The Effect of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating as Metacognitive Strategies on the EFL Writing Process[*]

El efecto de las estrategias metacognitivas en el proceso de escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research was to find out the effect meta-cognitive strategies had in the writing performance of second semester students at the modern languages program in a university. The project followed three stages: A) a diagnostic whose aim was to reveal the main difficulties in the writing performance done with interviews, question-naires, diary entries and a pretest. B) an action that consisted in the ap-plication of six lesson plans, divided into three main phases, each aimed at the application of three metacognitive strategies. The lesson plans followed the CALLA model (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach). C) an evaluation to know the results obtained at the end of the process, including a posttest. The findings reported the effectiveness of using metacognitive strategies for enhancing writing in content, vo-cabulary, mechanics, accuracy, and fluency, which subsequently allowed to increase the students' self-motivation, self-awareness, and self-confi-dence towards EFL writing.

Keywords: *CALLA model, EFL, metacognitive strategies, writing.*

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RESUMEN

El propósito de esta investigación acción fue encontrar el efecto que tuvieron las estrategias metacognitivas en la escritura de estudiantes de segundo semestre del programa de lenguas modernas de una universidad. El proyecto se desarrolló en tres etapas: A) un diagnóstico cuyo propósito fue revelar las principales dificultades en la escritura a través de entrevistas, cuestionarios, entradas de diario y un pretest. B) una acción que consistió en la ejecución de seis planeaciones de clase divididas en tres fases, cada una de ellas dirigidas a la aplicación de tres estrategias metacognitivas. Las planeaciones de clase siguieron el modelo CALLA (siglas en inglés para Enfoque de Aprendizaje Cognitivo del Lenguaje Académico). C) una evaluación para conocer los resultados obtenidos al finalizar el proceso, incluido un postest. Los hallazgos reportaron la efectividad del uso de estrategias metacognitivas para mejorar la escritura en cuanto al contenido, vocabulario, mecánicas, precisión y fluidez, lo que a su vez permitió incrementar en los estudiantes su automotivación, autoconsciencia y autoconfianza hacia la escritura del inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: *escritura, estrategias metacognitivas, inglés como lengua extranjera, modelo CALLA.*

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APPROXIMATELY 86% OF THE WORLD'S population can write and read today (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). In recent years, writing has gained a greater impact on society as a tool to communication and learning. For this reason, people who do not write well nowadays will face difficulties not only in the acquisition of a foreign language, but also in further education and employment. Hence, «the need to help students acquire academic literacy skills has gained momentum as higher education institutions have expanded in both number and provenance of students» (Negretti, 2012, p. 3). EFL teachers are then faced with the demanding task of devising strategies that help learners cope with their illiteracy, so as to decrease the number of students failing to realize their personal, educational, and professional capabilities.

EFL in Colombia has proven to have some significant gaps. According to the English Proficiency Index by EF Education First (2020), Colombia ranked 77 among 100 countries participating around the world, thus labeled as «very low level» considering the score bands established by EF. Likewise, Education Intelligence, the British Council's global higher education service reported in 2015 that writing, compared to the other skills, generated low scores (20 out of 30 points) in the Test of English as a Foreign Language–TOEFL, meaning Colombian students are classified as «fair» for writing (British Council, 2015). In the same way, the International English Language Testing System–IELTS, also widely accepted by universities around the world, shows that in 2013 students were classified as «modest» users with partial command of the writing skill (British Council, 2015).

Furthermore, according to the Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación–ICFES (2020) in its report 2016-2019, the test Saber Pro (ECAES), implemented by ICFES, reported

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that only 8% of the undergraduate students from different degrees reached level B1, indicating the need to set off efforts to achieve a significant transformation in the teaching and learning of English in Colombia. Briefly, based on the previous results, students' English proficiency is at a low to medium level, meaning that they will face significant difficulties and will be at great disadvantage in the current academic world.

Thus, national policies and programs established by the Ministry of Education (Programa Nacional de Inglés 2015-2025) «Colombia Bilingüe» indicate that Colombia aims at reaching the highest level of English in South America, through the development of communicative skills in this language to support the inclusion of Colombian people in the global market (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2014). Such goal requires a large amount of well-trained graduated teachers. For this reason, it is imperative to educate students from the early stages of their learning process to be capable of fulfilling the current demands in different professional fields.

This article aims at showing and explaining the results of an action research project conducted with second semester students at a modern languages program in a public university in Colombia. The central issue that motivated this study laid on helping the students to improve writing considering the results obtained in the diagnostic stage, that evidenced low level of performance in aspects as content, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency, and accuracy. The purpose of this study was to analyze and describe the effects of the implementation of different metacognitive strategies in the writing process while planning, monitoring, and evaluating using the CALLA model proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

The project followed three stages: first, a diagnostic whose aim was to reveal the main difficulties in grammar, mechanics,

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fluency, correct structure, varied vocabulary, and lack of strategies in the writing performance of the target population. This was achieved through interviews, questionnaires, diary entries, and a pretest. Second, an action that was sub divided into three main phases, each consisting in the application of six lesson plans with three metacognitive strategies each following the CALLA model; the writing of narrative, descriptive, comparison, contrast, cause, and effect paragraphs had the purpose of aiding the students in the use of metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating, as Correales et al. (2007) stated that conscious use of metacognitive strategies in the classes helped their students to significantly improve writing. Also, the teacher-researcher used a diary, rubrics to check the artifacts, the four corners instrument, and an observation scheme. Third, an evaluation to analyze the data collected and determine the level of improvement the students reached after the implementation of nine metacognitive strategies, including a posttest. After the triangulation, the findings displayed the effectiveness of using metacognitive strategies for enhancing writing.

This research project was implemented with 23 young adults ranging from 17 to 24 years old in second semester at undergraduate school of Modern Languages in Colombia. Learners showed different levels of proficiency; some are re-takers, or had taken English courses in English institutions, or diploma courses before entering the major in Modern Languages. Most students in this course are very interested in English, for this does not represent a constraint in terms of motivation.

METHODOLOGY

This research study was based on Action Research, following the model proposed by Kemmis et al. (2014); likewise, the method of inquiry was qualitative, as this project aimed at intervening an

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academic context and overcoming classroom problems through the implementation of data collection techniques, analysis, and interpretation of the information collected, to have an impact on a specific aspect of the teaching and learning process. Also, it was conducted in three stages: a) the diagnostic, which was the application of three instruments to confirm the assumption of low performance in writing; b) the intervention, which consisted in the implementation of six lesson plans, each one with three different metacognitive strategies, previously chosen and adapted to affect the low level of performance found in the target group; c) the evaluation, which entailed the analysis of the process once completed and the formulation of pedagogical implications, conclusions, and recommendations.

Population

The participants for this study were 25 undergraduate Modern Languages Program students; 14 girls and 11 boys whose ages ranged from 17 to 24 years old. This group of learners already went through a process of learning English for one semester, about 240 hours. During that first semester, they took three different 5-hour English classes: Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Grammar, each subject with a number of 5 hours per week. The individuals were selected considering the following reasons: First, second semester students that have already taken one first course on the Reading and Writing component. The second reason is that second semester is fundamental to reinforce the theory and necessary concepts that will allow them to move from the writing of paragraphs to the writing of essays in third semester. Third, this particular group was known for having difficulties related to the writing skills, as it was confirmed in the interviews applied to the former teachers of this group, and the pretest carried out in the diagnostic stage.

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Description of the problem

Taking into account the data gathered in the diagnostic stage, the most prominent issue found was the low performance that students had in this skill, particularly in vocabulary, content, grammar, punctuation, and fluency, being the last two the most noticeable; likewise, their lack of strategies, their negative attitude towards writing and the transfer from L1 to L2 represent a great barrier for learners to perform well in a given task.

In this sense, the students lack of tools in general to be aware of their own mistakes, which can explain why students did not perform as expected at this level in the writing component. Therefore, according to Oxford, the metacognitive devices are essential to provide a way for learners to successfully coordinate and respond to the challenges presented during their own learning process (Oxford, 1990, p. 136).

Research question

The research question «How can metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating affect EFL writing in second semester students?» arose from the low writing performance of second semester students of Modern Languages, as evidenced in the writing assignments done in class. Also, their poor writing performance was initially detected by teachers in the previous semester, and later corroborated through the different instruments administered in the diagnostic stage, namely an interview using a questionnaire for teachers of the Reading and Writing component, a written survey administered to the target group, and a journal kept by the researcher describing relevant events during some classes. Additionally, a pretest in the form of a written assignment was conducted with the students to confirm their performance. These qualitative and

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quantitative procedures were carried out as proposed by Burns (1999) because they

> provide continuing accounts of perceptions and thought processes, as well as of critical events or issues which have surfaced in the classroom. Diaries and journals contain more subjective and personal reflections and interpretations that the relatively formalised recordings of notes. (p. 89)

Diagnostic stage

Instruments.

Interviews. The researcher designed a written questionnaire with the purpose of exploring the perceptions teachers have towards the teaching of English at the program and their opinion about the students' performance in the four skills. This instrument allowed to gather different points of view to give a transparent and objective perspective of the issue; it involved pre-established questions in a written format. Besides, this instrument was easier and less time-consuming in its administration; the transcription of the responses provided accurate information that was later triangulated and analyzed to determine and corroborate some shortfalls students had in writing (Burns, 1999).

Survey. This instrument allowed to examine the students' perception towards writing and determine their difficulties in learning. To elaborate it, the researcher took into account the language level of the students, the clarity of the instructions and the brevity of the questions. The survey contained eight questions and it was applied to 23 second semester students.

Diary. This personal document provided continuing accounts of subjective reflections and interpretations of phenomena happening in the classroom (Burns, 1999). The personal side

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of the teacher-researcher and the impressions were registered and interpreted in four entries, one per class.

Pretest (narrative paragraph task). A pretest was carried out to evaluate the students' writing proficiency before the implementation of the metacognitive strategies. The task consisted in writing a narrative paragraph with a topic sentence, three supporting sentences with examples and a conclusion describing the most embarrassing day of their lives. This type of writing was chosen as it facilitates students to include reflections about events of their own life, resulting in a meaningful task for them (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996).

Later, the writing was evaluated using a rubric adapted from Cushing Weigle (2002). This same process was applied after the intervention stage (posttest) to evaluate and determine whether or not the students' level of performance in writing improved.

Triangulation of data. After carrying out the corresponding analysis to each instrument in the diagnostic stage, the researcher conducted a triangulation of data that is essential in action research to check on validity. The aim of triangulation is to gather multiple perspectives of different participants, in this case from the four perspectives, to gain a richer and less subjective point of view on the issue being studied (Burns, 1999).

According to Freeman (1998), the raw data resulting from three instruments corresponding to three views: a survey applied to the students, a questionnaire applied to teachers and a teacher's diary was organized in small charts to assign codes to it. The researcher designed the instruments to find out the perspectives of the participants to determine the problem. After the information was carefully examined, the five emerging codes served to provide a more global view of the phenomena occurring in the classroom. Next, the codes were grouped according to the number of occurrences found throughout the three instruments.

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The information collected was deeply studied and analyzed using a grounded data analysis technique proposed by Freeman (1998).

The researcher compared the information gathered from the instruments to find relationships among them. This triangulation was executed to confirm validity and reliability among the instruments (Burns, 1999), and to identify the main problematic issue as displayed in Table 1:

TABLE 1. *Triangulation of data.*

N°	Codes/ categories	Operationalization	Instruments				
			Questionnaires students	Interviews teachers	Diary researcher	Frequencies Total	Percentages
1	Fluency	Code describes the time students take to start writing, as well as the logical sequence followed in writing.	22	14	12	48	25,13%
2	Vocabulary	Code describes the use of lexicon use in writing.	12	8	5	25	13,08%
3	Accuracy	Code describes the coherent use of grammar, tenses, sentence structure.	14	18	6	38	19,89%
4	Content	Code describes the topic, supporting and concluding sentences in a paragraph.	8	19	9	36	18,84%
5	Mechanics	Code describes the use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in writing.	27	11	6	44	23,03%
	Totals		83	70	38	191	100%

Note: triangulation of data in the diagnosis stage. Own elaboration.

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Table 1 shows the five categories that emerged after analyzing the instruments. This shows fluency with 48 occurrences (25,13%), evidencing the students' poor ability to use cohesive devices (linkers and connectors) appropriately to bind elements of a text together (Harmer, 2004). According to Oxford, the metacognitive devices are essential to provide learners with tools to successfully coordinate their own learning (Oxford, 1990).

Implementation stage

Considering the data gathered in the diagnostic stage, the intervention followed the phases of Educational Action Research proposed by Kemmis et al. (2014) who emphasized on a complementary process consisting mainly of four essential stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This stage was aimed at the implementation of planning, monitoring, and evaluating as metacognitive strategies to improve students' vocabulary, mechanics, fluency, content, and accuracy writing. Hence, six lesson plans were implemented using nine different metacognitive strategies; those strategies were distributed into three different phases, each one containing two lesson plans which were designed considering the students' preferences and needs, and based on the guidelines proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) who suggested the incorporation of activities inside the language classroom to promote the development of students' awareness of metacognitive strategies through four stages: a) preparation, b) presentation, c) practice, and d) evaluation.

Additionally, observational and non-observational instruments were administered during and after every phase to evaluate writing: a teacher-researcher's diary used to keep notes and reflections of the class and students' writing production; the four corners used to discover the students' attitude and opinion towards writing and the metacognitive strategies; a rubric to

evaluate the performance at the end of every lesson plan; an external observer scheme filled by three professors in every phase to have a peripheral viewpoint of the students' performance. A posttest was additionally conducted to know the level students reached at the end of the implementation. Its results were later compared with the ones obtained in the pretest to evaluate the effect of the metacognitive strategies on mechanics, accuracy, fluency, content, and vocabulary writing.

Phase 1. Table 2 shows that lesson plans 1 and 2 comprised the writing of a narrative paragraph and a descriptive paragraph through the use of three metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. The researcher designed and applied four data collection instruments to gather information regarding the students' performance.

TABLE 2. *Distribution in phase 1.*

Phase	Lesson plans	Topic	Strategy classification according to O'Malley & Chamot, 1990	Strategy description	Strategy definition	Data collection instruments
Phase 1	Lesson plan 1 Lesson plan 2	Narrative paragraph Descriptive paragraph	Planning	Overviewing and linking with already known material	Learning why the activity is done and building the needed vocabulary.	Teacher-researcher's diary. Four corners. Rubric. External observer.
			Monitoring	Organizing by means of crib sheets	Crib sheets are used to keep notes about special information for future references.	
			Evaluating	Self-monitoring checklist	The checklist allows to identify the strengths and difficulties at the end of the writing process.	

Note: distribution of lesson plans and metacognitive strategies in phase 1. Own elaboration.

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Lesson plan 1 provided three metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating that would facilitate the writing of a narrative paragraph about «an unforgettable experience». This topic took into account the needs and preferences stated by the students in the survey conducted in the diagnostic stage. Likewise, such metacognitive strategies were selected considering the theory of language learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1990). For each stage, Oxford (1990) listed the strategies: o*verviewing and linking with already known material, organizing by means of a crib sheet*, and *self-monitoring checklist*. These kept in mind the level of students, their background knowledge and the required skills for writing this type of paragraph. The worksheet contained an introduction, the objective of the lesson, the topic, the theory about narrative paragraphs, and prompts that indicate step by step how to achieve the expected outcome.

In the first 2-hour session, the students received a clear explanation of the worksheet and proceeded to read the introductory part that provided theory about the narrative paragraph to be developed in this lesson. After that, the students developed the points of the first strategy: *overviewing and linking with already known material*. As the topic was «an unforgettable event», they were asked to write a list of events and choose the most meaningful in their lives. Then, they answered some guiding questions to organize what they wanted to include in the paragraph. Once done, they created a list of descriptive language to enrich their writing in terms of content and vocabulary.

Next, the students used the second metacognitive strategy, named *organizing by means of a crib sheet*, to write important aspects to remember once they were engaged in the writing process. The worksheet provided some ideas, but the students had to write their own so as to revise them while solving the task.

In the second 2-hour session, the students reviewed the metacognitive strategies used in the previous class to write the paragraph; this took them approximately 1 hour. Afterwards, the students used the third metacognitive strategy *self-monitoring checklist* to revise the composition. They read the paragraphs and applied corrections if the case to finally deliver it to the teacher.

Lesson plan 2 was designed to reinforce the use of the same three metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating implemented in the first lesson. These were expected to help the students to write a descriptive paragraph about « a person you truly admire ». The worksheet contained an introduction, the objective of the lesson, and prompts to explain step by step the procedures to achieve the expected outcome.

In the first 2-hour session, the students read the introductory part of the worksheet to find out the theory and instructions needed to develop this task. They looked into the explanations about the descriptive paragraph, the topic and the objective of the lesson. Later, the students developed the points of the first strategy called o*verviewing and linking with already known material.*

As the topic was to describe a person they truly admire, they chose one important person for them and listed special features about his/her uniqueness. Afterwards, they answered some guiding questions to organize the ideas and wrote a list of figurative language to enrich the paragraph. Then, the metacognitive strategy o*rganizing by means of a crib sheet* led them to write the most important aspects to remember once engaged in the writing process.

In the second 2-hour session, the students reviewed the points developed in the previous session. Next, they wrote the paragraph which took them approximately 1 hour, to finally use

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the third metacognitive strategy *self-monitoring checklist* that contained five guidelines to help them correct the paragraph before its deliver to the teacher.

After analyzing the first two lesson plans corresponding to the first phase of implementation and the artifacts checked by using a rubric, there was evidence of the positive effect the metacognitive strategies had on the performance of second semester students in the writing tasks. This evidenced that the metacognitive strategies *overviewing and linking with already known material, organizing by means of a crib sheet*, and *using a self-monitoring checklist* helped enhance writing, since content had better structure and there were fewer grammar mistakes. Besides, students paid more attention to mechanics and used more accurate vocabulary. Such finding is linked to Oxford (1990) who states that these strategies support the second language learning by providing learners with enough tools to be aware of their advances.

Phase 2. Table 3 displays lesson plans 3 and 4 aimed at the writing of a comparison paragraph and a contrast paragraph by means of strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. During this second phase, the researcher applied the same four data collection instruments to gather information about the students' writing performance.

TABLE 3. *Distribution in phase 2.*

Phase	Lesson plans	Topic	Strategy classification according to O'Malley & Chamot, 1990	Strategy description	Strategy definition	Data collection instruments
Phase 2	Lesson plan 3 Lesson plan 4	Comparison paragraph Contrast paragraph	Planning	Setting objectives	The students set their own objectives according to the task at hand.	Teacher-researcher's diary. Four corners. Rubric. External observer.
			Monitoring	Graphic organizers	Venn diagrams are used to organize key ideas that are to be developed in the paragraph.	
			Evaluating	Peer correction and conferencing	A checklist is used to identify each other's strengths and weaknesses in their products.	

Note: distribution of lesson plans and metacognitive strategies in phase 2. Own elaboration.

Lesson plan 3 implemented three more metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating: *setting objectives, using graphic organizers* and *peer correction.* They were chosen taking into account the theory of language learning (Oxford, 1990) and the level of performance and background knowledge up to this point. The strategies hoped to enable learners to write a comparison paragraph about «your life as a 14-year-old student with your life as a student today». The worksheet comprised an introductory part, the theory on comparison paragraphs, and a step-by-step description on how to use each metacognitive strategy.

In the first 2-hour session, the students read the theory and explanation about comparison paragraph and the strategies to be used. No objectives were given in the worksheet because the metacognitive strategy *setting objectives* asked the students to do so. The objectives must be clear, attainable, and aimed at both, the achievement of an effective writing product and the improvement of aspects that had been difficult for them in writing.

Once the students set the objectives, they used the Venn diagram to establish relationships between two topics by placing them on the left and the right side of the diagram. The similarities found shaped the core of the comparison paragraph. The next step was to make a list of possible connectors to link the ideas.

In the second and third session, the students developed the paragraph. Once it was finished, they exchanged it with a classmate to make peer correction to identify difficulties in fluency, accuracy, mechanics, content, and vocabulary. When the students read and determined the main aspects to improve, they held conversations (small conferencing) with their classmates to help them realize about the mistakes done in the paragraphs.

Likewise, lesson plan 4 used the same metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating used in the previous lesson. This time, the strategies were expected to provide the students with tools to develop a contrast paragraph on «the differences between single life and married life». The worksheet had an explanation on contrast paragraphs and series of gradual prompts to guide the students on the use of the metacognitive strategies to accomplish the task.

As the students were familiarized now with the working procedures, in the first 2-hour session they gave a quick read to the introductory part of the worksheet and answered some guiding questions to set the objectives. Then, they completed

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the Venn diagram to organize their ideas on single life and married life. After that, they wrote the paragraph making emphasis on differences.

After the task was completed, the students exchanged their paragraphs to check possible deficiencies in writing. Then, they met up to socialize the comments and inform the mistakes found for the sake of applying the pertinent corrections. At the end, the students revised and verified the accomplishment of the objectives set at the beginning of this lesson.

The metacognitive strategy *setting objectives* used since the beginning of the lesson allowed students to have clear goals of what they wanted to achieve by the end through the implementation of the metacognitive strategies to write their paragraphs. As supported by Negretti (2012) «mental representation of the task will therefore influence metacognitive dynamics entailed in writing» (p.7). Yet, there was an unfavorable mark as a result from the confusion students expressed before completing the *Venn diagram*. On the other hand, the strategy peer correction and conferencing helped the students to focus their attention on the construction of sentences with effective grammatical patterns. Likewise, sharing recommendations with peers rather than the teacher is an effective way to encourage those who may be traumatized when making errors, since although it is inevitable, students can and should actually learn from them using metacognitive strategies (Oxford, 1990).

Phase 3. Table 4 portrays lesson plans 5 and 6 directed towards the writing of a cause paragraph and an effect paragraph through the strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. During the third phase, the researcher applied the same four data collection instruments to gather information about the students' writing performance.

TABLE 4. *Distribution in phase 3.*

Phase	Lesson plans	Topic	Strategy classification according to O'Malley & Chamot, 1990	Strategy description	Strategy definition	Data collection instruments
Phase 3	Lesson plan 5 Lesson plan 6	Cause paragraph Effect paragraph	Planning	Self-questioning	Samples of paragraphs and guiding questions to identify important steps when writing.	Teacher-researcher's diary. Four corners. Rubric. External observer.
			Monitoring	Mark schemes	A template is used to indicate actions they can take while writing (regarding grammar, mechanics, and content).	
			Evaluating	Self-correcting and evaluating	Providing statements to identify strengths and weaknesses in their products (concerning grammar, mechanics, and content).	

Note: distribution of lesson plans and metacognitive strategies in phase 3. Own elaboration.

Lesson plan 5 introduced three different metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating: self-questioning, using mark schemes and self-correcting-evaluating. The worksheet contained the explanation about cause paragraphs, a set of clear steps on how to use the metacognitive strategies, and the topic for this lesson which was explaining the reasons why learning English – or any other language – is difficult.

The first strategy was *self-questioning*. The students answered some guiding questions based on a sample of cause paragraph to consciously recognize the proper use of mechanics, accuracy, content, and vocabulary. After that, they answered another set of questions to reflect upon personal thoughts that could arise from the previous activity.

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Later, the students checked a printed template with small statements to indicate important aspects about the use of indentation, capital letters, punctuation marks, spelling, connectors, tenses, and content to have in mind while writing the paragraph. Then, the students used *self-correcting-evaluating*, which consisted in reading a series of rules and examples on fluency, accuracy mechanics, content, and vocabulary to guide the students to check and improve their paragraphs.

Lesson plan 6 was applied to strengthen the use of the metacognitive strategies to find out how much they helped the students to achieve a high level of performance in writing. Worksheet 6 guided the students to develop an effect paragraph to explain the results, either positive or negative of learning a second or foreign language.

As done in the previous lesson, the students answered some guiding questions from a sample paragraph to gather ideas on how to properly write the paragraph. After that, they used the template, which was expected to help them remember key rules about accuracy, fluency, content, mechanics, and vocabulary. Finally, the students verified their paragraphs using the statements given to correct the possible mistakes.

When analyzing the results obtained after carrying out both lesson plans, it was evidenced that the metacognitive strategies *self-questioning*, *mark schemes*, and *self-correcting-evaluating* helped learners to elaborate complete paragraphs with well-thought-out sentences and examples connected with adequate linking words. Additionally, vocabulary, mechanics, and accuracy had the same number of positive occurrences, which represents a significant improvement. As stated by Oxford (1990), the metacognitive strategies are essential in providing the learners with ways to coordinate their own learning by focusing their attention on important aspects of the language.

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Triangulation in the implementation stage. After comparing the perspectives of the different instruments used, Figure 1 reports the number of positive and negative occurrences found in each instrument administered during the implementation stage to find out the impact of the metacognitive strategies in writing.

Figure 1. Triangulation of data.

| Instruments	Phase 1 Content +	Content -	Fluency +	Fluency -	Vocabulary +	Vocabulary -	Accuracy +	Accuracy -	Mechanic +	Mechanic -	Phase 2 Content +	Content -	Fluency +	Fluency -	Vocabulary +	Vocabulary -	Accuracy +	Accuracy -	Mechanic +	Mechanic -	Phase 3 Content +	Content -	Fluency +	Fluency -	Vocabulary +	Vocabulary -	Accuracy +	Accuracy -	Mechanic +	Mechanic -
Teacher's diary	5	1	3	3	2	0	4	0	3	1	6	1	5	1	4	1	4	1	4	2	7	1	10	0	6	2	6	1	6	1
Artifacts analysis	13	10	11	12	12	11	5	18	5	18	34	12	39	7	42	4	35	11	36	10	45	1	45	1	46	0	45	1	46	0
Four corners	25	21	19	27	23	23	9	37	12	34	20	3	17	6	13	10	16	7	18	5	15	8	15	8	17	6	21	2	15	8
External observer	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total	44	32	34	42	38	34	19	55	21	53	61	16	62	14	60	15	56	19	59	17	68	10	71	9	70	8	73	4	68	9

Note: triangulation of data in the implementation stage. Own elaboration.

In Figure 1, most of the positive occurrences were found in phases 2 and 3. This means that the students improved writing in terms of fluency, accuracy, content, vocabulary, and mechanics due to the use of the metacognitive strategies in the different workshops. In fact, this data confirmed what Oxford (1990) stated regarding the benefits of implementing such strategies for writing instruction. According to her, students often feel overwhelmed when having too much unfamiliar vocabulary, confusing rules, and different writing systems, causing them to lose focus which «can only be regained by the conscious use of metacognitive strategies» (Oxford, 1990, p. 136). To sum up, intervening writing classes with the metacognitive strategies allowed second semester students to enhance writing progressively.

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Evaluation stage

Additionally, a pretest and a posttest were administered to determine the level of performance of the students in writing. These tests were applied before and after the implementation of the metacognitive strategies, and consisted in the writing of a narrative paragraph on familiar topics. The teacher-researcher used an analytic rubric to evaluate these paragraphs. The results are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Pretest and posttest comparative results.
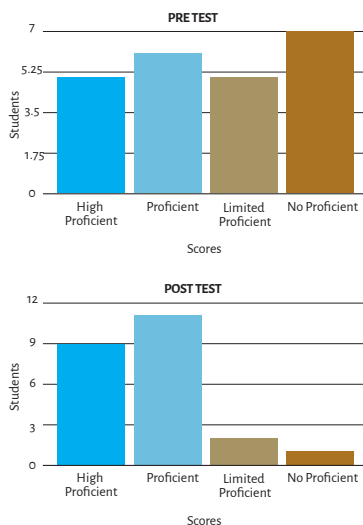
Note: level of proficiency in writing before and after the metacognitive strategies. Own elaboration.

Figure 2 shows substantial improvement in all aspects of writing in the posttest. The amount of non-proficient and limited proficient students went down from 52,1% to 13% after the implementation of the metacognitive strategies. Likewise,

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there was a remarkable increase in the percentage of students who became high proficient in the posttest going up from 47,8% to 86,9%. As such, the metacognitive strategies used in the regular instruction of writing empowered the students with the necessary tools to perform better in the tasks.

The data collected after six workshops using the metacognitive strategies in the regular instruction of the classes allowed to identify a significant improvement in content, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, and mechanics, as evidenced in Table 5 and Table 6.

TABLE 5. *Pretest results.*

Categories \ Scores	High proficient (4-5)	Proficient (3-3,9)	Limited proficient (2-2,9)	No proficient (1-1,9)
Fluency	6	5	7	5
Accuracy	5	6	5	7
Mechanics	4	7	8	4
Content	5	7	3	8
Vocabulary	6	6	8	3

Note: results of the pretest by categories. Own elaboration.

TABLE 6. *Posttest results.*

Categories \ Scores	High proficient (4-5)	Proficient (3-3,9)	Limited proficient (2-2,9)	No proficient (1-1,9)
Fluency	15	5	2	1
Accuracy	8	10	2	3
Mechanics	11	9	2	1
Content	15	6	1	1
Vocabulary	13	8	0	2

Note: results of the posttest by categories. Own elaboration.

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The progressive development of the lesson plans using the CALLA Model (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) provided students with flexibility to move back and forth between phases to understand, practice, and reinforce the strategies proposed in each lesson. Additionally, the learners coordinated their own learning process by being self-aware of their strengths and directing their attention to their weaknesses to improve aspects of writing through planning, monitoring, and evaluating stages.

Furthermore, the students had scarce knowledge on strategies for developing the writing tasks, as evidenced in the diagnostic stage. Hence, the teaching of metacognitive strategies supposed active learners able to acquire a repertoire of steps to facilitate the organization and linking of new information in a conscious way, and developing habits to « use them on new tasks that are similar to the learning activities on which they were initially trained » (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.196).

FINDINGS

Fluency

The participants showed a significant improvement in fluency as evidenced in the number of positive occurrences in phase 2 and 3. This means that students were able to connect ideas clearly and coherently using the appropriate connectors, due to the metacognitive strategies setting objectives and self-questioning, as analyzed in the four corners. Besides, the students could initially discover and connect with the nature of the lessons, predicting possible flaws to be improved as they were developing the task (Oxford, 1990). As mentioned by the teacher-researcher in the diary, the students showed great interest in not only making proper use of connectors but also being able to finish the writing task on time.

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Accuracy

A considerable improvement was noticed in accuracy mainly in phases 2 and 3 of the implementation, since the number of positive occurrences was higher than in phase 1. The students manifested in the four corners that the metacognitive strategies peer correction and conferencing and self-correcting and evaluating guided them to become aware of grammatical aspects through reviewing their own work and evaluating and comparing their progress with that of their peers over time (Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, the rubrics showed gradual progress in the use of complex constructions, articles, prepositions, and tenses in general. This is corroborated by the observation schemes that noted the use of peer correction always before handing in the paragraphs to the teacher, which led to infer that corrections suggested by their peers were taken into consideration.

Content

Content showed one of the highest improvements after the implementation. As evidenced in the teacher-researcher's diary, the metacognitive strategies functioned as a productive unit that contributed to ameliorate the students' difficulties in writing, especially in the structure of paragraphs. Additionally, the analysis of the rubrics showed content going up from 34 negative occurrences to 104 positive occurrences. Equally, the students stated that the strategies organizing by means of crib sheets, graphic organizers, and self-questioning helped them to clearly arrange the main points of the paragraphs. This goes hand in hand with Oxford (1990) in regards to the use of notes to write down «new target language expressions or structures and the contexts in which they were encountered» (p. 156). Also, the external observers often noted the students editing and restructuring their papers before delivering them to the teacher.

Vocabulary

The students displayed a major development of vocabulary in phases 2 and 3, as evidenced in the rubric's analysis, where it went up from 27 negative to 111 positive occurrences, and in the four corners where they went up from 22 negative to 47 positive. Moreover, the external observers confirmed that the metacognitive strategy overviewing and linking with already known material is vital in vocabulary building as the students could preview «the basic principles and/or material (including new vocabulary) for an upcoming language activity, and link these with what the learners already know» (Oxford, 1990, p. 152). Also, peer correction and conferencing not only helped the students to enrich their paragraphs in terms of vocabulary, but also provided an alternative to promote autonomy in the classroom by encouraging them to rely more on their classmates than on the teacher. Likewise, with self-correcting and evaluating the participants reviewed the effectiveness of words and expressions used in the paragraphs and applied adjustments if necessary. It is worth to mention that the external observers reported the use of dictionary as an aid to widen their lexicon during the writing tasks.

Mechanics

Mechanics was the most challenging aspect of writing in the students' questionnaire. However, the number of students who obtained low scores in the pretest diminished compared to those in the posttest going down from 12 to 3. Furthermore, there was main improvement in phases 2 and 3 with a total of 127 positive occurrences. This is confirmed by the teacher-researcher's diary, which reported great interest in making proper use of punctuation marks and spelling in the paragraphs. Also, the rubrics analysis displayed 82 positive occurrences in phase

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2 and 3 compared to 12 in phase 1. This suggested gradual improvement as the strategies were implemented and reinforced during the tasks. Besides, the four corners and the external observer schemes emphasized that the metacognitive strategies self-monitoring, peer correction and conferencing and mark schemes guided students to both make consistent use of basic punctuation marks, capitalization and spelling, and to promote self-learning and self-confidence by encouraging them to find each other's mistakes under a non-threatening environment fostering language acquisition.

All in all, the progressive improvement resulted from an adequate identification, modeling, and scaffolding of the metacognitive strategies in the regular instruction, that provided the students with opportunities to learn, practice, and reinforce them, as evidenced throughout the tasks developed in the implementation stage. The information and the data portrayed above is used as support to acknowledge the importance of this study to influence positively second semester students' writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Regular classroom instruction carried out with metacognitive strategies of planning supposes an innovative way to engage students at early stages of the writing task, because it provides with new procedures that help in conflict resolution. This means, the students are able to anticipate possible difficulties and devise ways to face them, which also fosters self-awareness and self-confidence allowing to establish higher possibilities of performing better. For this reason, it is advisable for teachers and language instructors to incorporate planning.

Likewise, the use of metacognitive strategies of monitoring provides confused learners with ways to clarify doubts and

keep a specific focus in writing. It also fosters students' self-comprehension of strengths and difficulties to pursue language goals by being aware of what they are doing.

Similarly, the metacognitive strategies of evaluation promote self-autonomy and self-motivation, since the students can execute mental processes to examine learning outcomes. Besides, monitoring own mistakes and evaluating overall progress empower students with ways of determining which of the actions performed were either thoughtless so they can be improved, or purposeful so they can be incorporated in the coming task. Furthermore, evaluating strategies allow students to check if their products respond to the prompts of the task and to the personal goals established at the beginning. Hence, language teachers are encouraged to implement these strategies regularly in their lessons.

In essence, the implementation of metacognitive strategies facilitates the acquisition, storing, and practice of new information, stimulating the students to work independently and confidently towards settled learning goals. The evidence discussed in the triangulation of the evaluation stage reports that the reinforcement of metacognitive strategies supposes more opportunities for students to become gradually more aware and familiarized with their own development, leading them to coordinate their own learning when working with incoming tasks.

Moreover, the CALLA model for teaching strategies assists language teachers in the development of integral and intended lessons that incorporate strategies in the normal course of a class rather than as an additional activity. In this way, both teachers and students have the opportunity to effectively introduce and practice the strategies and content through the phases

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that constitute the CALLA model: preparation, presentation, practice, and evaluation.

The phases of the CALLA model aim at providing language teachers with the possibility to describe the kind of strategies to introduce, the content topic, and the outcome intended for the lesson. Also, these phases allow flexibility, since the students have the opportunity to go back and forth to reinforce previous knowledge and consolidate new one. For this reason, language teachers who look forward to implementing metacognitive strategies are recommended to use the CALLA model to benefit learning.

Additionally, in the constant search for ways to make students feel drawn to learning, it was important to include purposes in writing, so they have a wider range of possibilities to share experiences, to describe interesting events, to analyze concepts, to research on important facts, to give their opinions and persuade to change or contribute to someone else's ideas. In this way, learners feel encouraged to continue writing as they sense their work has value beyond the classroom.

Besides, the use of meaningful topics supposes a key point to motivate the students to engage in writing, as they can express their ideas with major ease on topics that are interesting for them, which also contributes to improve their performance in writing. This means, students become active learners by being not only concentrated in solving a task and producing an outcome, but also empowered to spread ideas through their texts knowing the impact they might have in society. Therefore, it is appropriate to design tasks whose topics are relevant for the students to foster motivation and enhance the students' writing.

To conclude, the implementation of metacognitive strategies proves to be a fruitful way to help second semester students in writing. Thus, if the main objective is to enrich the students'

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learning experience and to enhance writing, EFL teachers, language institutions, and universities are advised to use these strategies as part of the curriculum and lesson planning. It is also relevant to point out that the usefulness of metacognitive strategies is not limited only to writing, but also to other language skills and academic fields. For this reason, the author of this study encourages researchers to inquire into this matter to broaden the field of action and help learners in their daily struggle to be better each day.

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