

The Attitudes of Yemeni University Students towards the Use of Metacognitive Writing Strategies

Mahmoud Kulaib Saeed Sultan

Department of English, Faculty of Languages, University of Sana'a, Yemen

Algaphari2018@gmail.com

Mohammed Abdu Ahmed Al-Mekhlafi

Professor of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Education, University of Sana'a

malmekhlafi@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the Yemeni University students' attitudes towards the use of metacognitive strategies in an Academic Writing course. It also explored whether there were any significant differences in the students' attitudes towards the metacognitive writing strategies based on their gender. This study employed a quantitative approach. The sample of the study consisted of thirty second-level students (10 males and 20 females) who were studying English in the Department of English at the College of Languages at Sana'a University in Yemen during the academic year 2023- 2024. The researchers used a literature-based questionnaire with special reference to Rhema and Miliszewska (2017), Al Moqbali et al. (2020) and Ajayi (2024). It consisted of seventeen statements that aimed to measure the attitudes of the Yemeni students towards the use of metacognitive strategies in writing skills. The results of the present study showed that the total mean score among the participants was (3.74), based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1- strongly agree to 5- strongly disagree. (1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- neutral 4- disagree 5- strongly disagree). The scores for each item ranged from 1-5. Furthermore, the findings of the study indicated that the majority of the students reported positive attitudes towards the use of metacognitive strategies as they help to improve their writing skills. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference between the male and female students in their attitudes towards using metacognitive strategies. This research ends with some recommendations for the people concerned with the Yemeni teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and presents some suggestions for further studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complicated skill for students to acquire; every student has different strategies to overcome their difficulties in a writing task, organizing and evaluating their writing process in a structured manner. The researchers are of the view that the learners' attitudes and perceptions are a vital component in language learning strategies. The metacognitive writing strategies are one type of such learning strategy. They refer to the techniques that help learners understand and manage their own learning process. They help the learners in developing their abilities of writing while focusing on planning, monitoring, and

evaluating their writing tasks. These strategies lead the students to increase the awareness of their writing tasks. According to Diaz (2013 and Yanyan (2010), as cited in Alfawzan (2020), both Diaz (2013) and Yanyan (2010) reported that using metacognitive writing strategies is a valuable teaching function that helps EFL students facilitate their English writing skills. The purpose of such metacognitive writing strategies is to improve the students' writing texts and lead them to be effective in their writing. At the beginning of writing a task, the students must recognize how to use their planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies.

This current research attempts to explore the Yemeni university students' attitudes towards the use of metacognitive strategies in their academic writing and how they implement metacognitive strategies when writing a task. The quantitative data of this study were collected through a literature-based questionnaire with special reference to Rhema and Miliszewska (2017), Al Moqbali et al. (2020) and Ajayi (2024). The adopted questionnaire aimed to explore the undergraduate students' attitudes towards the use of metacognitive strategies in writing skills. After checking the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was distributed to 30 Yemeni students who were enrolled on the bachelor's degree in the English language program. They were Second-year Yemeni students of the English Department at the Faculty of Languages at Sana'a University during the First Semester of the academic year 2023-2024.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Attitudes

Attitude is a basic evaluative process related to the viewpoints, opinions, thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the students when they want to master a task, either positive or negative. It plays a crucial role in enabling the students to learn English skills in general and writing skills in particular. It is one of the major predominant components of success in metacognitive strategies.

The term "Attitudes" is a key prominent component influencing the metacognitive strategies performance in writing skills. It relies on the intellectual capacity of the learners as well as on their attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies. This means that the metacognitive strategies should be approached primarily as an educational, social, and psychological strategy rather than a product approach. Such strategies include the students'

motivation, feelings, behaviours, beliefs and perceptions. Inal, Evan, and Saracalogu (2003) and Zulfikar, Dahliana, and Sari (2019) reported that the term “attitudes” refers to the learners’ feelings and shapes their behaviour towards learning.

Using metacognitive strategies becomes more important in the educational system. Several studies have been conducted and identified factors that influence the students’ metacognitive strategies use. These include the students’ attitudes towards metacognitive writing strategies (Razi, 2012); Al-Jarrah et al., 2018; Astudillo, 2018; Khikmah, 2018; Qin and Zhang, 2019; and Dhillon, 2024). These studies showed that the students became aware of their performance in writing skills through the metacognitive strategies, and they had positive attitudes towards the use of the metacognitive strategies in writing skills. Hence, it is clear that metacognitive strategies play an essential role in improving the student’s writing skills.

Several research studies have been conducted in the area of student attitudes, for example, (Wenden, 1991; Alhmali, 2007; Ghazal et al., 2009; Abidin et al., 2012; and Zulfikar et al., 2019). These studies classified the term “attitude” into three interrelated components, namely, cognitive, practical, and behavioural. The first one is made up of the beliefs, thoughts, and emotions towards an object. The second one involves different emotions and feelings towards something, and the third one refers to one’s action on an object.

Eshghinejed (2016) and Soomero (2018) explained the construct of attitudes as the behaviour of people towards someone or something. Thus, the student’s attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies may play an essential role in achieving success in the adoption, effective integration and utilization for positive results in writing skills.

According to Mensah et al. (2013) and Zulfikar (2019), attitudes tell us the learners’ performance, such as how they think, act, and behave. They are regarded as the most essential element to be taken into account. Thus, the current researchers are concerned about the students’ attitudes and performance in writing skills.

2.2. Metacognitive Writing Strategies

The metacognitive writing strategies have played a significant role in the educational field. They have become an integral part of the educational system, from schools to universities. The metacognitive writing strategies are an effective alternative to the traditional teaching methods. They are the techniques and the activities that the teachers often apply to help the

students understand how they learned the English language skills in general and the writing skills in particular.

According to Oxford (2013) and ALshammari (2015), metacognitive writing strategies help students determine how they carry out their thinking processes.

They play a vital role in learning the English writing skills. Metacognitive writing strategies such as thinking, brainstorming, and paying attention help the students stay focused and maintain concentration while writing a text (Oxford, 1990 Al Moqbali et al. 2020). They play a crucial role in the writing skill. They encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration between the students. They provide the opportunity for the teachers to give the needed instructions to their students. They play an essential role in the students' love of training in writing skills. With the help of the metacognitive writing strategies, the students take writing skills as activities and fun.

The metacognitive writing strategies empower the students to become more academically independent by providing them with the techniques, procedures, and activities needed to take control of their learning process. They also empower the students to take control of their learning tasks. By using them, they learn how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing skills. They enable the students to monitor their progress and identify areas of weakness. Numerous researchers have attempted to classify the metacognitive strategies in the educational system (Ajayi, 2024).

Oxford (1990), Zhang and Sheepo (2013), Usman et al. (2017) and Saleh et al. (2025) classify the metacognitive strategies into three types, namely: the planning strategy, the monitoring strategy, and the evaluating strategy. They are discussed below:

The Planning Strategy is the first category of the metacognitive strategies that include previewing concepts related to the language task and anticipating strategies to be used in a language process (LV & Chen, 2010). It helps the students organize their thoughts and ideas and approach a task systematically before they start writing. Flower and Hayes, 1981; Al Moqbali et al., 2020) classified three types of planning: strategy generating ideas, setting goals, and organizing.

The Monitoring Strategy is the second category of metacognitive strategies. According to Ahmed et al. (2013), in this strategy, the students monitor and control their learning processes. It could be described as the process of controlling and selecting the appropriate steps in order to produce a good piece of writing (Handayani et al., 2023).

The Evaluating Strategy is the third category of the metacognitive strategies. This happens when the writing process has been completed. Evaluation will be more successful when it is done in pairs or called peer assessment (Handayani et al., 2023).

2.3. Previous Studies Related to the Students' Attitudes towards the Metacognitive Writing Strategies

Several studies were conducted to explore the attitudes of the students towards the use of metacognitive writing strategies in different parts of the world.

In Turkey, Razi (2012) conducted a study to investigate the students' attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies in the writing skills in the classroom. This study involved 250 Turkish students at the Cypriot University. The study was based on a questionnaire and structured interviews. The researcher interviewed the six teachers of the students who participated in the study. The results indicated that less than half of the participants were aware of the practice of metacognitive writing strategies. However, there were highly positive students' attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies.

In Jordan, Al-Jarrah et al. (2018) examined the learners' attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies of the writing process. Their subjects were ten high school learners. The data of this research were based on extensive interviews. They consist of nine questions about the writing process and learners' views on implementing the metacognitive strategies. The results of this research revealed that the majority of the students showed positive attitudes towards metacognitive strategies. They were familiar with and utilize metacognitive strategies as part of their learning process.

In Ecuador, Astudillo (2018) investigated the effectiveness of the students' attitudes to improve their awareness of writing essays. The sample of the study consisted of 24 students (7 females and 17 males), regardless of their gender, who were registered in the third level of the English credit course at the University of Cuanca. Their ages ranged from 20 to 25 years old.

The data were collected by a survey questionnaire to know the students' attitudes, reflections, and perceptions after the training. The results indicated that using the metacognitive strategies had a positive impact on their writing levels and increased their confidence levels and also motivated them to write narrative and opinion essays at their level of English proficiency.

Khikmah (2018) reported a significant difference in the students' proposal writing before and after the metacognitive strategies interventions. The students were enrolled in the English Education Department at the Sunan Ampel Satiatic Islamic Surabaya University. The research was based on an e-questionnaire on the metacognitive awareness and the student's attitudes towards the common use of the metacognitive strategies. The results revealed that the students had positive attitudes and high enthusiasm towards the metacognitive strategies in the proposal writing process.

In the Chinese context, Qin and Zhang (2019) investigated the effectiveness of the use of metacognitive strategies. The sample involved 126 non-English primary Chinese learners. They are around 21 years old. They administered the observation and e-questionnaires as the instruments of the study. The treatment was conducted in an actual class where the participants were asked to write an essay. The results showed that the students had positive attitudes towards the use of the metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, the results showed that the students who have a high level of proficiency apply more metacognitive strategies and are more aware of regulating their writing process than the low-proficiency students (Aliyu & Fung, 2020).

In Malaysia, Aripin & Rahmat (2021) conducted a study to examine how male and female students plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing from the perspective of gender. Two students took part in this study from Johor University. The data of this study were collected and analyzed qualitatively. The result of the study revealed that female students applied more subcategories of metacognitive writing strategies in their writing process compared to male students with strong writing performances who were observed to use metacognitive strategies in their writing process.

In Indonesia, Dhillon (2024) examined the effectiveness of the metacognitive aspects use (knowledge and regulation) and the students' attitudes towards them. The study involved

twenty-two third-level Indonesian university participants in the academic year 2022-2023. The data for this study were collected through interviews and observations to know about the students' attitudes and their awareness towards metacognitive aspects. The quantitative data were collected by the questionnaires to identify the students' difficulties in essay writing and discover what they need to improve their ability to learn essay writing. The results showed that the most commonly used metacognitive regulation is the planning stage, with a mean score of (0.84) in the metacognitive aspects.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the Yemeni EFL undergraduate students' attitudes towards the use of metacognitive strategies in writing skills.

3.1. Aims of the Study

1. The study aims to explore the Yemeni university students' attitudes towards using metacognitive strategies in an academic writing skill at the University of Sana'a in Yemen during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024.
2. It also determines if there is a significant difference towards the metacognitive strategies among the students' attitudes based on their gender.

3.2. Research Questions

The present study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the Yemeni University students towards the metacognitive strategies?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference between the male and female students' attitudes towards using the metacognitive strategies?

3.3. Methodology

3.3.1. Research Design

The researchers used the survey descriptive approach to collect the data of the study through a literature-based questionnaire. They also used the quantitative method.

3.3.2. Participants

The Participants of the study were 30 Second-year students enrolled on the Bachelor program at the Faculty of Languages at Sana'a University in Yemen during the academic year

2023-2024. They were 20 females and 10 males with ages ranging from (20 -27) years old. All the participants were chosen randomly, disregarded their age, gender, race, or any other variables. All were speakers of the same mother tongue (Arabic).

3.3.3. Instrument

The instrument used to collect the data for this study was a closed- ended questionnaire that consisted of seventeen items. The statements were designed on a 5 point Likert scale format with values: 1= “strongly disagree”, 2= “disagree”, 3= “neutral”, 4= “agree”, 5= “strongly agree”.

The questionnaire was distributed to the students during the first semester of the academic year 2023- 2024 in the classroom. It took approximately 30 -50 minutes to complete. It was administered to measure the attitudes of the students towards the metacognitive strategies. It was adopted from Rhema & Miliszewska (2017). After designing the questionnaire and before giving it to the students, it was distributed to nine University teachers from the English Department, Faculty of Languages at Sana’a University, the English Department, Faculty of Education at Ibb University, and the English Department, Faculty of Education at Taiz University for checking its validity. They gave comments and suggestions, which were taken into consideration in writing the modified version of the questionnaire.

According to their recommendations, the questionnaire was modified, some of the items were defected, and some of the items were modified. The total number of items was 18 and was reduced to only 17 items. The research tool was piloted by 30 Second-year students in the English Department at the Faculty of Languages, Sana’a University, during the first semester of the 2023- 2024 academic year.

3.3.4. Instrument Validity and Reliability

For validity purposes, the questionnaire was validated by a panel of nine experts in EFL teaching and Education, who evaluated the relevance and clarity of each item. The experts suggested some modifications to avoid redundant items, and some items were reworded to make them clearer. Some other items were defective. To verify the reliability of the

questionnaire, the researchers calculated Cronbach's Alpha which was (0.88) which indicates high reliability of the instrument.

3.3.5. Data Analysis

The data of the study were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The data were analyzed to produce descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequency. The researchers also used the t-test to measure the significance level between the attitudes of the males and females towards their attitudes towards the use of the metacognitive strategies in writing. Furthermore, to interpret the values of the mean scores the researchers used the criteria shown in Table (1) below.

Table (1): Scale Used for Interpreting the Data

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Mean	5 - 4.20	4.19 – 3.40	3.39 – 2.60	2.59 -1.80	1.79 – 1

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section attempts to answer the research questions of the study.

4.1. Answering the First Research Question

The first research question was: “What are the attitudes of the Yemeni University students towards the metacognitive strategies?” To answer this question, the One-Sample t-test was calculated as shown in Table (2) below:

Table (2): Mean and Standard Deviation for the Students' Attitudes

N	Statements	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		M	Std. D.	Degree of agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	I believe that metacognitive strategies improve my learning experiences.	26	86.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	4.40	.8130	Strongly agree
2	I think that metacognitive strategies give me the chance to acquire new knowledge.	27	90	3	10.0	0	0	4.36	.6680	Strongly agree
3	I write better when I use metacognitive strategies.	26	86.6	3	10.0	1	3.3	4.36	.800	Strongly agree
4	I believe that using metacognitive strategies enable students to write better.	26	86.6	4	13.3	0	0	4.30	.700	Strongly agree
5	I like to attend lectures that use metacognitive strategies.	25	83.3	2	6.7	3	10	4.13	1.04	Agree
6	I prefer to take /study a compositional course within	25	83.4	3	10.0	2	6.6	4.10	.950	Agree

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N	Statements	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		M	Std. D.	Degree of agreement
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
7	metacognitive learning strategies I think evaluation is an important component of metacognitive strategies.	26	86.7	2	6.7	2	6.6	4.06	.900	Agree
8	Using metacognitive writing strategies in English is very interesting.	20	66.6	9	30.0	1	3.3	3.96	.880	Agree
9	I believe that metacognitive strategies enhance the quality of writing skills because they integrate all parts of the writing process.	22	73.4	7	23.3	1	3.3	3.96	.800	Agree
10	I like to apply metacognitive writing strategies in my life.	18	60	8	26.7	4	13.3	3.83	1.08	Agree
11	I feel confident in my ability to express /articulate my thoughts clearly using metacognitive strategies	22	73.3	3	10.0	5	16.7	3.80	1.18	Agree
12	I think that metacognitive strategies will help me with my future career.	19	63.3	5	16.7	6	20	3.73	1.20	Agree
13	Metacognitive writing strategies will give me higher scores in this term.	16	53.3	11	36.7	3	10	3.63	.920	Agree
14	I feel that I have a high level of culture when I use metacognitive strategies	18	60	6	20.0	6	20	3.60	1.13	Agree
15	I believe that I have some problems in using metacognitive writing strategies.	10	33.3	7	23.3	13	43.3	2.80	1.29	Neutral
16	I feel tense and afraid when I start writing by using metacognitive strategies.	9	30	4	13.3	17	56.7	2.53	1.38	Disagree
17	I avoid participating in using written metacognition strategies.	4	13.3	6	20.0	20	66.7	2.13	1.13	Disagree
Total		339	66.5	86	16.9	85	16.7	3.74	.4120	Agree

Table (2) shows the average mean of the students' attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies perception scale was (3.74) which is (74.8 %). The results shown in the table above indicate that the means of the statements associated with the learners' attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies ranged between (4.40) and (2.13). The results displayed in Table (2) above also show that the highest rating, "strongly agree," was given to the statement: *I believe that the metacognitive*

strategies improve my learning experiences with a mean of (4.40). The lowest rating, “Disagree”, was given to the statement: *I avoid participating in using written metacognitive strategies* with a mean of (2.13).

The finding of the present study lends support to the findings of Razi (2012), Al-Jarrah et al. (2018), and Dhillon (2024) who found that there were highly positive attitudes towards using the metacognitive strategies in writing skills. For example, Khikmah (2018) found a positive attitude towards using metacognitive in writing skills. The finding of the present study also supports what Qin and Zhang (2019) reported on the difference between high and low-proficiency-level students; the highly proficient students use more metacognitive strategies than the students with a low proficiency level.

4.2. Answering the Second Research Question

The second research question of this study asks: “*Is there any statistically significant difference between the male and female students’ attitudes towards using the metacognitive strategies?*” To answer this question, the Independent Sample t –Test was calculated. Table (3) below displays the results

Table (3) the Difference between Males and Females Attitudes towards the Use of the Metacognitive Strategies

Gander	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig.
Male	10	2.51	0.168	28	0.294	0.771
females	20	2.48	0.291			

Table (3) above shows that the mean scores of the male students on their attitudes towards using the metacognitive strategies in the writing skill was (2.51) with the standard deviation of (0.168), while the mean score of the female students was (2.48), and the standard deviation was (0.291). The mean scores of the male and the female students were compared using a t-test. This statistical analysis resulted in a T-score of (0.294) and the probability value was ($P < 0.77$). This means that the difference between the male and the female students was not statistically significant at $P < 0.05$ (Mutar, 2019 & Al-Mekhlafi, 2020).

The finding of the present study lends support to the findings of Astudillo (2018) investigated the use of the metacognitive strategies among university students in Ecuador and did not find any difference in the use of the metacognitive strategies based on gender. However, this finding does not support the findings of Aripin and Rahmat (2021) who found statistically significant differences between the male and female students in the use of the metacognitive strategies in favor of the female students.

5. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the current study was to investigate the attitudes of Yemeni EFL students towards using metacognitive strategies in writing skill. The second aim was to explore any differences between the male and female students in their attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies in writing skill. The participants were 30 students enrolled in the second year at the Department of English in the Faculty of Languages at Sana'a University in Yemen.

The results of this study revealed that the students' attitudes towards the use of the metacognitive strategies in writing skill were positive. This study concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the male and female students in their attitudes towards the use of the metacognitive strategies in the writing skill.

Moreover, this study emphasizes that the metacognitive strategies should be used effectively to improve the writing skills and it confirmed that positive, effective students' attitudes towards metacognitive strategies may be enhanced through the ways students gain confidence in the writing skill. It also emphasizes that the writing essay should be restricted through planning, monitoring, and evaluating.

5.1. Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Based on the findings of the present study, the researchers suggest the following recommendations for the students in the bachelor program:

- The teachers should use and train the students to use the metacognitive strategies of English skills in general and in the writing skill in particular.

- The teachers should develop the students' monitoring skills to tackle the metacognitive and linguistic aspects by adopting the best methods for teaching writing skills.
- The teachers should create an encouraging atmosphere in the writing lectures to promote the students' positive attitudes towards the metacognitive strategies.
- They also should motivate the students to learn the writing skills.
- The teachers should give the students material which can enhance the students' motivation to use the metacognitive strategies in the writing skill.
- The teachers should provide the students with practical activities that help them to achieve progress in their writing skill.
- Using metacognitive strategies enables students to become aware of monitoring their progress towards their goals.
- The students should be aware of their attitudes towards applying metacognitive strategies to improve their writing skill.
- The students should be motivated and encouraged to actively use the metacognitive strategies in the writing skill.
- The students should be provided with authentic material in the classroom as it is considered a rich resource for the metacognitive strategies and the writing skill.

Suggestions for Further Research

- More writing research is needed on different factors influencing the use of the metacognitive strategies such as gender, age, proficiency, and cultural background.
- Since this study is related to the second level university students' use of the metacognitive strategies, other studies should investigate the students' use of the metacognitive strategies by the secondary school students.
- This research employed a quantitative approach. Therefore, it is recommended that further research should use the qualitative approach through using multiple data collection (Usman, et al, 2017).

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