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THE ROLE OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS IN ENHANCING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

Abstract: *Metacognitive awareness is widely recognized as a key factor in the development of academic writing skills in higher education, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Academic writing is a complex, problem-solving process that requires learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing activities. For master's students, strong academic writing competence is essential for academic success and research productivity. In Uzbekistan, however, traditional writing instruction often provides limited opportunities for fostering metacognitive and critical thinking skills. This study adopts a narrative literature review approach to examine the role of metacognitive awareness in enhancing academic writing. The synthesis of theoretical and empirical studies suggests that metacognitive strategies support self-regulation, cognitive control, and reflective learning in writing. Based on these insights, the study highlights the pedagogical value of integrating metacognitive strategy instruction into graduate curricula and underscores the need for further empirical research in authentic academic writing contexts.*

Keywords: *Metacognitive awareness; Academic writing; Metacognitive strategies; EFL context; Master's students; Higher education*

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METAKOGNITIV ONGNING AKADEMIK YOZUV KO'NIKMALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISHDAGI O'RNI

Annotatsiya: *Metakognitiv xabardorlik oliy ta'limda, ayniqsa ingliz tili xorijiy til sifatida (EFL) o'qitiladigan kontekstlarda, akademik yozuv ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda muhim omil sifatida e'tirof etiladi. Akademik yozuv murakkab, muammo yechishga yo'naltirilgan jarayon bo'lib, unda talabalardan yozish faoliyatini rejalashtirish, monitoring qilish va baholash talab etiladi. Magistratura bosqichidagi talabalar uchun mustahkam akademik yozuv kompetensiyasi akademik muvaffaqiyat va ilmiy faoliyat samaradorligi uchun muhim hisoblanadi. Biroq O'zbekiston sharoitida an'anaviy yozuv o'qitish amaliyotlari ko'pincha metakognitiv va tanqidiy fikrlash ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish uchun yetarli imkoniyatlarni taqdim etmaydi. Ushbu tadqiqot akademik yozuvni rivojlantirishda metakognitiv xabardorlikning rolini o'rganish maqsadida narrativ adabiyotlar sharhi yondashuvini qo'llaydi. Nazariy va empirik tadqiqotlarning sintezi metakognitiv strategiyalar yozishda o'z-o'zini boshqarish, kognitiv nazorat va reflektiv o'rganishni qo'llab-quvvatlashini ko'rsatadi. Ushbu natijalarga asoslanib, tadqiqot magistratura o'quv dasturlariga metakognitiv strategiyalarni o'rgatishni integratsiya qilishning pedagogik ahamiyatini ta'kidlaydi hamda real akademik yozuv kontekstlarida qo'shimcha empirik tadqiqotlar olib borish zarurligini ko'rsatadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Metakognitiv ong; Akademik yozuv; Metakognitiv strategiyalar; EFL muhiti; Magistratura talabalari; Oliy ta'lim*

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РОЛЬ МЕТАКОГНИТИВНОЙ ОСОЗНАННОСТИ В ПОВЫШЕНИИ НАВЫКОВ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОГО ПИСЬМА

Аннотация: *Метакогнитивная осознанность признаётся одним из ключевых факторов развития академических навыков письма в системе высшего образования, особенно в контексте обучения английскому языку как*

иностранному (EFL). Академическое письмо представляет собой сложный процесс решения задач, требующий от обучающихся планирования, мониторинга и оценки собственной письменной деятельности. Для студентов магистратуры сформированная компетентность в академическом письме является необходимым условием академической успешности и научной продуктивности. Однако в условиях Узбекистана традиционные подходы к обучению письму зачастую предоставляют ограниченные возможности для развития метакогнитивных и критических навыков мышления. В данном исследовании применяется нарративный обзор литературы с целью изучения роли метакогнитивной осознанности в развитии академического письма. Синтез теоретических и эмпирических исследований показывает, что метакогнитивные стратегии способствуют саморегуляции, когнитивному контролю и рефлексивному обучению в процессе письма. На основе полученных выводов в работе подчёркивается педагогическая целесообразность интеграции обучения метакогнитивным стратегиям в магистерские образовательные программы, а также отмечается необходимость дальнейших эмпирических исследований в аутентичных контекстах академического письма.

Ключевые слова: Метакогнитивная осознанность; Академическое письмо; Метакогнитивные стратегии; Контекст EFL; Магистранты; Высшее образование

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that metawriting instruction and students' metacognitive awareness plays a significant role in writing development in higher education. Metacognitive strategies enhance students' skills to monitor their writing processes, which can result in enhancing academic writing (AW) skills. It is important to note that writing is mainly about solving problems and involves different steps. Being aware of learning strategies helps students figure out how to learn most productively and what strategies work more effectively when learners can change their methods based on self-reflection [1, 373]. In EFL settings, also,

writing needs high-level thinking skills that can create difficulties for learners [2, 358]. In particular, well-developed AW skills among Master students are regarded as an asset for successful educational performance. However, in Uzbekistan educational institutions, the research reveals that there is a need for adjustment of traditional writing instruction. For example, it is believed that students should be supported by instructors to enhance their critical thinking [3,173]. Likewise, and together, there is a need for MA students to enhance in metacognitive skills to study more effectively.

Literature Review

1. Understanding Metacognition

Many definitions exist for the term metacognition. Essentially, metacognition is about understanding and managing one's own thinking processes. It is complex because it helps students develop the abilities they need to "manage their thinking in different areas" [4, 7]. For understanding a complex model of metacognition and how it works at different levels Efklides serves as a quality source. He explores how metacognition connects with self-regulation, co-regulation, and other-regulation. Specifically, metacognition describes a process where learners are "consciously aware of the monitoring and control processes" [5, 278]. There are three levels of metacognition: 1) the non-conscious level; 2) the personal awareness level; 3) the social level which are linked by monitoring and control. [6,240].

2. The Importance of Metacognition in Writing Instruction.

Some research highlights the significance of metawriting instruction whereby Metacognition as a theoretical framework is seen as paramount in effective writing instruction (Table 1).

Table 1

Metacognition and its components in metawriting instruction	
Metawriting instruction	
<i>Metacognition is when one knows how to apply certain methods and tools to control their comprehension of what is happening. Metacognition has two vital components:</i>	
<i>Metacognitive awareness</i> It consists of three kinds of knowledge:	<i>Metacognitive monitoring</i>

<i>Declarative knowledge is related to:</i> -how a writer perceives themselves as writers; -the way they impact writing; -their effectiveness in their writing skills; -their ability to understand what the writing task asks to do; -how they know what strategies they can apply to complete the task.	<i>Procedural knowledge</i> is heavily impacted and developed by declarative knowledge. It is, also, called the “know-how” knowledge, and is related to: -how the writer plans important steps to complete the writing task.	<i>Conditional knowledge</i> is the product of both declarative and procedural knowledge, and is about: -the writer’s ability to evaluate a writing task; -determining its goal and audience; -identifying the needed conditions for producing effective writing; -ability to choose, apply, and test the efficiency of specific writing strategies and skills to produce well-developed writing.	<i>and regulation</i> It means being able to evaluate one’s performance
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It is believed that, to foster grammatical conventions and writing mechanics, students should self-analyze essays, find mistakes and errors, compare them with correct sources. While students explain how certain conventions they analyzed were employed in a wrong way and how to correct them, their’ metawriting is assumed to be activated. This process is likely to enable students to gain deeper knowledge of writing conventions, such as nuances in grammar or punctuation. Also, there is the impact of metawriting in breaking the writer’s block and shaping writer’s inner dialogue. For instance, exposing students to read and analyze writers’ commentaries, descriptions and notes, which depicts the process of how a certain composition was written, students may learn what hurdles writers come across prior to beginning writing. In this process, metawriting enables students as future writers to find what the problem is and what is causing it; examine the problem and search for its solution. This, in turn, develops the “inner critic” in writers who can evaluate emerged problems and seek solutions in the process of writing [7, 85]. According to Teng and Yue, metacognition, critical thinking and AW are interconnected, and they suggest that the higher the level of students’ metacognitive awareness is, the better critical thinkers they are which helps them to be more proficient in AW performance. Also, students can better plan, control and assess their learning process and outcome, if they apply metacognitive strategies, be it, in traditional classroom or digital educational platform [6, 255].

So far, many research studies have explored how writing skills are connected with metacognition. These studies together emphasize how important metacognition is in the writing process. They demonstrate how proficient writers use advanced thinking skills, which include planning, monitoring, evaluating and revising their written piece. Additionally, these studies suggest that teachers should focus on metacognitive strategies to help students improve their writing skills, regardless of their current levels of writing. For example, it is advisable to introduce and remind the tool that effectively measures if EFL learners applied metacognitive strategies. To this purpose, writing instructors can introduce *The Metacognitive Awareness Writing Questionnaire* which consists of three stages: 1) *planning*: the stage when the writer makes an outline of the task; selects proper language; determines the goal; 2) *monitoring*: the stage when the writer examines their piece while they are writing for appropriate word choice, grammar accuracy or range, topic development; the writer revises the work; controls time management; 3) *evaluating*: the stage when the writer assess the completed piece for language quality, organization, content, and areas for improvement. This tool provides a chance to observe the levels of EFL learners' awareness of their writing process, and how this awareness contributes to their writing skills enhancement [1, 375-376]. Indeed, many experts agree that metacognitive knowledge has a major impact on both the process and the results of writing in a language [8, 53-54]. When students work on writing assignments, those who understand metacognition well can organize their writing steps, manage their thinking efforts, and think back and note what they have written. In other words, students who use metacognitive strategies in their writing process, often develop a more polished and effective written work [9, 41]. In research carried out by Balta the relationship between students' skills in writing argumentative texts and their levels of writing anxiety and their metacognitive awareness was examined. The results of the study revealed that it is important to reduce levels of writing anxiety among students and upgrade their levels of metacognitive knowledge to enhance their argumentative writing abilities [10, 238]. In a study carried out by Teng, the impact of group feedback

and self-explanation on Chinese college students' English writing skills was investigated. The implementation of two types of support in writing was tested in three groups: a) a group where students received group feedback; b) a group where students applied self-explanation; 3) a control group without any special support. The study examined how these methods affected students' writing and their skill use, while the students managed everything on their own without any extra help in new situations, solely, relying on their metacognition. The findings indicated that students who received group feedback performed the best overall, followed by those who used self-explanation, while the control group came in last. Moreover, students who received the feedback from the group demonstrated implementation of metacognitive strategies comprehended the assignment better and applied various learning approaches [11]. Another research examined the relationship between self-regulated learning and metacognitive awareness with English persuasive writing skills. They studied this through data collected from a survey and samples of written arguments by students. Although there was a connection between these factors, the study could not demonstrate that being more aware of your learning or having better self-regulation directly resulted in improved outcomes in argumentative writing [12, 17]. Another study claims, well-organized self-regulation has three main parts: 1) cognitive strategies: memorizing and understanding information which should be mastered; 2) metacognitive strategies that help us monitor our work while we complete tasks; 3) the amount of motivation required to complete the tasks [13, 12].

Methods

The present research adopts a narrative literature review design to examine the impact of metacognitive awareness on enhancing academic writing skills. This approach allows for the synthesis and interpretation of theoretical and empirical findings rather than the exhaustive coverage or formal quality appraisal characteristic of systematic reviews. Relevant literature was identified through searches of international and regional academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, and selected regional journals focusing on

applied linguistics, academic writing, and educational psychology. The selection criteria included studies that addressed metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, evaluating), their relevance to writing skills development, and their application to scientific or academic writing.

Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the reviewed literature underscores the central role of metacognitive awareness in enhancing academic writing skills. A recurring theme is that writing is not merely a linguistic activity but a self-regulated cognitive process of planning, monitoring, and evaluation which is integral for producing coherent and effective texts [5,278], [14], [6, 18]. Evidence suggests that learners who actively engage in these processes demonstrate higher levels of control over their writing and are better able to translate ideas into well-structured arguments. Metacognitive awareness appears to function as both a cognitive and regulatory mechanism in writing. Declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge collectively enable learners to understand themselves as writers, plan writing tasks effectively, and evaluate both task demands and their performance outcomes. For instance, studies on metawriting instruction illustrate that learners who analyze and reflect on their writing, through self-correction, comparison with models, or engagement with peers' feedback, show notable improvements in writing quality [14], [7,85]. It can thus be inferred that metacognitive strategies mediate the relationship between knowledge and written expression, facilitating a deeper understanding of writing conventions and enhancing the capacity for self-assessment.

Empirical studies further indicate that the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies may vary depending on context and support mechanisms. For example, Teng's investigation into group feedback and self-explanation suggests that external scaffolding can augment the benefits of metacognitive strategy use, with students receiving structured feedback performing better than those relying solely on individual metacognitive monitoring. Conversely, while self-regulation and metacognitive awareness are generally positively associated with writing

performance, some research cautions against assuming a direct causal link; heightened awareness alone may not automatically result in superior argumentative or persuasive writing outcomes [6], [10, 236-238].

The literature also highlights the interplay between metacognition, motivation, and affective factors. For instance, high writing anxiety can undermine the potential benefits of metacognitive strategies, whereas students with both strong metacognitive awareness and effective self-regulation tend to demonstrate enhanced performance and reduced anxiety [11, 238]). Moreover, metacognitive interventions, such as structured planning, monitoring, and evaluating exercises, appear to foster not only technical proficiency but also the development of learners' "inner critic," which promotes reflective thinking and problem-solving throughout the writing process [7, 85].

Overall, the reviewed studies collectively suggest that integrating metacognitive strategy training into writing instruction has substantial potential for improving academic writing outcomes. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that the magnitude of these effects may be influenced by learners' prior knowledge, motivation, task complexity, and the instructional environment. Accordingly, while metacognitive strategies represent a powerful tool for enhancing writing, their effectiveness is context-sensitive and should be implemented alongside appropriate instructional support.

In conclusion, the findings reinforce the theoretical position that writing is a complex, self-regulated cognitive activity, with metacognitive awareness acting as a critical mediator in both the process and outcomes of writing. From a pedagogical standpoint, these insights emphasize the importance of systematically fostering metacognitive strategies, through both direct instruction and structured feedback mechanisms, to support learners in developing more proficient and reflective writing skills.

Conclusion

This narrative literature review highlights the importance of metacognitive awareness in academic writing development, suggesting that writing is a self-

regulated cognitive process rather than a purely linguistic activity. The reviewed studies indicate that metacognitive strategies, particularly planning, monitoring, and evaluating support writers in managing task demands and improving the quality of academic texts.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings imply that incorporating metacognitive strategy instruction into graduate curricula may be especially beneficial for Uzbekistani master's students, given the growing emphasis on English-medium research and international publication. Such strategies may contribute to students' academic professionalization and support the development of scientific writing competence.

However, as a literature-based study, the conclusions are necessarily constrained by the scope and quality of existing research, and empirical evidence focusing specifically on the Uzbekistani context remains limited. Future research should therefore examine how Uzbekistani master's students employ metacognitive strategies in authentic writing tasks and explore the long-term effects of targeted instructional interventions on academic writing development.

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