitor what they are writing, but they only responded through yes/no answers.

The last stage of writing (after writing) that had the same mean values as monitoring on the questionnaire was evaluating. The strategies related to evaluating were targeted through four items. The findings are shown in Table 5.

As demonstrated in Table 5, the participants were aware of their strategy use after writing. When positive responses for the items are considered, it is seen that values are close to each other as they are based on rereading students' writing products. Thus, it emerged that the participants checked what they had written to complete writing task successfully. All participants in the interviews (*N*=10) responded positively to the target questions through short answers (e.g., *"Do you check what you have written before handing in your paper?" Yes, I do, or Yes, I check/reread),* which supports the quantitative data.

The influence of proficiency level on Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive writing strategy use

The second sub-question of the current research strived to examine whether language proficiency level affects metacognitive writing strategy use. Since a high level of language proficiency is associated with the use of metacognitive writing strategies, advanced level of language proficiency was centered on. The findings revealed that language proficiency did not necessarily lead to higher amount of metacognitive writing strategy use, which is evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative data collected about the use of planning strategy. Furthermore, it emerged that the participants scored *making an outline* the lowest on the planning sub-scale even though they were taught how to organize their ideas through making an outline in the course plan explicitly. Moreover, it was reported in the interviews that the participants had difficulty in generating ideas before starting to write. These findings suggested that metacognitive writing strategy use was not inherently associated with a high level of language proficiency.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggested that the participants somehow use metacognitive writing strategies, which is in line with previous research (e.g., De Silva, & Graham, 2015; Ruan, 2014; Wei et al, 2014; Zhang & Qin, 2018). For instance, Ruan (2014) focused on Chinese EFL learners' metacognitive awareness in writing and found out that they used planning, generating texts and revising strategies, which are referred as planning, monitoring and evaluating in the present study. Similarly, Zhang and Qin (2018) examined the use of metacognitive writing strategies with a larger sample in Chinese context and found out that the participants used strategies to achieve writing goals particularly to plan, monitor and evaluate their products, which has been supported by the current research. Therefore, this research provides up-to-date empirical data with a different context (Turkish) supporting existing research.

The findings also present evidence on Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive writing strategies specific to stages of writing (planning, monitoring and evaluating). As for planning strategy, the participants in the interviews reported having used relatively less metacognitive writing strategies, which is in contrary to what Ellis and Yuan (2004) suggested since these researchers especially highlighted significance of planning strategies. Moreover, as also mentioned earlier, the participants of the current research had experience only in planning strategies (brainstorming and making an outline). Thus, it is surprising that they reported less use of strategies in the planning stage of writing, which is in contrast with suggestions on providing instruction on the use of metacognitive strategies (e.g., Al-Jarrah et al., 2018; Chen 2022; Wei et al, 2014). It may have been because the participants had regarded those exercises (brainstorming etc.) as tasks that they needed to complete without

Table 5: Responses for Strategy Use in Evaluating

After I finished writing…	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I reread my essay and made sure that the language of my essay was clear. (*M*=4.65, *SD*=1.28)	3 (2.7%)	4 (3.6%)	11 (10%)	29 (26.4%)	26 (23.6%)	37 (33.6%)
I reread my essay and made sure that the organization was easy to follow. (*M*=4.6, *SD*=1.25)	3 (2.7%)	4 (3.6%)	12 (10.9%)	26 (23.6%)	34 (30.9%)	31 (28.2%)
I reread my essay and made sure that I had covered the content fully before I handed it in to my teacher. (*M*=4.7, SD=1.38)	5 (4.5%)	4 (3.6%)	10 (9.1%)	22 (20%)	28 (25.5%)	41 (37.3%)
I thought back to how I write, and about what I might do differently to improve my English writing next time. (*M*=4.4, *SD*=1.44)	7 (6.4%)	5 (4.5%)	14 (12.7%)	24 (21.8%)	30 (27.3%)	30 (27.3%)

thinking about the purpose for their being used. It is likely to suggest that instruction alone may not be enough to raise metacognitive awareness of language learners about strategy use in writing. Thus, the type of instruction whether it is explicit or implicit may be a factor leading to difference in the use of metacognitive writing strategies. Additionally, the participants' perceived use of planning strategies may be the result of their overconfidence about generating and organizing ideas randomly without feeling the need to make an outline, which is referred as "knowledge telling" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987 in Huang & Zhang, 2022, p. 13). To this end, the finding about the use of planning strategies supports Huang and Zhang's (2022) assumption for the use of planning strategies.

On the other hand, this assumption is for language learners with low level of proficiency. Yet, language proficiency addressed in the current study was high level of proficiency (advanced). The learners who tended to write randomly were not beginner or elementary level learners, but they were learners with high level of proficiency who engaged in academic writing through paragraph and essay writing, which requires meticulous planning. Thus, this finding about proficiency is contrast with the finding of Huang and Zhang's (2022) study in a sense. However, in general, this finding suggests that language proficiency does not influence metacognitive writing strategy use. Therefore, the study contributes to existing research by supporting previous studies with samples of different proficiency groups (e.g., beginner level; Wei et al, 2014; elementary level; Ruan, 2014).

In sum, the present research aiming to investigate EFL learners' metacognitive awareness in writing presented findings that could help understand an issue considered as crucial to improve L2 writing. To this end, the findings suggest that a high level of language proficiency or explicit teaching on how to use metacognitive writing strategies does not lead to a higher amount of metacognitive writing strategies usage.

CONCLUSION

Considering attached importance to 21st century skills and metacognitive awareness involved in them, this study focuses on metacognitive awareness through strategy use in L2 writing. In the literature, studies present findings on beginner and elementary level language learners' metacognitive awareness in writing (e.g., Ruan, 2014; Wei et al, 2014). Trying to help understanding the notion of proficiency, a higher level of proficiency was involved in the research design. Accordingly, the current paper presents a study examining advanced level EFL learners' metacognitive awareness in writing through strategy use. For this purpose, the study was designed in accordance with explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design. The quantitative data were collected from 110 participants in Turkish context by using a valid and reliable questionnaire that addresses the research purpose whereas qualitative data were collected through interviews. Statistical data analyses suggested that the participants used metacognitive writing strategies in their essays, which was supported by the findings of the interviews. Yet, regarding the extent of their use, it was found that there were differences in the sub-categories of metacognitive awareness. That is, the participants were found to use more strategies while and after writing (monitoring and evaluating strategies) than before writing (planning). As the aim of the research was to explore whether these learners were metacognitively aware in writing without any intervention, it was conducted in a descriptive manner. Therefore, it could be suggested that instruction on metacognitive awareness and strategy use be part of language education programs as also emphasized in the literature regardless of language proficiency of learners (e.g., Al-Jarrah et al., 2018; Chen 2022; Ramadhanti & Yanda, 2021; Teng, 2020). Explicit guiding on how and why to use metacognitive writing strategies is necessary, and it is highly important that language learners should be presented with rationales for using writing strategies as part of explicit instruction on metacognitive awareness and writing strategies considering that the participants in this study reported less use of strategies in the planning stage of writing despite their in-class practice on them. In addition to instruction, they should be explained the ways and reasons for writing strategy use and provided opportunities for further metacognitive practices. Therefore, writing exercises to generate and organize ideas before writing such as brainstorming and outlining could be promoted in writing classes with the rationale for using them to raise language learners' metacognitive awareness. Furthermore, self-evaluation forms such as checklists for each stage of writing could be shared with language learners. Finally, the importance of metacognitive awareness and metacognitive writing should be highlighted in language teacher education to improve prospective language teachers' thinking and writing skills as well as their 21st century skills, which might be reflected in their future teaching experience.

Limitations of this study are related to its scope and design. To this end, data analyses are restricted to only a specific sample with a certain number of participants. The limited number of the participants in the interviews made it difficult to reach a conclusion. The participants' short answers and/or only yes/no answers hindered analyses of the qualitative data. Furthermore, as it was designed in explanatory sequential mixed methods research, no instruction or focus on proficiency was involved in the scope. Thus, for further research, it is suggested that studies be conducted in various contexts with different proficiency levels, and experimental designs could be involved to analyze any possible effect of instruction on metacognitive writing strategies. For a deeper insight, comparative studies that would explore whether there are similarities or differences between learners with a high and low level of language proficiency in their metacognitive writing strategies usage. Various writing genres and writing tasks may be involved as materials, or they could be associated with the use of metacognitive writing strategies (e.g., thesis writing and metacognitive writing strategies). Moreover, students' papers could be evaluated to relate their scores with different aspects such as to investigate any possible effect of instruction. Finally, monitoring and evaluating strategies could be focus of research since existing research is likely to focus more on planning.

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