

**PROPOSING AN INITIAL METACOGNITIVE CONSTRUCT FOR EXPLORING
EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING PROCESSES****Diah Merrita¹, Ratna Dewanti², Liliana Muliastuti³**Universitas Negeri Jakarta^{1,2,3}Email: khususmengajar1@gmail.com¹, rdewanti@unj.ac.id², liliana.muliastuti@unj.ac.id³**ABSTRACT**

Metacognition has been recognized as an essential component of writing because it enables learners to regulate their thinking throughout the composing process. However, existing metacognitive frameworks and instruments have largely been developed as domain-general measures and provide limited conceptual guidance for investigating metacognitive processes in EFL writing. This study aimed to propose an initial metacognitive construct for English essay writing derived from Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework. Employing a conceptual research design, the study used Flavell's framework as its primary theoretical foundation and interpreted the dimensions of planning, monitoring, and evaluating for the context of essay writing. The analysis resulted in an initial construct comprising three dimensions and thirteen context-specific indicators representing learners' metacognitive regulation before, during, and after composing an essay. Rather than modifying Flavell's original framework, the proposed construct offers a contextual interpretation of metacognitive regulation for EFL essay writing. As an initial conceptual framework, it provides a theoretical foundation for future qualitative research and may support the development of interview protocols to explore learners' metacognitive processes in writing.

Keywords: *english essay writing; higher education; metacognitive construct***INTRODUCTION**

Challenges in learning English, particularly those related to literacy skills such as reading and writing, are often treated as separate from the possibility that learners may encounter similar difficulties when using Indonesian. For example, students' problems in English writing, including generating ideas and demonstrating awareness of their audience, are frequently regarded as issues unique to English rather than difficulties that may also arise when they write in Indonesian (Rusfandi, 2025). Since English proficiency enables Indonesians to expand their knowledge and access broader learning opportunities, mastering the language is considered essential for Indonesian students (Alfarisy, 2021). In addition, second language learners often encounter linguistic challenges during the language-learning process, including difficulties related to syntax, which refers to the rules used to construct coherent and grammatically accurate sentences (H. Zhang & Xie, 2014).

These difficulties may arise because learners already possess linguistic knowledge from their first language and may unconsciously transfer its grammatical patterns when acquiring a new language (Jensen & Westergaard, 2023). Such challenges can also result from differences in the grammatical and syntactic systems of the first and second languages (Ying, 1999). Consequently, learners may produce errors, which are viewed as a natural part of developing competence in a second language rather than as evidence of failure (Merrita et al., 2025; Krashen, as cited in (Rustandi et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, writing is not merely a linguistic activity but also a cognitive process and a meaning-making endeavor that requires learners to think critically, evaluate information, and generate new ideas (Hyland, 2022). It is also viewed as a problem-solving activity in which writers approach a writing task as a problem to be addressed and draw upon their intellectual resources to resolve it (Hyland, 2022). More broadly, writing is recognized as a complex and multidimensional socio-cognitive activity that requires writers to coordinate linguistic, contextual, and content knowledge while exercising metacognitive control throughout the writing process (Hayes, 2012; Zhang, 2021). Hence, greater attention should be given to the roles of metacognition, and writing, as effective writing requires learners to employ metacognitive strategies to regulate their own writing processes. This also highlights the need for innovation in EFL academic writing instruction. One possible approach is the implementation of process-oriented writing instruction, which has emerged as a prominent trend in EFL writing pedagogy (Teng et al., 2022).

Metacognition is generally regarded as a multidimensional and domain-general construct. Its earliest conceptualization originated from the theory of mind perspective proposed by Flavell (1979). Within this perspective, metacognition is understood as the application of theory of mind to the regulation of cognitive tasks. Flavell (1979) defined metacognition as "thinking about thinking." It is also described as an individual's awareness of the knowledge and cognitive processes involved in evaluating, monitoring, and regulating ideas (Craig et al., 2020). Schraw & Dennison (1994) further developed the concept of metacognition by introducing metacognitive awareness, which they operationalized through the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), a 52-item instrument designed to assess metacognitive awareness across a wide range of learning contexts. However, because the MAI was developed as a domain-general measure, it was not specifically designed to examine the metacognitive processes involved in English essay writing. Accordingly, there is a need to develop a context-specific metacognitive construct for this domain. Informed by Flavell's (1979) framework of metacognitive regulation, the present study develops a metacognitive construct for English essay writing to investigate the planning, monitoring, and evaluating processes of EFL university students.

Previous studies have consistently emphasized the important role of metacognition in EFL writing. Alfaifi (2021) and Han (2024) demonstrated that explicit metacognitive strategy instruction improved students' writing performance and motivation, whereas Teng et al., (2021) developed and validated the Metacognitive Academic Writing Strategies Questionnaire (MAWSQ) to measure metacognitive strategies in EFL academic writing. While these studies have advanced research on metacognitive instruction and assessment, limited attention has been given to proposing a conceptual metacognitive framework that can guide qualitative inquiry into EFL students' metacognitive processes during English essay writing. Therefore, this study proposes an initial metacognitive construct, grounded in



Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework, as a theoretical basis for developing interview protocols to explore EFL university students' planning, monitoring, and evaluating processes during English essay writing. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: How can an initial metacognitive construct for investigating EFL university students' English essay writing processes be developed based on Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework? The objective of this study is to propose an initial conceptual metacognitive construct for English essay writing, grounded in Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework, to provide a theoretical foundation for developing interview protocols that explore EFL university students' planning, monitoring, and evaluating processes during essay writing.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a conceptual research design to propose an initial metacognitive construct for English essay writing in EFL higher education. The construct was grounded in Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework, particularly the dimensions of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. These dimensions were theoretically contextualized to the processes of English essay writing and organized into an initial metacognitive construct. The proposed construct is intended to provide a theoretical foundation for developing interview protocols to explore EFL university students' metacognitive processes during English essay writing.

2.3 Data Sources

The primary data source for this study was Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework. This framework served as the theoretical basis for identifying the dimensions of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. These dimensions were subsequently interpreted and contextualized to the processes of English essay writing to formulate the proposed conceptual framework and its corresponding indicators.

2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis began by examining Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework to identify its three dimensions: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. These dimensions were then interpreted in the context of English essay writing. Based on this interpretation, indicators were formulated for each dimension to develop the proposed conceptual framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Development of the Proposed Metacognitive Construct

The proposed metacognitive construct was derived from Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework. This study retained the three dimensions of planning, monitoring, and evaluating and formulated a set of indicators for English essay writing. The indicators were developed to represent each metacognitive dimension in relation to the

writing process without altering the original theoretical framework. Table 1 presents the proposed metacognitive construct.

Table 1. Proposed Metacognitive Construct for English Essay Writing

Dimensions	Concept	Indicators
Planning	Planning involves the selection of appropriate strategies and the allocation of resources that affect performance. Examples include making predictions before reading, strategy sequencing, and allocating time or attention selectively before beginning a task	• Selecting appropriate strategies • Allocating resources that affect performance • Making predictions before beginning a task • Strategy sequencing • Allocating time selectively before beginning a task • Allocating attention selectively before beginning a task
Monitoring	Monitoring refers to one's on-line awareness of comprehension and task performance. The ability to engage in periodic self-testing while learning is a good example.	• On-line awareness of comprehension • Awareness of task performance • Engaging in periodic self-testing while learning
Evaluating	Evaluation refers to appraising the products and regulatory processes of one's learning. Typical examples include re-evaluating one's goals and conclusions	• Appraising the products of one's learning • Appraising the regulatory processes of one's learning • Re-evaluating one's goals • Re-evaluating one's conclusions

Planning

The planning dimension represents learners' preparation before engaging in English essay writing. Derived from Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework, this dimension emphasizes the decisions made prior to the writing process. As shown in Table 1, the proposed indicators describe planning through the selection of appropriate strategies, the allocation of resources, the anticipation of task requirements, the sequencing of writing activities, and the allocation of time and attention before writing begins. Taken together, these indicators suggest that planning extends beyond deciding what to write. Instead, planning involves preparing how the writing task will be approached by organizing the strategies and resources needed to complete the task effectively. In this respect, the planning dimension provides a conceptual representation of learners' metacognitive preparation before composing an English essay.

Monitoring



Unlike the planning dimension, which focuses on learners' preparation before writing, monitoring concerns the regulation of cognitive processes during the writing activity. Based on Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework, this dimension encompasses learners' awareness of their comprehension, awareness of task performance, and periodic self-testing throughout the writing process, as presented in Table 1. These indicators emphasize that metacognitive regulation is sustained while writing is taking place rather than occurring only before or after the task. Through continuous awareness of their understanding and performance, learners are able to monitor their progress and recognize whether adjustments are needed as the essay develops. Viewed from this perspective, the monitoring dimension illustrates the dynamic nature of metacognition during English essay writing, highlighting learners' ongoing efforts to regulate their thinking while composing their texts.

Evaluating

Evaluation constitutes the final stage of metacognitive regulation, during which learners reflect on both the outcomes and the processes of their English essay writing. Following Flavell's (1979) framework, this dimension is represented by four indicators: appraising the completed work, appraising the regulatory processes employed during writing, re-evaluating initial goals, and re-evaluating conclusions, as presented in Table 1. Collectively, these indicators illustrate that evaluation extends beyond assessing the quality of the finished essay. Instead, learners critically examine whether the strategies they employed were effective, whether their original objectives were achieved, and whether the conclusions presented remain consistent with the overall content of the essay. This perspective highlights evaluation as a reflective process that enables learners to learn from their writing experience and informs how they may approach subsequent writing tasks.

The present study proposes an initial metacognitive construct for English essay writing by deriving indicators from Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework. Unlike previous studies that primarily employed metacognition as a variable to be measured or developed through standardized instruments, this study focuses on formulating context-specific indicators while maintaining the original dimensions of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Consequently, the proposed construct provides a more explicit conceptual representation of how metacognitive regulation may be interpreted within the domain of English essay writing. The proposed construct also complements previous metacognitive frameworks, particularly the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) developed by Schraw and Dennison (1994). Although the MAI has been widely used to assess learners' metacognitive awareness, it was designed as a domain-general instrument applicable across various learning contexts. In contrast, the present construct does not aim to measure general metacognitive awareness but to provide context-specific indicators that reflect the metacognitive processes involved in English essay writing. Therefore, the construct offers an alternative conceptual foundation for exploring writing-related metacognitive regulation through qualitative inquiry.

Another contribution of this study lies in its potential methodological application. The proposed indicators may serve as a theoretical basis for developing qualitative

interview protocols that explore students' metacognitive processes during English essay writing. Rather than functioning as a measurement instrument, the construct is intended to guide researchers in investigating how learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their thinking throughout the writing process. Nevertheless, the proposed construct represents an initial stage of conceptual development. The indicators were formulated through theoretical interpretation of Flavell's (1979) framework and have not yet been refined through empirical investigation. Future studies may further examine, revise, or elaborate these indicators based on evidence obtained from EFL learners in authentic writing contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study proposed an initial metacognitive construct for English essay writing derived from Flavell's (1979) metacognitive regulation framework. The proposed construct retains the three dimensions of planning, monitoring, and evaluating while formulating thirteen context-specific indicators that represent learners' metacognitive processes during English essay writing. Rather than modifying Flavell's original framework, the study provides a contextual interpretation of these dimensions to support research on EFL writing. The proposed construct contributes to the conceptual development of metacognition in English essay writing by providing a theoretical foundation for future qualitative investigations. As an initial conceptual framework, it may assist researchers in exploring learners' metacognitive processes more systematically within the context of EFL essay writing. Nevertheless, the construct represents an initial stage of development and may be further refined through future empirical studies.

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