

The Correlation between Students' Metacognitive Awareness and Their Anxiety in Writing Performance

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Abstract. *The aim of this study is to verify the relationship between students' metacognitive awareness and their writing anxiety. The researchers used descriptive statistics and the Pearson's correlation coefficient to find out the relation. Data were collected by distributing two questionnaires, Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) and Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) to 27 students who were at intermediate level and taking Academic Writing subject in English Department of State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung. The data were analyzed using SPSS. From the results, it revealed that there was a significant correlation between students' metacognitive awareness and their writing anxiety. The finding proved that Metacognitive awareness played a necessary role in increasing students' writing performance by reducing the anxious feeling in the writing activities.*

Keywords: *English Foreign Learners, Metacognition, Metacognitive Awareness, Writing Anxiety, Writing performance*

A. INTRODUCTION

The role of the students' Metacognitive Awareness in EFL classroom has been successfully proved by some researchers in different English skills (Young and Fry, 2008; Tok, Ozgan, and Dos, 2010; Okoza, Aluede and Sogolo, 2013; Li, 2013; Nosratinia, Saveiy and Zaker, 2014; and Jaleel Premachandran, 2016). Metacognitive awareness has also been identified as characteristic of a successful writer as it has been proved by El-Hindi (1996), Negretti (2012), and Azizi, Nemati, and Estahbanati (2017).

Metacognition, often defined as cognition about cognition or simply thought about the thought, has become a primary field of study in cognitive and developmental psychology and is recognized to affect cognition of human beings in various ways (Farahian, 2015). It has been argued that metacognitively aware learners can monitor and control the effectiveness of their learning and have control with their problems solving behavior. Flavell (1987) stated that metacognitive knowledge is “the part of one’s acquired world knowledge that has to do with cognitive (or perhaps better, psychological) matters” (p. 21). According to Flavell, metacognition includes the individual’s perspective of one’s own cognitive abilities as well as others.

As it is approved by Gutterman (2003) that metacognitive awareness referring to learning awareness and knowing to being aware of knowledge as a means to know. A learner’s knowledge and awareness of this knowledge will determine the level of his or her understanding, performance, and achievement. It has also been regarded as one of the facilitating factors of self-regulated learning, as it helps learners transfer skills, knowledge, and strategies across contexts and situations (Schraw, 1998).

El-Hindi (1996) examined how a metacognitive instruction effected learners’ metacognitive skill both on the awareness of reading and writing. It was proved that the instruction was effective in raising the metacognitive awareness of the first year students who join a summer program in their college. The similar result also found in Negretti’s study (2012) which aimed to examine the strategic choices on the students’ metacognitive awareness and related it with their perception and evaluation on their writing task. Her result proved that there is a mutual relationship between students’ metacognition and thier writing achievement. Moreover, she also examined how the learners’ awareness changed time to time.

Similar result also found in Azizi, Nemati and Estahbanatis' study (2017) about the metacognitive awareness on the Iranian students' writing performance. Their study indicated there was relationship between the students' writing achievement and the metacognitive strategies

whose the study about examining meta-cognitive awareness of writing strategy use among Iranian EFL learners and the impact of the participants' meta-cognitive awareness of writing strategy use on their L2 writing performance found that there was a significant relationship between writing performance and (planning, monitoring, evaluation, and self-awareness).

Writing in a foreign language is more challenging than other skills in English learning, and it is very general for learners to have negative feelings such as anxiety, fear, and low motivation in foreign language classes, especially in writing class. Since the learners have less experience with written expression, therefore writing anxiety becomes the most hard challenge for English students (Genç and Yayli, 2019).

Hassan (2001) defined writing anxiety as a general avoidance of writing behavior and situations thought to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of writing. Cheng (2004) who proposed multidimensional L2 writing scale-the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) in his study, confirms a three-dimensional conceptualization of anxiety, such as (1) Somatic Anxiety, refers to one's perception of the physiological effects of the anxiety experience, as reflected in an increase in the state of unpleasant feelings, such as nervousness and tension, (2) Cognitive Anxiety, refers to the cognitive aspect of anxiety experience, including negative expectations, preoccupation with performance and concern about others' perception, and (3) Avoidance Behavior, refers to the behavioral aspect of the anxiety experience, such as avoidance of writing (Cheng, 2004: 316). He also pointed out that the negative relationship between test anxiety and L2 writing

performance is primarily due to the cognitive components rather than somatic components or avoidance behavior.

Beside it is an emotional and cognitive activity, foreign language writing is also considered as a complex system of social, cultural and contextual factors, and the learner's individual characteristics, such as institutional requirements, parental or social expectations, teaching and evaluation procedures, motivation, personality, self-confidence, learner's belief, L2 proficiency, and even gender and years in school (Cheng, 2002). Therefore, the reasons why the second language learners feel anxious when writing might be different and multiple, but some general causes ranging from highly personal (such as self-confidence) to procedural (such as classroom activities and teaching methods).

Elif and Demet (2018) in their study, explain some of the most common causes in EFL writing are past traumatic experiences, negative feedback from teachers, lack of writing competence, time limit, fear of negative evaluation, recent knowledge, and linguistic concerns including grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

Based on those previous studies, the writers intended to find out whether there is a significant correlation between the students' metacognitive awareness and their anxiety in the process of writing. The writers assumed that students with a high level of metacognitive awareness tend to be easier to overcome their writing anxiety.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study focuses on finding out the relation between students' metacognitive awareness and their anxiety in writing performance quantitatively. A quantitative method was used to gather numerical information to answer whether there is a relationship between students' metacognitive awareness and their writing anxiety.

Population and Sample

The participants were students of English Department in Teacher Training Education Faculty who taking Academic Writing subject in the Third Year. These students were chosen because they wrote their thesis proposal practice in the process of learning, and they are thought to be proficient users of English. They were given the questionnaires just after writing the third drafts of their thesis proposal practice throughout six weeks. There are 27 students took part in the questionnaire with opens ended questions and also participated in the interviews.

Instruments

The study used two data collection tools. The first is the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), which is developed by Schraw and Dennison (1994), and it was conducted for the purpose of collecting data about the students' level of metacognitive awareness in the learning process of Academic Writing class. The MAI is a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) which has two main categories (Metacognitive Knowledge and Metacognitive Regulation) with three sub-categories (Declarative, Procedural and Conditional) for Metacognitive Knowledge and five sub-categories (Planning, Information Management, Monitoring, Debugging and Evaluation) for Metacognitive Regulation.

Meanwhile, Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004) was used to find out the students' level of anxiety in writing English. It was delivered to the students at the same time the MAI questionnaire. The SLWAI has three sub-categories: cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behavior. SLWAI aimed to encompass both English as a second language and also foreign language contexts.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, the researchers used descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the hypotheses, determine percentages, answer the research question, and compare the results.

The quantitative data, the MAI, and the SLWAI were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, with the SPSS software for Windows 22.0. The descriptive statistics, numbers, percentages, means, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. The findings of both instruments were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval and 5% level of significance.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine the correlation between students' metacognitive awareness and their anxiety level in doing their writing performance in an academic writing class.

This section reports and discusses the findings obtained from the data analysis based on Research Question: *"Is there any correlation between students' metacognitive awareness and their anxiety in writing performance?"*

Hypothesis 1 was formulated as follows:

H1: There is a correlation between students' metacognitive awareness and their anxiety in writing performance.

In table 1. Pearson product moment formula was used and the correlation between estimated metacognitive awareness and students' anxiety level was computed. This correlation reached statistical significance ($r = -.416$, $p < .05$).

Table 1 Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between Metacognitive Awareness and Anxiety Level in Writing

| Variables | Metacognitive Awareness |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Writing Anxiety | -.416* |

*.Correlation is significant at the level (2-tailed).

The result indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between the students' metacognitive awareness and their level of anxiety in the writing performance ($p = -0.416$). It means that students with the higher level of metacognitive awareness, they tend to have lower writing anxiety level and vice versa. So it is believed that students who metacognitively aware of their learning process could overcome their anxiety much better, which affected their writing performance.

The result of this study supports Balta' study (2018). In her study, after the students were given several treatments, their metacognitive awareness increased, and their writing anxiety decreased. Her finding showed the existence of a relationship between metacognitive awareness and writing skills, which concludes that each cognitive skill can give an effect on one another.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Metacognitive Awareness (MAI) and Writing Anxiety (SLWAI)

| | N | Range | X | Std. Dev | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|-------|----|-------|--------|----------|----------|----------|
| MAI | 27 | 74 | 141.96 | 15.416 | -0.175 | 1.387 |
| SLWAI | 27 | 36 | 47.85 | 9.678 | 0.277 | -0.544 |

From Table 2, it can be seen that students' metacognitive awareness mean score was 141.96 while the standard deviation was 15.416. When the distribution of the metacognitive level was examined, it was observed that the distribution was symmetrical and had a sharp peak.

The average mean score and symmetrical distribution showed that the students had a high level of metacognitive awareness. The high standard deviation and sharp peaks distribution demonstrate the students were similar in terms of metacognitive awareness (Setiyadi, 2006). When the descriptive statistics of students' writing anxiety levels were examined, it was observed that the mean score was 47.85, and the standard deviation was 9.678. The distribution was also symmetrical and was normal in terms of kurtosis (Setiyadi, 2006). The high mean

and structure of distribution indicated normal distribution. Accordingly, it can be expressed that students' metacognitive awareness levels were high. The distribution of students' metacognitive awareness levels and their writing anxiety levels can be seen in Figure 1.

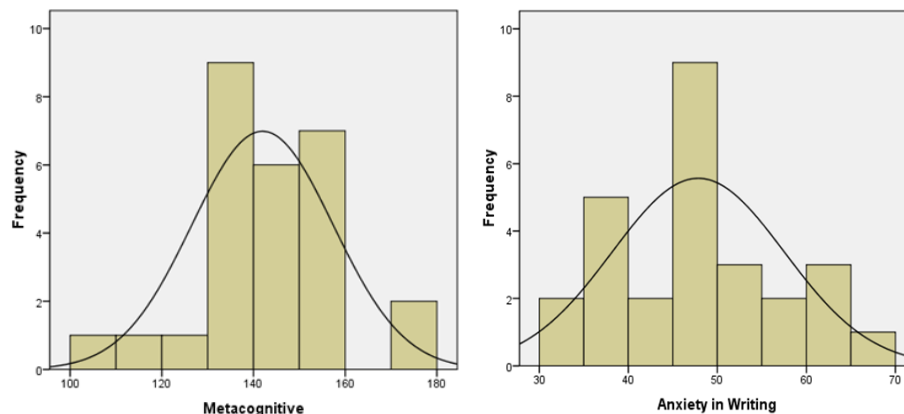


Figure 1. Histograms of MAI and SLWAI

Discussion

It has been proved by many researchers that metacognitive awareness has a positive impact with the students' learning process both in oral and written skills and also other aspects of the learning process. Therefore, the present study documented students' perceptions about how metacognitive awareness might help reduce their anxiety in writing.

A Pearson's correlation coefficient found a significant negative correlation between students' metacognitive awareness and their anxiety level ($p = -0.416$) which means that students who are metacognitively aware of their learning process are less anxious in their writing performance and vice versa. It seems that when students think about their cognition, regulate their learning, have control over their learning, and plan for each step of their writing performance, they can decrease their learning anxiety and it allows them to believe that they have the ability to accomplish the language task.

Similar findings also can be seen in Ruan's study (2014), which investigated the metacognitive awareness of Chinese EFL student writers. The study comprised a threefold metacognition framework, including person, task, and strategy variables within cognitive writing theories. He found that motivation, self-efficacy, and writing anxiety constituted students' awareness of person variables influencing their EFL writing, in contrast their task awareness involved task purposes, task constraints, and cross-language task interference. Strategy awareness of planning, text generating, and revising was found typical of novice EFL student writers.

The existence of a relationship between metacognitive awareness and writing skills proved that each cognitive skill can give an effect on one another skill. As it has been proved with Goudarzi and Ghonsooly study (2014) about the relation of metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy which concludes that learners can improve their language performance by considering the role of metacognitive awareness in their performance and by understanding it can help them in learning a foreign language.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This section discusses the conclusion and the suggestion of the research.

Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between metacognitive awareness and writing anxiety on the content of EFL writing. The result of this present study found that there is a significant relation of the students' metacognitive awareness in their writing process with the anxiety they feel during the process. The higher metacognitive awareness owned by the students, the less writing anxiety they have in the process of EFL writing.

Suggestion

Regarding the results of this study, learners can improve their language performance by considering the role of metacognitive awareness in their performance and by understanding how it can help them in learning a foreign language. It might be better for learners to think deeper about their process of

learning and what they know about their learning. In addition, it is recommended for lecturers to train their students about the use of metacognitive strategies during writing activities. Since the results of this study was derived from the specific sample size, therefore it is suggested for further researchers to conduct the similar research with another English aspect or skill in a larger sample.

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