

Business Writing Skills Development through Metacognition Training

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate how metacognition training could facilitate students' writing skills development using a mixed research approach. The participants were university students from two Business Communication in English classes; one class was selected to be experimental and the other control. The metacognition training was served as a treatment. Four students from the experimental group were selected based on their pretest scores to represent two high and two low proficient writers for retrospective interviews. Quantitative data from the pretest and posttest writing scores were analyzed to find the significant difference between groups in the three component scores which include relevance and adequacy of content, compositional organization, and cohesion. Qualitative data from retrospective interviews before, during, and after metacognition training with the high and low proficient writers were analyzed to find the development of person, task, and strategic knowledge. The results showed that the significant difference between the groups exists only in the posttests' mean of the content scores. The retrospective interviews also revealed that both high and low proficient students could develop metacognition to a certain extent. However, the high proficient writers could develop better.

Keywords: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive strategies, learning strategies, writing skills

การพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนทางธุรกิจโดยผ่านการอบรมด้านอภิปัญญา

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อศึกษาว่าการอบรมด้านอภิปัญญาจะช่วยการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนของนักศึกษาได้อย่างไรโดยผ่านโดยการวิจัยแบบผสม ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยได้แก่นักศึกษาระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่เรียนรายวิชาการสื่อสารทางธุรกิจในภาษาอังกฤษ 2 กลุ่ม และได้ถูกแบ่งเป็นกลุ่มทดลองและกลุ่มควบคุม โดยมีการอบรมด้านอภิปัญญาเป็นหน่วยทดลอง นักศึกษา 4 คนจากกลุ่มทดลองถูกเลือกจากคะแนนก่อนการทดลองให้เป็นตัวแทนของนักศึกษาที่มีความเชี่ยวชาญทางการเขียนสูง 2 คนและต่ำ 2 คน สำหรับการสัมภาษณ์แบบย้อนหลัง ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณจากคะแนนการเขียนก่อนและหลังทดลองของสองกลุ่มถูกนำไปวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยยะระหว่างกลุ่มของคะแนนสามส่วน คือ ความเกี่ยวข้องและความพอเพียงของเนื้อหา การจัดเรียงการเขียน และความเชื่อมโยง ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากการสัมภาษณ์แบบย้อนหลังก่อนระหว่างและหลังจากการอบรมด้านอภิปัญญา กับนักศึกษาที่มีความเชี่ยวชาญทางการเขียนสูง 2 คนและต่ำ 2 คน ได้รับวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาการพัฒนาความรู้ด้านบุคคล ด้านงาน และด้านยุทธวิธี ผลการศึกษาพบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยยะของคะแนนการเขียนหลังการทดลองระหว่างสองกลุ่มจากคะแนนเพียงส่วนเดียวคือคะแนนความเกี่ยวข้องและความพอเพียงของเนื้อหา ผลจากการสัมภาษณ์แบบย้อนหลังพบว่านักศึกษาที่มีความเชี่ยวชาญทางการเขียนสูงและต่ำสามารถพัฒนาอภิปัญญาได้ในบางขอบเขต แต่นักศึกษาที่มีความเชี่ยวชาญทางการเขียนสูงพัฒนาได้ดีกว่า

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Introduction

Writing is a skill that can hardly be acquired naturally but it has to be taught and learned especially when writing in a foreign language. József (2001) notes that “writing is among the most complex human activities because it involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects” (p.5). Accordingly, it can be assumed that becoming an efficient writer requires the ability to integrate such complicated skills as generating ideas, planning and monitoring writing processes, and evaluating and revising writing works. To be successful in writing, Ahmed (2010) also points out that students should be

trained to demonstrate awareness of their communicative goals or purposes of writing, the readers, and the writing context. Having awareness of such writing related issues means that learners are equipped with *metacognition* which helps them to plan, implement, and evaluate their writing tasks effectively. Furthermore, it is believed that students possessing metacognition could overcome their writing difficulties (Ruan, 2005; Wu, 2008; Xinghua, 2010). However, few studies have been conducted to investigate the improvement of students' writing ability after they have been trained with metacognition. In addition, most related studies (e.g., Lv & Chen, 2010; Lu, 2014; Zeleke, 2015) only explored the development of students' writing skills after receiving the metacognition training treatment in quantified results comparing experimental and control groups. This present study therefore applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the effect of metacognition training on EFL tertiary students' business writing skills. The main objective is to investigate, through an experiment, the EFL tertiary students' business writing skill development as a consequence of metacognition training. Moreover, the development of metacognitive knowledge of self, task, and strategy were explored through the retrospective interviews.

Theories of Metacognition

Metacognitive knowledge refers to the knowledge that helps to control the cognitive processes. There are three variables, including knowledge of person, task, and strategy (Flavell, 1979; Wenden 1998). Person knowledge is the belief about oneself as a learner who deals with his or her ability in achieving the effectiveness of his or her learning. Task knowledge is the learners' knowledge about the purpose, the demands, and the nature of learning tasks; for example, learners tend to understand what the tasks require them to do and how they should do to accomplish the task. Strategic knowledge is the knowledge about when and how the learners should employ strategies in dealing with their learning. Schraw and Moshman (1995) also described that metacognitive knowledge is what learners know about their own cognitive processes. To them, metacognitive knowledge is

categorized in declarative, procedural and conditional domains. For declarative knowledge, it refers to learners' ability to talk about what they know about how they learn and what factors influence their performance. Procedural knowledge is the learners' knowledge about different learning and memory strategies or procedures that work best for them. Conditional knowledge is the knowledge the learners have about the conditions under which they can implement various cognitive strategies. Although metacognitive knowledge has been categorized in slightly different ways by different theorists, the sub-categories share quite similar characteristics of the knowledge that help ones manage and control what they are doing.

According to Oxford (1990), "metacognitive strategies allow learners to control their own cognition using three sets of metacognitive strategies which are: (1) centering your learning, (2) arranging and planning your learning, and (3) evaluating your learning. The first set deals with how learners are prepared with the upcoming language tasks by overviewing key concepts and associating them with what is already known, paying either directed or selective attention according to the requirement of the task, and delaying speech production to focus on listening comprehension. The second set helps learners to organize and plan the language tasks as learners are capable of setting goals and objectives, knowing the task's purpose, identifying the focus of the task, and getting more involved in group work activities in order to seek for more practice opportunities. The last set of metacognitive strategies assists learners to become aware of what they are going to do by self-monitoring and self-evaluating. They are called indirect strategies because they support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language." (p. 135). She stated that learners should always be conscious when they are learning. By that, it means they should rely on their metacognitive strategies that help them to deal with the learning difficulties effectively. At times, learners are overwhelmed with the novelty of unfamiliar language features such as vocabulary, grammar, and writing processes that distract them, but they can regain the focus when they pay attention or apply metacognition to manage the learning tasks.

Previous Studies on Metacognition Training

Many authors claimed that metacognition training facilitates L2 learning. Oz (2005) stated that guiding L2 learners through the thinking process can assist developing their learning skills as they think through a problem, make decisions, or attempt to understand a situation or text. He suggested that students who are trained with metacognition will be confident in their abilities to learn. They are considered autonomous learners who can assess why they are successful in performing a task or think critically about the mistakes they made when failing to do the task. Since the students are able to reflect and adjust themselves to cope with new situations, Oz categorized them as continual learners and thinkers. According to Wenden (1998), metacognitive knowledge is considered crucial to successful learning of a second or foreign language because it enables learners to reflect their own belief and knowledge about learning. The three components of metacognitive knowledge include person, task, and strategic. Learners having person knowledge believe that they have general ability to achieve specific learning goals because they have proficiency in a certain area; learners possessing task knowledge know about a task's demands and the skills needed to complete the particular task; and learners who have strategic knowledge are able to use different kinds of strategies to successfully deal with a language task. Moreover, Schraw (1998) added that metacognition is essential to successful learning as it allows students to better manage their learning because students have to think about how to perform the language skill. In addition, Victori and Lockhart (1995) suggested that learner's metacognitive knowledge training in the form of counseling sessions is useful for L2 learners since it equips them with a self-directed learning approach. They also believe that students who are trained with metacognition, i.e. knowledge and strategies related to language learning, will approach learning autonomy with less effort than those who are not trained.

For writing skill development, Zimmerman & Bandura (1994) claimed that effective strategy instruction could improve learners' writing outcomes and performance. In order to have positive learning outcomes, students should possess self-regulatory efficacy which means "the capability to

mobilize, direct, and sustain one's instructional efforts" (p. 846). The authors suggested that students need to be taught skills and strategies to have such self-regulatory efficacy which can be directly linked to their perceived need in succeeding in the writing task and consequently receiving good grades. Moreover, Ching (2002) suggested that strategy and self-regulation instruction has equipped engineering students with the knowledge of how to plan and revise their essays. Engineering students were selected to be the participants in this study because the author was interested to find out whether self-regulation instruction could be extended to other ESP settings. Moreover, the study intended to correct those students' misconceptions about writing as they think that English writing may not be necessary in their future career.

Xiao (2007) suggested that a need exists to integrate metacognition as part of EFL writing instruction, for example, coaching in brainstorming strategies and implementing a training program on the development of self-monitoring in student writing. She added that interactive and reflective writing activities, including learning journals and self-editing tasks, may be also applied to enhance learners' metacognitive knowledge and overall writing effectiveness. Maftoon, Birjandi, and Farahian (2014) also proposed that EFL writing courses should implement metacognition so that teachers can develop students' metacognitive knowledge. Based on the results of their study, the authors suggested that declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge should be implemented in EFL courses so that students have a positive self-concept toward their own abilities, know how to deal with a particular goal, and also know when and why to use particular strategies. To do so, the students should be trained to plan, draft, consider the audience's needs, checking the content, evaluate, and revise their writing tasks.

Studies on Writing Instruction in the Thai Context

Even though metacognition training is found to be useful in helping students to develop writing strategies and cope with writing difficulties, relatively few studies were conducted in the Thai context and mostly applied the quantitative approach using Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a survey questionnaire designed by Oxford (1990), to only investigate

English language problems. For example, Pawapatcharaudom (2007) pointed out in her study that the most problematic skill for Thai undergraduate students studying in an international program at a public university was writing. She reported the results gathered from SILL and the results showed that metacognitive strategies were not used sufficiently even though it appeared these were the strategies that students tried to use the most. However, there were no reasons found in her studies as to why students did not use metacognitive strategies sufficiently. Moreover, Tangpermpoon (2008) discussed the benefits and drawbacks of using the integration of genre, product, and process approaches in the writing classroom. She suggested that the writing teachers in the Thai context should incorporate these three approaches in teaching writing to the university students. However, she did not mention writing strategies training even though it should be used in the process approach. In addition, Ka-kan-dee and Kaur (2014) applied think aloud protocols in their study to only identify students' argumentative writing problems and the results indicated that several difficulties students faced deal with the lack of metacognitive knowledge and strategies such as incapability to think while writing, to understand the task requirement, and to evaluate own writing tasks. The findings also reported that students even expected their teacher to provide regular feedback, process-based teaching, and pre-discussion of the writing task. Therefore, it is suggested that writing teachers should consider students' writing difficulties and consider appropriate teaching strategies to help students develop writing skills. In sum, writing strategy instruction is still limited and neglected in the Thai educational context.

Challenges in Writing Strategy Instruction

Based on the notion of strategy instruction, it is assumed that writing strategy instruction can help writing teachers develop students' writing skills because useful strategies are implicitly and explicitly introduced to them. However, training students with different English proficiency to improve writing skills remains challenging. Sasaki (2000) found in her study that both high and low proficiency students consume considerable time to develop

writing skills yet the quality and fluency of their writing were still not improved. In addition, even though Ching's (2002) study discussed several practicalities of the strategy and self-regulation instruction, it was suggested that the writing teachers need to improve the course implementation by not focusing on the writing frequency. In so doing, the suitable quantity of writing tasks should be assigned at the appropriate time otherwise they increase workload from the students' core course writing tasks. Then, the students feel pressured and do not develop writing strategies effectively. Similar to Ching's (2002) study, De Silva (2015) reported the positive results of the strategy training; however, she suggested that strategy instruction program should be appropriately designed to suit the particular needs of the learners. For example, she used the writing tasks beginning from less demanding to more demanding (e.g. from describing object to writing argumentative essay) to gradually develop students' writing strategies. Therefore, writing teachers should take into consideration that training writing strategies to EFL students requires considerable time, appropriate quantity of the assigned writing tasks, and well-designed writing tasks.

Research Methodology

This present study was conducted at Business English department, Assumption University where all the offered courses are taught in English. The approximate number of students in each class is between 25 and 30 depending on the course complexity and the skills taught. Business Communication in English II (EN3211) is the major required course for the third year students. EN3211 concentrates on both business writing skills and business communication skills such as working in team, conducting meetings, and making business presentations.

Participants

The student participants comprised groups of third year students majoring in Business English, Faculty of Arts, Assumption University. Two Business Communication in English II classes were administered as a control group ($N=24$) and an experimental group ($N=28$). The students are mostly Thai and some international students are from Korea and China. Their ages

ranged from 21 to 25 years old and there are more females than males. Based on the pretest results, four students from the experimental group who received the highest (H1, H2) and lowest scores (L1, L2) were chosen for further interviews.

Metacognition Training for Business Writing Skills Development

For metacognition training, the researcher of this current study (as the trainer) applied Cohen's (1998) strategies-based instruction (SBI) to implicitly and explicitly integrate metacognitive strategies training into a normal business English classroom. The aim of the metacognition training is to help students learn to write business correspondence and develop metacognitive knowledge for the writing tasks. Researcher-designed activities for metacognition training and writing development were administered in the course lessons. The activities for the metacognition training applied three strategy sets introduced by Oxford (1990) which are centering, planning, and monitoring and evaluating strategies. Centering refers to the technique of linking the prior knowledge to perform a present task; planning refers to the strategy to identify the goal and know what specific requirements are needed to perform the task; monitoring and evaluating refers to the ways students consciously monitor their own errors and evaluate their own actions. To train with metacognition, each course lesson was divided into two sessions of lecture-based teaching and metacognition training as shown in Appendix 3. During the lecture-based session, when the regular course content from the textbook discussed some relevant writing strategies such as analyzing problem, defining purpose, and revising ideas, the researcher explicitly explained the usefulness of those strategies so that students could consider using them in other writing tasks. After the lecture-based session, the teacher distributed the metacognition training tasks that support each of the lecture topic. The instructions were explained clearly to the students for them to work by themselves individually, in pairs, or sometimes in groups while the control group was administered with the writing drills without metacognition discussions. The researcher then observed how the students did the task; moreover, she explicitly suggested appropriate metacognitive strategies for the assigned writing activity and encouraged them to use.

Data collection

The pretest and posttest, adapted from the writing assignments of the prerequisite course, Business Communication in English I, were used to measure changes in the students' business correspondence writing ability resulting from the metacognition training as an intervention (See Appendix 1). Before administering these pretest and posttest, the three evaluators as experts were requested to rate the tests' difficulty and the results showed that the level of difficulty was similar. Before the metacognition training, both the control and the experimental groups were administered with the pretest. Whereas the students in experimental group were exposed to writing tasks and metacognition training activities, the regular Business Communication in English II course's writing tasks were administered to the control group only to introduce the business writing concepts and strategies from the textbook. After the training was completely finished, the students from both groups were administered with the posttest in which the content was similar to the pretest. Both pretest and posttest were evaluated by three nonnative instructors, from the Business English Department at Assumption University, who have more than 5 years of experience teaching business English courses where writing skills are in focus, using the Test in English for Educational Purposes (TEEP) developed by Weir (1988), as cited in Weigle (2002). TEEP scheme consists of seven scales: (1) relevance and adequacy of content; (2) compositional organization; (3) cohesion; (4) adequacy of vocabulary for purpose; (5) grammar; (6) mechanical accuracy I (punctuation) and (7) mechanical accuracy II (spelling). However, only the first three scales were employed in this study because they assessed behaviors/practices which could be improved by using metacognitive strategies and knowledge, while the rest were rather related to the language knowledge. To ensure the reliability of the pretest and posttest scores, there was a discussion with the three evaluators regarding the criteria for assessing those tests.

To investigate how high and low proficient writers (H1, H2 and L1, L2) use and develop metacognitive knowledge and strategies, retrospective interviews were conducted before, during, and after metacognition training. In

each interview, the students were given a writing task, and after they finished the task, they were asked questions about metacognitive knowledge and strategies (See Appendix 2).

Data analysis

The pretest and posttest scores collected from both control and experimental groups were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) through the inferential statistics, Independent Sample *t*-test, to measure the students' writing abilities before and after the metacognition training. The qualitative data from the student interviewees' retrospective interviews were interpreted and coded according to the set themes of person, task, and strategic knowledge (Wenden, 1998).

Results

This section reports the results from the pretest and posttest scores of both groups. The descriptive statistics and Independent Samples *t*-test analysis of students' pretest scores of both groups are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and Independent Samples T-Test analysis of both groups' posttest scores.

Table 2 Pretest scores for the writing tasks of both groups

	Max. scores	Control group (N=24)		Experimental group (N=28)		Sig. (2-tailed)
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Content	3	2.07	0.25	2.02	0.34	0.595
Organization	3	1.58	0.50	1.61	0.45	0.837
Cohesion	3	1.63	0.34	1.53	0.42	0.388

**p* = < .05

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean scores for the relevance and adequacy of content are 2.07 for the control group and 2.02 for the experimental group; the mean scores for the compositional organization are 1.58 for the control group and 1.61 for the experimental group; and the mean scores for the cohesion are 1.63 for the control group and 1.53 for the

experimental group. When comparing the mean scores, an Independent Sample T-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the three component pretest scores between control and experimental groups. This indicates that the level of writing competency of students from both groups is statistically homogeneous

Table 3 Posttest scores for the writing tasks of both groups

	Max. scores	Control group (N=24)		Experimental group (N=28)		Sig. (2-tailed)
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Content	3	2.38	0.33	2.59	0.28	0.021*
Organization	3	1.93	0.48	2.12	0.26	0.082
Cohesion	3	1.77	0.33	1.92	0.26	0.073

*p = < .05

Table 3 shows the posttest mean scores of both groups. The mean scores for the relevance and adequacy of content are 2.38 for the control group and 2.59 for the experimental group; the mean scores for the compositional organization are 1.93 for the control group and 2.12 for the experimental group; and the mean scores for the cohesion are 1.77 for the control group and 1.92 for the experimental group. The Independent Sample T-test shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the posttests' mean of the content scores ($p = 0.021$) between control and experimental groups. Even though there is no statistical difference in the posttests' mean scores of the compositional organization and cohesion, these two component scores of experimental group are considerably higher. This can be concluded that the experimental group could outperform the control group on writing performances after receiving the metacognition training.

For the qualitative data of the student interviewees' retrospective interviews, findings revealed that high and low proficient writers were considerably different in terms of person knowledge development. High proficient writers described more of their writing progress and abilities than the difficulties, while low proficient writers mostly viewed themselves negatively as poor writers. However, it is shown that metacognition training

helps the low proficient writers talk about weaknesses in more details. The ability to disclose their weaknesses may help them to find the right ways to develop writing skills. Their responses after the metacognition training are shown below.

H1: "I can write well because I put myself into the situation. I can write better and I can put more details. I know how to organize the message."

H2: "I think I can write better than the previous task. I can write more analytically and the thinking process is more organized. I think the progress is from the way I think."

L1: "It is very difficult for me because I am not good at persuading other people to follow my ideas."

L2: "It is still difficult for me because I have to figure out how to ask for the reader's cooperation politely."

In developing positive attitude towards themselves, L1 stated *"I think my writing is improved because I know the patterns for writing different types of message"* and L2 said *"I think I have a progress because I practice and I know more about the patterns for writing different types of messages."*

For the task knowledge, all participants had no difficulties in identifying the intended readers; however, indicating the task purpose was somewhat challenging for them. For example, instead of giving bad news to the hotel guests that the outdoor pool was out of service, H1 stated that she had to persuade the customers to use the service in their next visit. Nevertheless, all students could develop the task knowledge of this aspect after the metacognition training. The high proficient writers could develop their knowledge of task requirement even before they were trained. The pre-training interview results showed that they focused on discussing the cognitive and language requirements. Their responses are shown below.

H1: “...I need to realize the problem. Why the company failed to include the product when delivering and what caused the problem?”

H2: “I should know what word to use to make customer feel satisfied and purchase from us again next time.”

H1 emphasized thinking of what to write in the content based on the given situation. H2 focused on using appropriate language to better communicate with the readers. Even though the low proficient writers’ initial responses related only to objective requirement of the task, (e.g. L1: “The customer didn’t receive the product she ordered. I have to do something to let the customer know it’s the company’s mistake.”; L2: “This letter requires me to solve problem to meet customer’s satisfaction. I have to write in a polite way.”) they were able to describe a more subjective form of the task requirement (e.g. cognitive and language requirements) after the metacognition training. Their responses are shown below.

L1: “This writing task requires me to plan to persuade the readers.”

L2: “This task requires me to avoid using the forcing tone and ask politely for the cooperation from the readers.”

The metacognition training helped all participants to be aware of the necessities of particular writing strategies such as outlining, understanding context and situation, and the appropriate use of word choice. Their responses relating to the strategies use are demonstrated below.

H1: “For planning, it is quite clear for me from the given situation that we have to face with this problem. For the evaluation, as I said, I emphasized details and solution. I monitor by asking myself questions if I am ok with the provided solution.”

H2: “I plan to write the reasons to support the idea so that the reader takes certain actions.”

L1: "Planning for me is to think about how to write each paragraph to make it clear to the readers. I try to monitor myself but I cannot figure out what to monitor. I evaluate my writing that it is still not ok."

L2: "I plan what to write in each paragraph. I do not monitor. I evaluate that the message should make sense."

For the writing process, the students focused mostly on the content organization and they considered planning the main points as their first step in the writing process. For the strategy use, in terms of goal and objective setting, the high proficient writers could develop this strategy better than the low proficient writers. H1 said she set writing goal and objective every time before she wrote; H2 said he focused on the reader's responses as he set goal and objective for his writing, while L1 and L2 stated that they did not set any writing goal and objective. Although participants did not provide detailed explanation of how planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies were used, their answers showed that the metacognition training could help them to be aware that they had to use these particular strategies for the writing tasks.

Discussion

The experimental group students outperformed the control group students in terms of relevance and adequacy of content. A possible explanation for this would be because the students' task knowledge was developed. They were trained to identify the task's purposes, requirements, and the intended readers; therefore, they were able to write relevant and appropriate content of the message. However, there is no significant difference between the two groups in the aspects of organization and cohesion of writing. This is contrasting to most research studies (e.g. Bacha, 2001; De Silva, 2015; Gustilo, 2016; Lee, 2006) as those studies reported students' writing skills improvement regarding these two aspects. In general writing courses, measuring the writing improvement on content, organization, and cohesion is mundane as De Silva (2015) stated that she paid attention to organization and cohesion in her intervention because students are usually

weak in these aspects. However, with the business writing genre, students are generally discussed with the different patterns in writing different types of business correspondence. For example, if a student has to write a negative message, he or she will begin writing the reason for refusal before offering other alternatives to satisfy the readers' needs. Therefore, it could be justified that gauging the scores of organization and cohesion might not be applicable to see effect of the metacognition training as the students are already equipped with frameworks to organize the coherent message. However, metacognition training could still help students to indirectly improve the way they organized the message in a coherent way through the thinking of how to provide adequate and relevant content.

Comparing between high and low proficient writers, the former used and developed more of person, task, strategic knowledge in all aspects. For the person knowledge, high proficient writers have more self-confidence in their writing than the less proficient writers. According to Oz's (2005) suggestion, students who are trained with metacognition will be confident in their abilities to learn; however, this present study's finding showed that skilled writers possess this quality even before the training whereas low skilled writers who perceived themselves as poor writers and did not have confidence when writing could be developed slightly through metacognition training. For the task knowledge, the findings indicate that high and low proficient writers are different in terms of the way they evaluate tasks and how to communicate effectively. To the proficient writers, they emphasized understanding the readers' needs, using appropriate language, as well as considering to write appropriate type of message. However, the low proficient writers focused on the objective requirement of the tasks such as accepting mistake, solving problem, and considering special offer. To simply identify tasks' requirement is not sufficient in business writing. The students usually discussed that maintaining goodwill with the customers is vital. To do so, they should initially identify the purpose accurately in order to write the correct type of message using the suggested pattern. Moreover, the language use can also help them to remain courteous when communicating with the customers. These characteristics refer to the effective communication in

business context. Therefore, this indicates that high proficient writers have a higher level of critical thinking skills that could help to develop better message for effective communication. The finding correlates with Kasper's (1997) study which states that good writing requires adequate content with the clear communication that makes the readers understand the message well. For the strategic knowledge, high proficient writers are aware that writing requires strategic thinking which help them to adjust their writing to the given situation, the purpose, and the target reader. Based on Victori's (1999) study, skilled writers tend to be more aware of content development than less skilled writers; therefore, the findings from this research is in line with this.

Although several training sessions enhanced students to develop person knowledge which helped them to be aware of their writing progress, abilities, and difficulties, some writing tasks required considerable time to proceed; therefore, they caused the low proficient writers to feel demotivated. Thus, the focus should be on training the low proficient students by giving them easier writing tasks or arranging a pre-discussion of the assigned task with the teacher before they perform the task. The course content and the training sessions introduced several types of readers in the business context and the main purposes in business communication. As a result, students were able to develop task knowledge of these aspects. However, time allotment was not sufficient in the training sessions that trained students to be aware of the task requirement. Then, some poor writers did not know what the task required them to do and could not continue writing resulting in not developing the task knowledge. Training strategic knowledge could be considered the most challenging. The training sessions seemed to emphasize training planning strategy, but not monitoring and evaluating strategies. Similar to the limitations for training person and task knowledge, the time constraint was the major problem for the teacher to manage the metacognition training.

In summary, the research findings contribute to the knowledge on conducting the metacognition training to develop the metacognitive knowledge and strategies for EFL tertiary students, both high and low

proficient, in the business writing classroom or the similar context. However, there are additional pedagogical implications suggested to the writing teachers who desire to teach the writing course using the approach of embedded strategies-based instruction.

The study raised the learners' awareness that, even though it was justified that students in the business writing course have already been equipped with the frameworks to organize the coherent message based on the quantitative results, the statistically difference does not exist in the mean scores of compositional organization and cohesion. These two component scores could not be exempted from the metacognition training as they were still used in most general writing studies (e.g. Lee, 2006; Bacha, 2001; De Silva, 2015; Gustilo, 2016) to show the writing skills development.

Furthermore, when training students with metacognition, the pre-designed writing tasks should not be too difficult to perform because when the students are able to understand the instructions of the task, they (particularly high proficient students) are able to discuss and share strategies they find useful with other friends. This indication helps promote scaffolding concept and benefits low proficient students. Moreover, the writing tasks that are not too difficult also facilitate metacognition development and writing abilities. With the matter of time restriction, it is obviously shown that high and low proficient students require different length of time to develop metacognition; therefore, each pre-designed writing task should not contain too many strategies to be trained. It is suggested that teachers should also consider dealing differently with students who have different writing abilities. In addition, it might be very practical if a group of low proficient students are arranged with the "how to learn" course before participating in the metacognition training.

Since training strategic knowledge and strategy use is difficult and challenging, it is suggested that the needs analysis should be conducted before administering the metacognition training so that the appropriate writing strategies can be established and categorized prior to the metacognition training. Consequently, the students can orchestrate suitable strategies to be used in a certain writing task. Furthermore, the metacognition training should

acknowledge the students with the concept of the self-oriented feedback loop which “entails a cyclic process in which students monitor the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and react to this feedback in a variety of ways, ranging from covert changes in self-perception to overt changes in behavior such as altering the use of a learning strategy” (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 5) so that they are able to develop monitoring strategy. With the evaluating strategy, the interview results showed that students were more concerned with their English language ability; therefore, it is suggested that providing additional training sessions to the students with the linguistic structure could help them to develop evaluating strategy as they are able to use the knowledge to evaluate their own work by revising and editing the message content.

Conclusion

This study investigated how metacognition training helps students develop better business writing skills and the findings revealed that high and low proficient students could develop metacognition to a certain extent. Based on the findings, it is suggested that business writing course should employ particular writing activities in training students to be equipped with person, task, and strategic knowledge (Wenden, 1998). However, those writing activities should be adjusted to suit students who have different writing abilities so that they are able to fully develop metacognition. In so doing, writing teachers have to consider the level of task’s difficulty and the appropriate length of time provided in the training. For further research, this study can be replicated or expanded in other contexts such as universities which provide either regular or international educational programs and offer similar business writing or other content subject courses, to explore the extent to which metacognition training could improve EFL students’ ‘writing skills.

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Appendix 1: Pretest and Posttest Writing Tasks

Pretest Instructions (Type of message: informative)

Your company has just launched a new product which is a multifunction printer. A key customer is interested to buy in quantity to replace all the old printers. Write a letter to provide specific information to your customer giving good news that you will offer special discount. Write at least 200 words using full-block format. Make up necessary information such as the customer's name and company, products' details, terms and conditions, etc.

Posttest Instructions (Type of message: informative)

You work at a well-known fitness center as a manager. Your corporate customer writes a letter to ask for more details about the membership and the special price since the company has decided to provide more employee benefits in using the service at your fitness center. Reply with a positive message offering additional privilege. In the letter, provide all details of your fitness center's services. Write at least 200 words using full-block format. Make up necessary information regarding the special offer and the fitness center's facilities such as swimming pools, aerobic classes, weight machines, etc.

Appendix 2: Retrospective Interview Questions

Person Knowledge

- How do you explain about the overall progress of your writing task?
- How do you see yourself as effective writer of this business letter?
- What difficulties you had while writing this business letter.

Task Knowledge

- Who is the reader of this business letter?
- What do you think this writing requires from you?
- What skills do you need to complete writing this business letter?

Strategic Knowledge

- What strategies did you use to succeed in this writing task?
- How did you write this business letter? briefly explain step by step.

Appendix 3: Examples of Metacognition Training Tasks

Lecture Session (45-60 minutes)	Metacognition Training Tasks (30-45 minutes)	Trained Metacognitive Knowledge
Business Communication, Management, and Success	<p>Connecting with what already known</p> <p>Spend 10 minutes of nonstop writing telling what you can remember about the business writing you have learnt from EN3210 Business Communication in English I. You may list relevant vocabulary or expressions that should be used in writing good news, bad news, and persuasive messages.</p>	Person and task knowledge
Adapting Your Message to Your Audience	<p>Analyzing audiences</p> <p>Brainstorm with your friends in a group of 3-4 students a range of specific language functions and structures you will be using in your writing for different contexts such as asking questions, describing and explaining the company's products in order to deal with five different types of audiences: primary, secondary, initial, gatekeeper, and watchdog. Examples of specific language functions and structures include using past, present, future tenses, or conditional. You should also consider the tone of your message. Information from Module 14-16 can be useful to your group discussion.</p>	Task knowledge
Planning, Writing, and Revising	<p>Applying writing strategies</p> <p>Write a letter to a hotel to book a room for three nights. Make up more details on your own. Apply the strategies of planning, writing, and revising discussed in this module. Exchange your letter with your partner. Read your partner's letter and point out the errors he or she has made. Use the information from Module 14-16 for identifying the writing errors in spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, organization, content, and tone. Ask your partner to reflect on his or her strategies used in writing this letter.</p>	Person and strategic knowledge

Biodata

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