

Algerian EFL Students' Awareness and Use of Metacognitive Strategies in WritingOuahidadAtik Zid^{1*}, MohammedNaoua²¹University of KasdiMerbah, (Algeria)² University of El Oued, (Algeria)

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Abstract

The use of metacognitive strategies helps students enhance their writing competence and enables them to effectively plan, monitor, and evaluate what they write. This study aims to investigate the level of Algerian EFL(English as Foreign Language) students' awareness and use of metacognitive strategies in writing. Forty first-year students from the University of El Oued responded to a metacognitive writing strategies awareness questionnaire to collect data within a descriptive case study research design. The obtained quantitative data were analysed by means of descriptive statistics. The results revealed that students' level of awareness and use of the different metacognitive writing strategies was low, especially, with regard to evaluation. The study recommends the conduction of further research on the causes behind students' low level of metacognitive awareness and the explicit instruction of metacognitive writing strategies.

Keywords:*awareness, evaluating, metacognitive strategies, monitoring, planning, writing.*

1. Introduction

Writing is a vital skill in the process of learning a foreign language. It requires learners to develop language proficiency that helps them express their thoughts, write essays, produce research papers, and obtain high scores in exams; in other words, to succeed in their academic life. However, possessing effective writing skills is fraught with difficulties since writing is a complex process that represents one of the most problematic areas for foreign language learners (Panahandeh& Asl, 2014). Researchers have identified a number of factors that hinder the improvement of EFL learners' writing competence. These include the students' limited knowledge of the topic, insufficient practice, and inadequate feedback (Chang, 2012) and their negative attitudes and apprehension towards writing (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010). However, one of the most effective factors impeding students' writing performance is the absence of a purposeful and systematic use of the learning strategies in foreign language classes (Cer, 2019).

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According to Oxford (1989), language learning strategies are behaviours or actions which language learners use to make (language) learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable. Among all the types of learning strategies, EFL/ESL (English as a Second Language) writing strategies received much attention from researchers. Mu (2005) proposed one of the most widely recognised taxonomies of writing strategies, which includes five types strategies: rhetorical strategies, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, communicative strategies, and social/affective strategies. The focus of the current study is on metacognitive strategies as they have been found to have a great impact on ELF learners' writing skills. Magogwev (2013) and Mekala, Shabitha and Ponmani (2016) state that learners who use metacognitive strategies in writing focus more on linguistic elements, content, knowledge of task requirements, the personal learning process, text accuracy, and discourse features. Additionally, the use of metacognitive strategies helps learners develop and regulate awareness of the linguistic and cognitive levels of writing (Harris, Santangelo, & Graham, 2010) and provides them with the ability to plan, control and evaluate their learning (Rahimi and Katal, 2012).

Regular evaluation of the writing assignments, research papers, and exam sheets of the first-year students', who belong to the department of English at El Oued University, Algeria, reveal a considerable lack of awareness of such effective metacognitive strategies and the influence they may have on learners' writing competence. Starting from this overall problem, and given the fact that this issue is still under-investigated in the local Algerian context, the researcher found a great interest in conducting this study, which aimed to investigate the level of Algerian EFL students' awareness and use of the metacognitive strategies employed in writing.

By examining students' awareness and use of the metacognitive strategies employed in writing, this article intends to make a significant contribution to improving students' writing skills in the Algerian EFL writing classes. It may provide researchers and practitioners with an in-depth analysis of one of the major causes impeding students' writing development. Additionally, it may help raise students' awareness on the necessity of adopting strategy-based writing in order to improve their writing performance, which is a key factor to academic success. Finally, this research may add to the existing body of research on students' metacognitive awareness in EFL writing context.

2. Literature Review

This section tends to establish the theoretical framework of the research. It defines the concept of metacognition and highlights its components. Additionally, it provides a thorough account of the metacognitive strategies under investigation. This section ends with a short review of the previous studies conducted on the use of metacognitive strategies in EFL writing contexts.

2.1. Metacognition and its Components

Flavell (1976, 1979) was the first to introduce the term metacognition in the field of education. To him, metacognition is "knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena" (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). Another widely accepted definition of this term was proposed by Brown (1978), viewing metacognition as the knowledge about and regulation of one's higher mental activities in learning processes. Both definitions consider metacognition as awareness and control of thinking to enhance learning. In other words, strong metacognitive skills affect considerably students' learning through helping them understand their own learning processes and through ensuring better outcomes.

According to Flavell (1976), metacognition has two components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation. The former, also known as metacognitive awareness, involves an individual's knowledge about himself and his cognitive abilities; it includes knowledge of person, task, and strategy. Later researchers have used the terms declarative knowledge, task knowledge, and procedural knowledge to refer to the three constituents of metacognitive knowledge respectively, and adding a fourth constituent, conditional knowledge, to refer to how and when the individual performs varying processes of the task (Harris et al., 2010). The latter involves regulation of cognition through a set of activities that help people control their learning thinking about thinking; it includes planning, monitoring (or regulating), and evaluation. In 1979, Flavell added a new concept to his metacognitive dichotomy, namely, metacognitive experiences, which refer to "any conscious cognitive or affective experiences that accompany and pertain to any intellectual enterprise" (p. 906).

Since Flavell introduced the concept of metacognition in the 1970s, researchers have conducted a lot of research to explore the nature of metacognitive strategies and their effect on learning, particularly, writing.

2.2. Metacognitive Writing Strategies

One of the pioneering taxonomies ever devised for writing strategies is that of Mu (2005), who classifies writing strategies into five categories which are basically inspired by ESL writing theories. These are rhetorical, metacognitive, cognitive, communicative, and social/affective strategies. These strategies have been an area of interest among researchers who explored their dimensions and carried out experimental studies to test their efficacy in teaching and learning writing. Among all the above-stated strategies, this study focuses on metacognitive strategies.

Wenden (1991) defines metacognitive strategies as mental operations or procedures that learners use to regulate their learning. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) maintain that metacognitive strategies are higher order executive skills, which "involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, and self-evaluation after the learning activity has been completed" (p. 8). Starting from this definition, it can be concluded that O'Malley and Chamot maintain the same strategies set by Flavell, namely, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Papeontiou-louca (2003) and Mu (2005) and other researchers also follow the same traditional taxonomy mentioned above about metacognitive strategies. Below is a brief description of these strategies based on O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

2.2.1. Planning

Planning is considered as a procedure for resolving conflict among competing action statements that applies to the conditional clause in the production system. That is, planning refers to the processes of directing the course of language reception and production. It is preferably done before writing because it involves finding focus concerning purpose, audience, ideas, and strategies to be used. It includes five strategies: advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, and functional planning. It enables the learner to prepare and organise all necessary tools for effectively and systematically embarking on the writing task.

2.2.2. Monitoring

Monitoring refers to the learner's response to an ambiguous meaning in language. Based on the guesses he makes, possible meanings can be inferred to comprehend the intended message—comprehension monitoring. It involves the learner's awareness of (controlling) the processes he is engaged in while writing, such as checking the progress of writing in terms of global and local

features, a strategy referred to as production monitoring. Monitoring also includes self-monitoring, comprehension monitoring, styling monitoring, strategy monitoring, plan monitoring, and double-checking monitoring. This strategy allows the learner to determine progress during the process of writing and observe his strengths and weaknesses.

2.2.3. Evaluation

Evaluation is the learner's mental process of consciously and purposefully verifying the outcomes of the writing task to check whether the text meets the standard criteria. It takes place after writing and involves production evaluation, performance evaluation, ability evaluation, strategy evaluation, and language evaluation. Evaluation enables the learner to reconsider the global and local features of the text and examine the strategies used to accomplish the task. In sum, it allows the learner to judge and reflect on how well he accomplished the writing task. It is best conducted in pairs, a process referred to as peer assessment.

2.3. Previous Research on Metacognitive Writing Strategies

A plethora of research has been conducted on the use of metacognitive strategies in writing in EFL/ESL contexts. Lv and Chen (2010) carried out a study performed on 86 Chinese vocational high school students and found that their writing skills improved through the use of the metacognitive strategy. Another study conducted by Zu-Feng, Hui-Fang, and Briody (2012) on 152 students Taiwanese students revealed that students with a high level of writing competence were better at operating metacognition in planning and revising than those with poor writing skills. Magogwe (2013) found in his study that 30 students from Botswana improved their writing skills through the use of metacognitive strategies. The use of metacognitive strategies in writing had a positive effect on 59 Iranian students' writing achievement as proclaimed by (Maftoon, Birjandi, and Farahian 2014). In India, Mekala et al., (2016) found that the use of metacognitive strategies enables 27 students to improve the contextual attributes of writing. In the same year, Aliyu, Fung, Abdullah, and Hoon(2016) in their study on 18 Malaysian students asserted that students who developed metacognitive awareness were more likely to attain higher levels of achievement in writing.

In Algeria, the researcher is aware of only few research studies. For instance, Hamzaoui (2006) conducted an experimental study that included 16 EFL students from the University of Tlemcento uncover the causes of students' underachievement in writing through an exploration into the of essay writing strategies in English, French and Arabic. The results revealed deficient knowledge or use of writing strategies, namely, cognitive strategies. In her study on a group of first year students, ARAR (2015) aimed to explore the interrelationship between writing, learning, and thinking through suggesting an academic framework that would promote learning and writing strategies alike. The findings revealed that the implemented framework proved to be successful in raising students' metacognitive awareness in writing, and led to better academic achievement both in writing and in English learning. Nemouchi (2019) carried out an experimental study on 60 students to assess the impact of combining the product approach with metacognitive strategies on EFL students' writing organisation. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in the scores of the experimental group compared with the scores of the control group with regard to writing organization. Ould Si Bouziane (2020) found that the integration of strategy-based instruction (cooperative learning strategies, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies) resulted in the improvement of the quality of Algerian EFL students' paragraph writing. Hellelet (2022) investigated the possible effects of learning strategies and metacognitive awareness on the academic performance of 3rd year students. The results showed that some type of learning and metacognitive awareness strategies facilitated the attainment of academic success.

3. Methodology

This section introduces the research methodology adopted by the researcher. It explains the research design and discusses the procedures followed to conduct the study and collect the data. Also, it provides information about the research instrument, the population and sample of the study, and the sampling strategy.

3.1. Research Question and Hypothesis

This study is an investigation into the level of ELF students' awareness and use of metacognitive strategies in writing. It seeks to answer the following research question:

What is the level of ELF students' awareness and use of metacognitive strategies in writing?

Based on this research question, it is hypothesised that:

Students' level of awareness and use of metacognitive strategies in writing is low

3.2. Research Design

The researcher used a descriptive case study research design within a quantitative approach to investigate the level of students' awareness of the importance of metacognitive strategies in writing. This type of research design is typically interested in the systematic description and analysis of the features, properties, and characteristics of a phenomenon or a subject. Yin (2003) claims that a case study becomes descriptive when it seeks to present a thorough description of phenomenon within its context. Kothari (2004) confirms that a descriptive case study "is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group" (p. 39). The main goal of the descriptive case study is to assess a sample in detail and in depth, based on what is already known about the phenomenon. It is an approach that allows the intensive investigation of a particular instance or a few carefully selected cases (Gilbert, 2008). Therefore, this type of research design is very useful for exploring a phenomenon about which very little is known or when a holistic understanding of the phenomenon is required.

It is worth mentioning that a 'case' could be an individual, a group, a subgroup of a population, a community, an instance, an event, a situation, a town, etc. Therefore, the 'case' that the researcher selects becomes the basis of a thorough, holistic and in-depth exploration of the aspect(s) that they want to find out about (Kumar, 2011). What necessary in this process is that the researcher treats the total population of the study as one entity.

Descriptive case study research design is associated with many merits. Kothari (2004) states that this design uses a rigid design that maximises reliability and reduces bias and utilises structured instruments (pre-tested) for collecting data; (Yin, 2003) adds that it allows for the use of multiple resources of evidence—instruments—as questionnaires, interviews, documents, archival records, observations, and physical artifacts, which permit researchers to gather sufficient qualitative and quantitative data to different types of questions.

3.3. Participants

The study, that took place during the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022, involved 40 first-year students from the University of El Oued. They were 28 females and 12 males aged 18 to 35. This sample was randomly selected from a population of 230 students. They have been studying English for two semesters and are supposed to have gained basic knowledge of the various strategies used in learning English as a foreign language through regular instruction, including metacognitive writing strategies. The Participants are expected to graduate with Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature upon successful accomplishment of a six-semester course of study.

3.4. Instrument

A five-level metacognitive writing strategies awareness questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data for the study. This questionnaire, adapted from Farahian (2015), included thirty Likert-type items divided into three categories: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Each category involved ten items. Before administered to the study sample, the questionnaire was critiqued by two writing teachers to check its content and face validity. Both examiners provided constructive comments with regard to the content, order, and wording of the statements. After that, the questionnaire was piloted with a non-sample twenty students of similar background as the subjects of the study to test its clarity and readability. The results obtained showed that the questionnaire was clear, understandable, and hence, could yield reliable results. After these two measures, it was concluded that this questionnaire was valid and reliable.

3.5. Procedures of the Study and Data analysis

The study was conducted in the Department of English at the University of El Oued, Algeria during the first week of May 2022. The researcher asked for and received administrative approval to conduct the study. The questionnaire was administered to the students during the second half of a regular tutorial session in collaboration with the instructor of the module, a method of completing questionnaires referred to as group administration (Dörnyei, 2007). First, the researcher explained the nature and objectives of the study to the students and elaborated on the concept of metacognitive strategies in writing, including the three components: planning, monitoring, and evaluation. He also ensured them the confidentiality of the information provided. Then, he asked the subjects to follow him while reading the statements and tick the appropriate choices which reflect their actual views. The process went very smoothly and the students could understand most of the statements. However, some statements needed further explanation from the researcher. The subjects responded to all the statements in less than half an hour. The researcher immediately collected the students' responses during the same session.

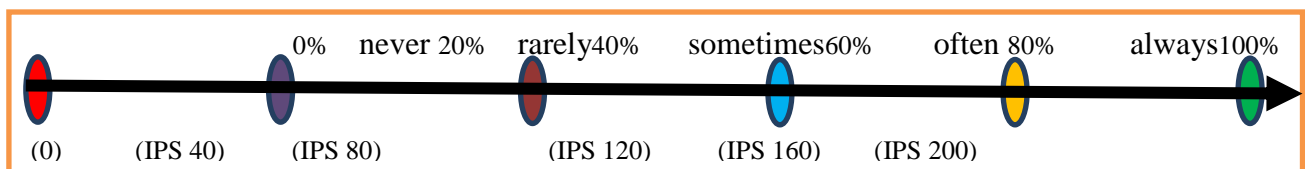
The questionnaire yielded quantitative data; hence, qualitative data analysis procedures were carried out. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data collected from the students' responses. This included counting the frequency of responses on the statements of the questionnaire and computing the mean score for every statement. The results were presented through percentages in frequency tables.

Data were analysed according to the following formula proposed by Sugiyono (2010, as cited in Santoso, 2014):

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \%$$

Where:

P = percentage parameter; **F** = total score of a statement's frequencies; **N** = the ideal possible score.



Figures 1. Distribution of response categories and ideal possible scores (IPS)

The five categories of response of the questionnaire are assigned the following values: always=(5), often=(4), sometimes=(3), rarely=(2), and never=(1). For every single statement, the

number of frequencies of every category of response is multiplied by the assigned value and divided by the ideal possible score (IPS) of that category.

Addition of all scores obtained from all categories of response for every statement constitutes the total score of frequencies for that statement, which is divided by the highest ideal possible score IPS (200); this score is obtained from multiplying 40 (the number of participants) by 5 (the value assigned to 'always' option in the questionnaire). The obtained result is then multiplied by 100 to find the percentage that represents the level of awareness of that statement. This percentage is used to classify the statement in the right level of awareness according to classification stated in Table 1.

Table 1.
Classification of Metacognitive Writing Strategies Awareness Levels

N.	Level	Range
1	Very high	90% = 100%
2	High	80% = 89.99%
3	Average	70% = 79.99%
4	Enough	60% = 69.99%
5	Low	50% = 59.99%
6	Very low	40% = 49.99%

Note: Adapted from Santoso (2014)

4. Results

This study investigated the level of EFL students' awareness of metacognitive strategies and their use in writing. The data collected by means of the questionnaire are presented below according to the three sections of the instrument.

4.1. Analysis of Data on Planning

The first section of the questionnaire seeks to determine students' awareness of the different strategies employed in the stage of planning. Frequencies and percentages of students' responses to the ten statements of this section are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2.
Distribution of students' Scores on Planning Strategies Awareness

S.	Always (5)		Often (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)		Amount		Level of Awareness
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	
1	28	70%	12	30%	00	0.00%	00	00%	00	0.00%	40	94%	Very high
	140		48		00		00		00		188		
2	10	25%	11	27.5%	08	20%	07	17.5%	04	10%	40	68%	Enough
	50		44		24		14		04		136		
3	03	07.5%	03	07.5%	11	27.5%	13	32.5%	10	25%	40	48%	Very low
	15		12		33		26		10		96		
4	04	10%	06	15%	11	27.5	06	15%	13	32.5%	40	51%	Low
	20		24		33		12		13		102		
5	07	17.5%	05	12.5%	01	02.5%	13	32.5%	14	35%	40	49%	Very low
	35		20		03		26		14		98		

6	06	15%	06	15%	11	27.5%	09	22.5%	08	20%	40	56.5%	Low
	30		24		33		18		08		113		
7	16	40%	07	17.5%	07	17.5%	06	15%	04	10%	40	72.5%	Average
	80		28		21		12		04		145		
8	03	7.5%	04	10%	8	20%	14	35%	11	27.5%	40	47%	Very low
	15		16		24		28		11		94		
9	05	12.5%	08	20%	11	27.5%	09	22.5%	07	17.5%	40	57.5%	Low
	25		32		33		18		07		115		
10	03	07.5%	06	15%	11	27.5%	12	30	08	20%	40	52%	Low
	15		24		33		24		08		104		
MEAN		17.25%		17%		17%		22.25%		29.07%		59.55%	

As shown in Table 2., the total percentage of the participants' responses to the first statement was 94%. This expressed a high level of awareness as 70% of them said they 'always' read the instructions before writing and 30% said they 'often' did so. As for the second statement, the total percentage dropped down to 68% 'enough' level. In that, 25% of the students chose 'always', 27.5% chose 'often', and 20% said that they 'often' prepared an outline before writing. The total rate of the third statement went down even more to 48% a 'very low' level. 25% of the respondents stated that they never made a primary draft before writing, 32% said they rarely made a primary draft, and 27.5% said they sometimes did so. In response to the fourth statement, the total score of the participants indicated a 'low' 51% level of awareness. 32.5% of the students revealed that they 'never' carried out some intensive reading to gain familiarity with the writing topic, 15% opted for 'rarely' and 27% opted for 'sometimes'. The total score of the fifth statement reflected a 'very low' level of awareness 49%. 35% of the students revealed that they were not aware of the importance of incorporating the necessary language sources (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) in their primary planning for writing and 32% stated that they rarely did so. Students' responses to the sixth statement classified it into 'low' level with 56.5%. 27.5% stated that they 'sometimes' set a goal and time for writing, 22.5% chose rarely' option and 20% opted for 'never' option. Only 15% said they 'always' had a goal for writing and set time for it and other 15% selected 'sometimes'. With regard to the seventh statement, the level of awareness rose to 72.5% representing an 'average' level. Here, 40% of the respondents claimed that they 'always' had a specific audience and purpose in mind for writing; 17.5% with 'often' option and 17.5% with 'often' option. Only 10% said that they wrote with no specific audience or purpose. The level of awareness for statement 8 was 'very low' 47%; 27.5% confirmed that were not aware of different writing strategies (planning...) and the steps to follow in every strategy; 35% opted for 'rarely' and 20% opted for 'sometimes' options respectively. Among all participants, only 7% were aware of the different writing strategies needed for writing and knew the steps to follow in every strategy. The total percentage of the participants' responses to the ninth statement was 57%, representing a 'low' level of awareness of the various types of genres in writing (expository, narrative...) and the relative components. For every category, responses were distributed likewise: 17.5% 'never', 22.5% 'rarely', 27.5 'sometimes', 20% 'often', and 12.5% always 94%. The final statement in this section also recorded a 'low' level of awareness 52% with regard to the use of other texts or resources as clues for writing. 20% of the students reported that they 'never' used other texts as hints for writing; whereas 30% chose 'rarely' and 27.5% chose 'sometimes'. However, 15% stated that they 'often' used other resources as clues for writing and 7.5% stated that they 'always' did so.

4.2. Analysis of Data on Monitoring

This section of the questionnaire examines the level of students' awareness of the strategies involved in the component of monitoring and determines their use in writing. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Distribution of Students' Scores on Monitoring Strategies Awareness

S.	Always (5)		Often (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)		Amount		Level of Awareness
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	
11	02	05%	08	20%	09	22.5%	10	25%	11	27.5%	40	50%	Low
	10		32		27		20		11		100		
12	04	10%	03	07.5%	13	32.5%	15	37.5%	05	12.5%	40	53%	Low
	20		12		39		30		05		106		
13	08	20%	11	27.5%	15	37.5%	04	10%	02	05%	40	69.5%	Enough
	40		44		45		08		02		139		
14	06	15%	08	20%	17	42.5%	01	02.5%	08	20%	40	61.5%	Enough
	30		32		51		02		08		123		
15	02	05%	05	12.5%	12	30%	11	27.5%	10	25%	40	49%	Very low
	10		20		36		22		10		98		
16	01	02.5%	04	10%	14	35%	09	22.5%	12	30%	40	46.5%	Very low
	05		16		42		18		12		93		
17	07	17.5%	08	20%	05	12.5%	07	17.5%	13	32.5%	40	54.5%	Low
	35		32		15		14		13		109		
18	10	25%	09	22.5%	12	30%	07	17.5%	02	05%	40	69%	Enough
	50		36		36		14		02		138		
19	01	02.5%	08	20%	09	22.5%	09	22.5%	13	32.5%	40	47.5%	Very low
	05		32		27		18		13		95		
20	10	25%	12	30%	16	40%	02	05%	00	0.00%	40	75%	Average
	50		48		48		04		00		150		
MEAN		12.75%		19%		30.5%		18.7%		19%		57.55%	

In the eleventh statement, students showed a low level of self-confident as writer. Only 5% stated that they 'always' knew what to do at every writing stage; 20% said they 'often' knew what to do. 22.5% opted for 'sometimes' option, 25% opted for 'rarely' option, and 27.5% selected the option 'never'. As for the twelfth statement, 37.5% of the students confirmed that they 'rarely' modified their primary plan while writing, 32.5% 'sometimes' modified the plan, and 12.5% said they 'never' changed it. 10% and 07.5% selected 'always' and 'often options respectively. The level of awareness for this statement was also low with a rate of 53%. Students' responses to the thirteenth statement classified it into 'enough' level with 69.5%. 37.5% stated that they 'sometimes' adjusted the time allocated to writing; 20% said they 'always' did so and 27.5% selected 'often' option. In the fourteenth statement, the rate of awareness was 'enough' with 61.5%. However, 42.5% of the students' stated that they 'sometimes' asked themselves about the fulfilment of the writing purpose and clarity of the message during the process of writing; 20% selected 'often' and other 20% selected 'never' as responses to this statement. In the fifteenth statement, 30% reported that they 'sometimes' managed to control their attention and prevent distraction; 27.5% opted for 'rarely' and 25% selected 'never'. 1.5% and 5% said they 'often' and 'always' controlled their attention during writing respectively. The total rate of this statement was 49% 'very low' level. The level of awareness for the sixteenth statement was 'very low' with 46.5% as a total rate. 35% of the participants confirmed that they 'sometimes' knew how to change the strategies employed if were ineffective. 30% said they 'never' changed their strategies and 22.5% said they 'rarely' managed to do it. The total rate of the seventeenth statement recorded 54.5% 'low' level. 23.5% of the respondents stated that they 'never' concentrated on the content, organization, and the language of the text and made necessary changes. For the options 'always' and 'rarely', they got 17.5% of the respondents' scores each; 20% said they 'often' considered these components while writing. The

eighteenth statement recorded a percentage of 69% 'enough' awareness. 30% revealed that they 'some' sought help from other people or other resources such as a dictionary or the Web; 25% did this 'always' and 22.5% 'sometimes' asked for help. 5% 'never' asked for help. The statement with the lowest level of awareness in this section was the nineteenth statement 47.5% 'very low'. 32.% stated that they 'never' used their background knowledge to create the content and organise facts. For the options 'rarely' and 'sometimes' they got a percentage of 22.5% each and 'often' got 20%. Only 2.5% responded with 'always' to this statement. The last statement in this section got the highest level of awareness 75% 'average' level. 40% 'sometimes' used the avoidance strategy, 30% 'often' used it and 25% 'always' used this strategy.

4.3. Analysis of Data on Evaluation

The last section reports on the level of students' awareness and use of the strategies used to evaluate writing. Table 4. summarises students' responses.

Table 4.
Distribution of Students' Scores on Evaluation Strategies Awareness

S.	Always (5)		Often (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)		Amount		Level of Awareness
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	
21	15	37.5%	12	30%	11	27.5	02	05%	00	0.00%	40	80%	High
	75		48		33		04		00		160		
22	09	22.5%	12	30%	13	32.5. %	06	15%	00	0.00%	40	72%	Average
	45		48		39		12		00		144		
23	07	17.5	05	12.5%	06	15%	10	25%	12	30%	40	52.5%	Low
	35		20		18		20		12		105		
24	16	40%	14	17.5%	09	22.5%	01	02.5%	00	0.00%	40	68.5%	Enough
	80		28		27		02		00		137		
25	03	07.5%	05	12.5	12	30%	09	22.5	11	27.5%	40	50%	Low
	15		20		36		18		11		100		
26	05	12.5%	04	10%	09	22.5%	10	25%	12	30%	40	50%	Low
	25		16		27		20		12		100		
27	07	17.5	06	15 %	11	27.5	12	30	12	30%	40	64%	Enough
	35		24		33		24		12		128		
28	00	0.00%	02	05%	03	07.5%	14	35%	21	52.5%	40	33%	Very low
	00		08		09		28		21		66		
29	00	0.00%	01	02.5%	02	05%	17	42.5%	20	50%	40	32%	Very low
	00		04		06		34		20		64		
30	01	02.5%	04	10%	05	12.5	13	32.5%	17	42.5%	40	39.5	Very low
	05		16		15		26		17		79		
MEAN		15.75%		14.5%		20.25%		23.5%		23.25%		54.15	

The twenty-first statement marked a 'high' level of awareness of effect of the topic familiarity on the writing output 80%. In that, 37.5% 'chose' always, 30% chose 'often', 27% chose, and 'sometimes'. Only 5% responded with 'rarely'. The twenty-second statement got an 'average' 72% level of awareness. 32.5% responded that they 'sometimes' knew which problems in writing need much more attention than others, 30% used 'often' in their response and 22.5% responded with 'always'. 15% opted for the option 'rarely'. 52% was the level of awareness for the twenty-third statement; this 'low' level was determined by 30% who claimed that they 'never' cared about the balance between the content of their writing and the outline, 25% responded with 'rarely', 15 % used 'often' option. However, 17.5% revealed that they carried out this step. The rate of awareness in the twenty-fourth statement rose to 68.5.% 'enough' level. 40% confirmed that they

'always' used fixed set of sentences they had in mind instead of creating novel sentences, 17.5% 'often' did this, and 22.5% used pre-set sentence 'sometimes'. No one replied with 'never' option. As for the twenty-fifth statement, the level of awareness fell down again to 50% 'low' level. 30% said they 'sometimes' asked themselves whether they learned something new after writing, 27.5% responded with 'never', and 22.5% chose 'rarely'. 12.5% 'often' asked such a question and 7.5% 'always' asked it. Statement twenty-six marked the same 'low' level of awareness 50%. With regard to the appropriateness of the strategy used in writing, 30% said they 'never' cared about this, 25% and 22.5 opted for 'rarely' and 'sometimes' respectively, and 10% responded with 'often' and 12.5 'always' considered this strategy. The twenty-seventh statement recorded a percentage of 64% 'enough' awareness. 30% of the participants confirmed that they 'never' revised their writing and the same percentage opted for 'rarely'. The amount of those who 'sometimes' revised their content was 27.5%, those who 'often' revised their writing recorded a rate of 15%, and other 17.5% 'always' considered this step. The level of awareness diminished to 33% 'very low' in the twenty-eighth statement; in that, 52.5% claimed that the 'never' exchanged drafts with their classmates for further revision and evaluation, 35% said they 'rarely' exchanged drafts. Among all participants, 7.5% responded with 'sometimes' and 5% 'often' exchanged drafts with their classmates. reported his/her use of such a strategy. In the same line with the previous statement, statement twenty-nine reported 32.5% 'very low' level of awareness. 50% stated that they 'never' used their peers' comments to improve the accuracy and quality of the written text and 42.5% used 'rarely' to reply to the statement. 5% 'sometimes' resorted to their peers' comments and just 2.5% 'often' did so. The last statement also reported a 'very low' level of awareness 39.5%. with regard to summarising the written text after finishing it, 42.5% 'never' considered this measure, 32.5% 'rarely' considered it, and 12% 'sometimes' summarised their written text. 10% responded with 'often' and only 2% said they 'always' summarised their writing.

4.4. Analysis of Metacognitive Awareness Based on Response Category

In this section, the total rate for every individual response option is examined; the aim is to identify the percentage of the participants' choice of every category of response among the five categories stated in the questionnaire. Table 5. Present the relevant data.

Table 5.

Level of Metacognitive Awareness Based on Response Category

Strategy	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Planning	17.25%	17%	17%	22.25%	29.07%
Monitoring	12.75%	19%	30.5%	18.7%	19%
Evaluation	15.75%	14.5%	20.25%	23.5%	23.25%
Mean	15.91%	16.83%	22.58%	21.48%	23.77%

As shown in Table 5, the response option with the lowest percentage was 'always' 15.91%, followed by 'often' option 16.83%. In the third position came 'rarely' with a percentage of 21.48%, followed by 'sometimes' option with 22.58%. The highest rate was recorded by 'never' category of response with 23.77%.

4.5. Analysis of Metacognitive Awareness Based on Component

As this study seeks to assess the level of students' awareness and use of the metacognitive strategies applied in writing, it necessary to determine the level of awareness based on components first. Table 6 presents the relevant results.

Table 5.

Level of Metacognitive Awareness Based on Component

Component	Percentage	Level	Range
Planning	59.55%	Low	50% = 59.99%
Monitoring	57.55%	Low	50% = 59.99%
Evaluation	54.15%	Low	50% = 59.99%
Mean	57.08%	Low	50% = 59.99%

The results stated in table 5 revealed that the total score of awareness of the metacognitive strategy of planning was 59.55%. Hence, and according to the classification of the awareness levels depicted in Table 1, it could be concluded that level of awareness of this component was 'low'. As for monitoring, the total score was 57.55% ranking this component into a 'low' level of awareness too. The last component, evaluation, recorded even a lower score of 54.15% giving this component a 'low' level of awareness. The total score of all components was 57.08% and the level was 'low'.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the participants had a low level of awareness and use of the metacognitive writing strategies under investigation. With regard to planning, students reported 'low' levels of awareness and use of four sub-strategies: a) setting goals for writing and setting time to achieve goals, b) being aware of the various types of genres in writing, c) the use of similar texts as clues, and d) carrying out some intensive reading to gain familiarity with the topic of writing. They also reported 'very low' levels of awareness and use regarding three sub-strategies: a) preparing the necessary language resources for writing, b) making a primary draft for writing, and c) being aware of the different writing strategies. These findings are supported by Surat, Rahman, Mahamod, and Kummin, (2014) who found that secondary school students, practically had no idea how the writing process should be organized, a factor which was reflected in the low quality of their writing. Conversely, the current findings are not in line with Karahroudi and Reddy (2014), Kim (2016), and Mekala et al., (2016) who confirm that students' writing must have a specific topic and purpose, and they must also understand how and when to perform these procedures about topic and purpose before engaging in regulation of cognition.

The same 'low' level of awareness was recorded on monitoring with a rate of 57.55%. Three sub-categories got 'low' level of awareness and use including, a) the lack of self-confidence as a writer, b) not making necessary modifications to the plan while writing, and c) the lack of concentration on all local and global features of the text. These findings are the immediate results of the lack of awareness of the planning skills. As long as students do not plan their writing in an appropriate and strategic way, it would be too difficult for them to monitor their writing progress, check its local and global features, reconsider the strategies employed, and make necessary modifications. This makes students feel unconfident about writing and increases their writing apprehension. In this regard, Magogwe (2013) Mekala, Shabitha, and Ponmani (2016) contend that learners who use the metacognitive strategy in writing focus more on linguistic elements, content, knowledge of task requirements, the personal learning process, text, accuracy, and discourse features. Two sub-strategies were marked with 'very low' level, namely; the use of one's background knowledge to create the content and organise facts and changing ineffective writing strategies. This finding does not support Azevedo's (2009) claim that successful language learners use various self-regulatory processes, for instance, activating knowledge, and monitoring and regulating their learning process metacognitively.

Evaluation was also classified as a 'low' level strategy with the lowest percentage among all components; 54.15%. Three sub-categories received less attention from students and were classified 'low': a) the lack of balance between the content of the text and the outline, b) asking oneself about

newly acquired knowledge, and c) examining the appropriateness of the strategy used. Three other sub-categories were classified as 'very low' level: a) exchanging drafts with peers for evaluation, b) using peers' comments to improve the accuracy and quality of the written, and c) summarising the final text. Despite the advantages students can gain from evaluating their writing, they seem to be ignorant of these merits. A vital measure in evaluation strategy is the process of peer assessment; this process is not applied, and hence, authors do not benefit from the comments peers can provide to improve subsequent drafts of their writing. This contradicts with Panadero (2016) and Topping (2017) who maintain that peer assessment provides an instant check of student performance against the criteria, uncovers strengths and weaknesses, and offers tips for improvement; and Zamora, Suárez, and Ardura (2018) who assert that the practice of peer assessment affects self-regulation since it allows learners to identify mistakes and develop strategies to address them.

All in all, the findings of the study collected by means of the metacognitive writing strategies awareness questionnaire confirm that the sample of EFL students involved in the study have a low level of awareness and use of metacognitive writing strategies with regard to planning, monitoring, and evaluation. This is evidenced by the low quality of students' writing in research papers, writing assignments, exams, etc.; a fact supported by the claims of Zhang, Aryadoust, and Zhang (2016) and Zhang and Zhang (2019) that students who know more about metacognitive strategies and how to use them learn and perform better than those with less metacognitive knowledge and strategy. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the level of Algerian EFL students' awareness and use of the metacognitive strategies employed in writing, namely, planning, monitoring, and evaluating. These three major metacognitive strategies that EFL learners should know and use to enhance their writing in terms of accuracy and quality. The results of the study confirmed the researcher's hypothesis and revealed a low level of awareness and use of planning, monitoring, and evaluation in writing.

The study involved a number of limitations. First, it used only one instrument to collect data. Second, it was limited by the small size of the sample; hence, its results cannot be generalised to the whole population of EFL learners Algeria-wide. In addition, the study did not involve an experimental part that could determine the nature of learners' practices with regard to writing. Another limitation was the lack of prior research studies that would investigate the Algerian context and provide appropriate literature that could be the basis for new research.

Further studies involving a larger and varied sample of EFL learners from a number of universities is recommended to draw more accurate conclusions that portray a wider EFL population in Algeria and allow the generalisability of the results. Deeper investigation into the causes behind this issue is also recommended to help teachers identify gaps in their instructional practices and improve the outcomes of teaching. Studies of this type also raise teachers' and learners' awareness on the importance of incorporating metacognitive strategies in writing classes. Further quantitative and qualitative research projects employing more instruments should be conducted to identify the direct impact of planning, monitoring, and evaluating on the process of text reconstruction and how they contribute to the improvement of the writing ability within EFL learners.

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Appendix A: EFL Students' Metacognitive Writing Strategies Awareness Questionnaire

EFL Students' Metacognitive Writing Strategies Awareness Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of study entitled: **Algerian EFL Students' Awareness and use of Metacognitive Strategies in Writing**. It aims to investigate the level of students' awareness and use of metacognitive strategies in writing and raise their awareness on the importance of such strategies in enhancing the quality of their writing. Please respond to these statements by ticking (✓) in the spaces that best show your opinion. Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire will be highly appreciated. Please note that this questionnaire will be used only for the sake of this research and the information contained in it is strictly confidential.

Thank you for your contribution to the study.

Key:1= Never2= Rarely3= Sometimes4= Often5= Always

SECTION ONE:PLANNING

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Before writing, I read the instructions carefully and take my time to understand the concepts to be written.					
2	Before I start to write, I organise my ideas and prepare an outline.					
3	I make a primary draft before writing.					
4	I carry out some intensive reading to gain familiarity with the topic to be tackled and understand its requirements.					
5	My initial planning involves the language resources (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, expressions) I need to use in my writing.					
6	I set goal(s) for writing and set time to reach the goal(s).					
7	I have a specific purpose and audience in my mind.					
8	I am aware of different writing strategies (planning...) and the steps to follow in every strategy.					
9	I am aware of various types of genres in writing (expository, narrative...) and the relative components.					
10	If my mind goes blank when I begin to write, I use othersimilar texts or resources totake hint (find the clue).					

SECTION TWO: MONITORING

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
11	I know what to do at eachstage of writing and I feel self-confident as a writer.					
12	I make necessarymodifications to the planwhile writing.					
13	I can adjust thetime allocated to writing.					
14	I ask myself periodically if I fulfilled my purpose in writing and if the message is clear.					
15	I have control over my attention and do not easily let myself sidetracked.					
16	If the strategies I employ are noteffective, I change them.					
17	I automatically concentrate onboth the content, organization, and thelanguage of the text and make necessary changes.					
18	While writing, I ask others to get help or consultresources such as a dictionaryor the Web.					
19	At every stage of writing, I use my backgroundknowledge to create thecontent and organise facts.					
20	I use avoidance strategies(e.g., when I do not know acertain vocabulary item orstructure, I avoid it).					

SECTION THREE: EVALUATION

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
21	Topic familiarity has asignificant effect on one'swriting output.					
22	I know which problems inwriting need much moreattention than others.					
23	I ask myself if the contentmatches the outline I havealready developed.					
24	I find myself resorting to fixedset of sentences I have in mindinstead of creating novelsentences.					
25	I ask myself whether I learned something new after I finish writing.					
26	I ask myself if the strategy I used in writing was the most appropriate.					
27	If I do revision, I do it at bothtextual and the content levels.					
28	I exchange drafts with my classmates for further revision and evaluation					
29	I use my peers' comments to improve the accuracy and quality of the written text.					
30	After I finish writing, I summarise what I have written.					