

## **The role of metalinguistic awareness in monolingual, bilingual and multilingual writing skills: A review**

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### **Abstract**

Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to recall the nature of language purposely. The metalinguistic awareness (MA) concept can help describe the execution and transfer of linguistic knowledge. In this work, the metalinguistic awareness of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual students was investigated and compared in the case of their writing skills as a review paper. In addition, the models and recent theories based on MA for writing were also evaluated. It was determined that opposite opinions about the better learning of multilingual students compared to monolingual students were too much work to find. It is proven that bilinguals and monolinguals can receive different knowledge, writing, and language skills. The findings show that MA is effective in the case of skill learning, understanding the importance of the messages they can consider but cannot be helpful to predict vocabulary size. MA development in multimodal writing has considerable potential for multilingual writers, and studies on MA models and the related effects are being developed. One of the issues that should be paid special attention to is the problem of the statistical population intended by the researchers, which is very limited in students of a grade in a particular school.

**Keywords:** metalinguistic awareness, writing, bilingual students, multilingual students, monolingual students

### **1. Introduction**

Metalinguistic awareness has been introduced as the function of linguistic units and the conscious knowledge of the language structure. Hence, it consists of understanding the phonological, morphological, and syntactic system of the language, the semantics and the words of a language, and the use of the language in real-life states utilizing pragmatics(Prentza, 2021).Many questions in the case of metalinguistic understanding in writing should be answered. Many scholars (Call et al., 2020; Myhill & Jones, 2015; Lines et al., 2019; Randen & Migration, 2022)are concerned about these questions. The term

metalinguistic understanding is problematic; "metalinguistic" is an adjective needing a noun for completion(Zhang et al., 2021). Therefore, different closely-related terms have been suggested by many scholars (Hassan et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2021), together with subsequent conceptual fuzziness. Therefore, researchers(Gao et al., 2019; Myhill et al., 2018)introduced different sorts of metalinguistic understanding. As a metalinguistic understanding, metalinguistic awareness has introduced the ability to distance oneself from speech content to reflect upon and administer the language structure (Ghanm & Navracics, 2021; Magnusson, 2018; Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021). In the case of metalinguistic awareness, the focus on the structure and the aspect of the language is required to develop in later stages of language acquisition on earlier linguistic knowledge(Magnusson, 2018; Melogno et al., 2022). In addition, (Altman et al., 2018) stated that it contains multiple skills related to the traditional forms of language: lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic awareness.As the main aim of language education, based on the directions of the Greek Ministry of Education and the National Curricula, raising metalinguistic awareness is crucial for primary school. It has been introduced as an approach by which the child figures out the innate knowledge that he/she has for his/her mother language and has become aware of the linguistic repertoire of the mother language as well as the structural relations of the related units and, can use language to communicate impressively. Hence, it is a requisite for communicative competence. In addition, written production has been introduced as a complex task in which abilities and skills of all representation levels have to be used. Notably, for the appropriate composition of a text, the communication context should be understood in which the text will be placed(Prentza, 2021)also stated that the meaning of the words should be known to make appropriate language choices.

In the present, the previous studies on the metalinguistic awareness effect on students' writing skills were reviewed. In the first step, different significant categories of metalinguistic awareness were briefly concerned, and the relation between metalinguistic awareness and writing in English was investigated. Then, the previous studies in metalinguistic awareness for writing skills considering monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual students were listed and compared. Finally, the models and theories based on metalinguistic awareness for writing were compared, and a conclusion was provided. All the utilized papers in sections 3 and 4 were searched and found by using the Google Scholar search engine, and all papers published after 2018 were concerned.

### **1.1 Developments of metalinguistic awareness**

Currently, the most crucial widely-accepted notion of metalinguistic awareness development is based on developing two dimensions of analyzed knowledge and cognitive control(Betti & Yaseen, 2020). The first one analyzed knowledge, which is explicit and objective, and the second one is based on cognitive control considering the selection and coordination of information within a time constraint; commonly(Igaab, 2010)stated that there exist different significant categories in the case of metalinguistic awareness in that this notion of metalinguistic ability may reveal: word awareness, syntactic awareness, pragmatic awareness, and phonological awareness.

### **1.1.1 Phonological awareness and word awareness**

Phonological awareness and word awareness can act in pairs to allow the language used to provide, realize, and utilize the constituent section of the language being utilized. Phonological awareness and word awareness, as different aspects of metalinguistic awareness, are of special relationship in learning. One can consider phonological awareness together with the use of phonemic segmentation functions (i. e., the use of tests using an ondograph, nonword syllables appear to bring out more precise outcomes(Igaab, 2003; Knoop-van Campen et al., 2018).

### **1.1.2 Syntactic awareness**

Syntactic awareness can be utilized when an individual considers mental operations for performing structural aspects of language(Magnusson, 2018). The inferential and pragmatic rules can be added by it and can be measured by using correction tasks in sentences containing word order violations (Betti, 2021; Siu et al., 2020; Tong et al., 2022).

### **1.1.3 Pragmatic awareness**

Pragmatic awareness has been introduced as the awareness of the relationships among sentences and the related contextual/relational quality, including the knowledge of the situation, the epistemic context, and further details in the case of the utterance that can be measured considering the ability to detect inconsistencies among sentences (Betti, 2021; McConachy, 2019).

## **1.2 The relation between metalinguistic awareness and writing in English**

Recent studies on the relationship between metalinguistic awareness and writing in English proposed that many parts of metalinguistic awareness can be associated with writing development. First, phonological awareness is determined to play an essential role in spelling competence; it can assist children in establishing systematic correspondence among speech sounds and graphemes (Goswami & Bryant, 2016). The grapheme-phoneme correspondence in English is often indirect or unpredictable due to its astonishing alphabetic orthography (Bowers & Bowers, 2017) (the letter a is /æ/ in apple, /ə/ in above, and /ei/ in cake)(Sun et al., 2018). Hence, learners cannot exclusively pertain to phonological approaches in learning in the case of writing. Studies(Fumero et al., 2020)on English metalinguistic awareness demonstrated that metalinguistic awareness could play an essential role over and beyond that of phonological awareness in writing development using a proper comprehension of the semantic relationship among words irrespective of the related phonological properties as children grow older.

## **2. Metalinguistic understanding and writing**

There are many studies on the role of grammatical metalanguage in writing development (Hardman et al., 2019; Schleppegrell, 2010; Wilson et al., 2012). Explicit grammatical knowledge is metalinguistic understanding based on conscious awareness and verbalization.

Hence, students' words about a text are critical to making metalinguistic knowledge visible. The metalinguistic discussion can be supported and framed in grammatical terminology in a writing schoolroom. The use of particular terms during written text discussion is a statutory requirement. Currently, teachers can be aware that using linguistic terminology does not balance with knowledge automatically. Jones et al. (2012) have proposed that the variations from the common prescriptive and decontextualized procedure to one that advantages the rhetorical power of grammar "causes substantial demands on teachers about the related subject matter and pedagogic knowledge." Macken-Horarik et al. (2011) ascertain the skills of enabling students in the case of drawing on MA in writing, communicating knowledge in the term of language, and considering the related knowledge to composition as well as taking into consideration how this knowledge can expand. In Harper et al. (2009), researchers considered teachers with only a fragmented language knowledge in the first days of teaching. In addition, teachers have yet to receive formal grammar instruction; however, it was an issue shared by experienced teachers who lacked a proper grounding in the linguistics of English or struggled to consider linguistic knowledge to teaching writing. Therefore, it is believed that, as stated in (Myhill & Critique, 2005) conducted based on a large-scale randomized controlled trial to investigate the effect of contextualized grammar teaching on 20 children's writing, there is a measurable direct relation between teacher linguistic subject knowledge and enhancement in student writing (Lines et al., 2019). Most previous studies proposed equipping students with MA (Chen & Myhill, 2016; Gutiérrez, 2008; Karmiloff-Smith et al., 1996; Moore et al., 2014; Myhill et al., 2016).

### **2.1 Metalinguistic awareness in vocabulary acquisition**

It has been noted by (Bae, 2015; Sun et al., 2018) that much evidence Six Korean EFL obtained from Grade Learners' metalinguistic awareness demonstrated a statistically considerable role in intuition among many vocabulary level groups. It was also introduced as a unique approach to clarifying group differences in comparison with phonological awareness and also interrelated common impacts of phonological awareness, metalinguistic awareness, and Metalinguistic Awareness in Vocabulary Acquisition: Evidence from Grade Six Korean EFL Learners (OA) on vocabulary learning has been determined besides inimitable phonological awareness and metalinguistic awareness influences.

### **2.2 What is the comprehension difference between bilinguals and monolinguals?**

In the L2, metalinguistic awareness and the related impressive meta linguistic competence are commonly expanded in the classroom through a focus on the formal structure of L2 (Bessy et al., 2020; Oloruntuyi & Multilingualism, 2021; Watson et al., 2021). Metalinguistic awareness can provide new and innovative language applications that cannot be possible without it (Shin et al., 2019, 2020). Mousa et al. (2022) stated that the increasing multilingual metalinguistic awareness of women as learning two languages needs learners to concentrate on the two languages' attributes. Metalinguistic awareness and the clear understanding of a language's form/meaning relationships were referred to as the capacity

for expressing thoughts in the case of communication and are a critical documented conflict between bilingual speakers and monolingual children. It has been noted (Varga, 2021) that metalinguistic awareness strongly links with text instruction. Bilinguals can better comprehend language than monolingual children due to their enhanced metalinguistic awareness (MA). It can be used as an assistant to expand an L2 learner's language comprehension leading to better language performance. In the literature, vital evidence confirmed that the performance of metalinguistic awareness is essential to developing reading abilities. In order to figure out different forms of language, children who need to improve in the considered interpretation and production method can be forced to rely on their metalinguistic abilities. There is a positive relationship between linguistic knowledge and second language proficiency. It has been noted in several studies (Mercer et al., 2018; Perez & Alito, 2018) that students dramatically varied in the related subsystem knowledge and that this material is considerably associated with their highest English grades, making a connection between linguistic knowledge and the competence of English (Mousa et al., 2022).

Hofer and Jessner (2019) investigated the effects of multilingual education considering linguistic knowledge and MA in young learners in the case of the first level. Their study was performed by considering whether children in multilingual education programs can act higher on a MA measure by taking into account their L1 Italian, L2 German, and L3 English compared to children who received common second and foreign language skills—noted that all the participants have done a MA test, a German and an English test and showed the dramatic positive impacts of early multilingual learning as well as a clear total superiority in cases of the subjects in the multilingual programmers over ordinary programmers. Finally, the performance of multilingual education was confirmed in cases of cognitive benefits in multilingual children (Hofer & Jessner, 2019; Woll, 2018). A similar study was also conducted (Angelovska, 2018) in which cross-linguistic awareness of adult L3 learners of English was concerned with a focus on the metalinguistic effect and agreed with results compared to (Hofer & Jessner, 2019; Woll, 2018) obtained. They also stated that the cross-linguistic awareness of MA is the most critical estimator of positive transfer. They showed that many learners, especially adults have substantial metalinguistic knowledge in the L2. There is better proof that it can help learners focus on the form of MA when doing tasks (Kopečková, 2018).

### **3. Metalinguistic awareness for writing skills: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual students**

Sun et al. (2018) studied the concurrent contributions of different parts of metalanguage, namely phonological awareness (PA), MA, and syntactic awareness (SA), in the case of the writing competence of principal monolingual Chinese-speaking children in Mainland China and bilingual children. Based on hierarchical regression evaluations, it was determined that the numerous sorts of metalinguistic awareness varied in their contributions in the case of writing competence through the languages and among the two groups of children, with morphological awareness as well as SA described markedly more variance than

phonological awareness. In addition, some results demonstrated a robust cross linguistic association among English and Chinese MA in bilingual children that emerged to support writing competence in the case of both stated languages. Finally, they dramatically concerned home language utilization evaluated and the bilingual children’s English metalinguistic awareness and the related performance of writing skills in Chinese. Shin (2018) studied the argumentative multimodal writing approaches in the case of a sixth-grade bilingual student in an English language arts class and found more awareness of students about metafunctions and metalanguages of different semiotic states as well as intermodal relationships is helpful to figure out the register of argument. Eviatar et al. (2018) conducted a study to measure the changes in scores based on the PA and MA, considering two bilingual groups and two monolingual groups. They have found that bilingual ones with different languages have better scores in the case of reading and spelling but equal reading speed. One of the critical questions that were answered by (Eviatar et al., 2018) was whether there is a relation between literacy measures of monolingual students and bilingualism and PA in a small case study or not. These relations were determined to differ for the two languages and reading and spelling measures. Only parental education estimated non weird reading and reading speed in the case of children learning to read Arabic. Considering spelling tasks, language experience interacted with metalinguistic abilities, with morphological abilities estimating the bilinguals scores and monolingual skills estimating the monolingual scores. In Table 1, recent studies concerning metalinguistic awareness for writing skills in cases of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual students are presented. Based on Table 1, besides significant differences in the aim of previous studies, the authors confirmed that the multilingual participants in MA could be more skilled than the monolinguals in the English language and bilinguals and monolinguals have different knowledge, writing, and language skills. All monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual students were considered in different studies, and the related effects on different skills, such as writing, were investigated. Based on Table 1, many study gaps were created due to the vastness of the subject of MA and its effects. Previous studies can confirm the superiority of multilingualism in the field of their MA and better learning of writing skills. For example, Riehl (2021) considered 175 bilingual 9th and 10th grades and provided an appropriate correlation between MA and writing abilities. Similar research has been conducted for different age groups and levels, but the parameters differ.

**TABLE 1.** Recent studies concerning metalinguistic awareness for writing skills.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Sort</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Results</b>
Hopewell et al. (2022)	Bilingual learners	The use of MA for disrupting language separation	A group of students incorporating reading, writing,	New instructional approaches based on the explicitly developed MA can help disrupt

			speaking, and listening.	language separation.
Incognito (2022)	Monolingual	Evaluating the associations among writing instruction considering explicit sentence syntax	75 students after receiving 16 weeks of writing lessons	The student's participation in courses in metalinguistic writing can only partially improve literacy scores.
Jones (2021)	Multilingual	A case study of English Language Education (ELE) in Singapore from 2010 to 2020	Parameters affecting teacher and student adoption of different methods were considered in cases of multiliteracies.	Proper recognition of participant agency and the construction of knowledge over the networked variety
Bianchini (2020)	Multilingual	Investing in how to enhance MA by writing a language without writing	Graphic representation system of sign language (SL)	Metalinguistic reflections can be reinvested to comprehend the structure and functioning further.
Riehl (2021)	Bilingual	The interaction between language awareness and the abilities of bilingual writing	175 bilingual 9th and 10th graders	We are providing a considerable correlation between MA and writing abilities and a higher correlation between MA and text-level scores.
Hidayatun et al. (2021)	-	Investigating students' MA in L2 writing	20-participant questionnaire and reflection	Proper outcomes from using an online tool to enhance learners' MA and learner

				autonomy.
Altman et al. (2018)	Bilingual	Investigating how language dominance is related to MA can estimate vocabulary size.	15 Russian-Hebrew bilingual children, 21 Russian-Hebrew bilingual children, and 32 monolingual children.	MA cannot predict vocabulary size.
Mousa et al. (2022).	Bilingual and monolingual	Whether enhancing students' MA understanding of them other skill successes are necessary or not?	-	MA can help to comprehend the importance of the messages they can consider.
D'Angelo and Sorace (2022)	Bilinguals	MA effects on the third or additional language acquisition.	Two bilinguals with different levels of proficiency and MLA	Higher MA bilinguals can better act in TLA.
Tadesse et al. (2021)	Multilingual	Study on the association of multilingualism with English Language Proficiency.	Thirty-nine multilingual and 30 monolingual students.	The multilingual participants in MA can be more skilled than monolinguals in English.
Newton (2021)	Multilingual	We are investigating the nature and sorts of MA in cases of primary-aged children.	Eighty-five children in Years 3 to 6 and 32 participants were divided into four high-achieving and low-achieving profile groups.	MA affects knowledge. Students develop internal control of a network of MA to work on a text that can be self-extending.
(Poorebrahim et al., 2017)	-	You are comparing	-	Bilinguals and monolinguals have



		bilinguals and monolinguals in different writing and language skills knowledge cases.		different knowledge, writing, and language skills.
Rafi and Morgan (2022)	-	Study on translanguaging and power in academic writing discourse.	The analysis of observation data.	Translanguaging strategies have improved students' metalinguistic, metacognitive, and sociolinguistic awareness, enhanced multicompetence, and facilitated the total rate of participation in academic writing.

**4. Models and theories based on metalinguistic awareness for writing**

In the schools, knowledge about language patterns in the various disciplines, so a metalanguage has not been considered, can be due to the lack of awareness that language and knowledge are co-dependent. Forey (2020) conducted a study to evaluate the advantages of explicitly teaching language by using curriculum learning (LCL) across disciplines versus using a metalanguage based on the Systemic Functional linguistics (SFL) model. He found that schools can adopt a functional method for improving learning tasks.

Cavazos (2022) introduced the translingual theoretical base for designing a multilingual writing course. They have designed unique course in which monolingual ideologies were challenged in academic writing and explored translingual pedagogies in community partnerships known as a method for making students' linguistic awareness of monolingual, multilingual, and translingual ideologies. Finally, they have concluded that students' multilingual abilities in negotiation, resistance, and question languages affected the communities of students through writing, research, and collaboration. D'Angelo and Sorace (2022) concerned the MA as a potential reason for the positive impacts of bilingualism on cognitive development as well as Third Language Acquisition (TLA). They stated that MA could be considerably affected by grammar-related activities.

Further investigations are suggested with a focus on the context and approach of acquisition of the bilingual learners' L2 for adjusting M A impacts in TLA. Considering different effective parameters, namely overall proficiency, explicit MA, number of

languages, and instruction in German L2, they have concluded that high MLA level bilinguals can act better in TLA. Healey and Gardner (2022) stated that grammar nature could bring many challenges for teachers and students in the classes. They suggested conferences encouraging the student to reflect on grammatical selection and their effects on meaning can be an impressive means for expanding the MA. They were also concerned with cognitive linguistics and mentor texts for evaluating the effect of a concept-led, dialogic approach to teaching writing in the context of student-teacher discussions. They concluded that the concepts could have an enduring impact on student's ability to make independent and creative selections in writing aims. Sanusi (2018) stated that to make textbook materials for reflecting the developments and innovations in teaching essay writing, the writers of English language textbooks have to be further promoted by considering the effects of MA on students' writing skills to enhance the related English language writing performance. Their work aimed to identify the level of MA on the written skill of students in cases of considered schools for determining the level of writing skills in the selected schools and also for evaluating the effect of MA knowledge in the areas of content words, organization, and linking devices on the written output. Their study was designed considering 166 respondents, which were considered and divided, randomly. In order to enhance the written skills of students when describing words, they also recommended that teachers have to be conducted to implement direct metalinguistic strategy instruction. Hacker (2018) conceptualized writing skills as primarily a metacognitive approach modeled using contemporary metacognitive theory. In the first step of their research, the model was elaborated utilizing metalinguistic, and children's writing development, including an appropriate focus on the nature of written language, and they confirmed the relevant results of their work. Berthele and Udry (2022) conducted a study based on the theory of multilingual language learning to predict previous language learning experiences; two languages provided benefits in the case of additional language learning. They evaluated the predictions according to a multilingual advantage theory and fitted them with the data, but the point that should be noted is that they just focused on children.

Tsareva et al. (2020) studied the relationship between the expanded semiotic resources and expanding semiotic competence and the metalanguage in multimodal writing considering bilingual students. They have introduced multimodal writing approaches as synesthetic method among semiotic modes appropriately in composition contexts by investigating how deployed modes can construct the meaning potentials and communicative possibilities of semiotic resources jointly and found that the student used many semiotic, linguistic resources and utilized non-linguistic modes.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this paper, the recent progress in the field of MA's effect on students' writing skills was reviewed. Considerable differences between previous studies in terms of aims and statistical population, almost all researchers believed that bilinguals and monolinguals have different knowledge, writing, and language skills, and the multilingual participants in the case of MA

can be more skilled than the monolinguals in the English language. Students who mastered two languages compared to students who mastered one language can be differently advantaged. Among these advantages, one can mention different abilities such as text knowledge, writing, and language skills. Ng (Stated that many other effective parameters, such as the past schooling of students, can highly affect a role in specifying the kinds of metacognitive advantages. They claimed that the effect of certain social aspects is relevant to the metacognitive development of people. In past studies, participants' metacognitive advantages have primarily been examined from a cognitive perspective, independent of social and cultural influences. D'Angelo and Sorace (2022) also stated that higher MA bilinguals could better act in TLA. D'Angelo and Sorace (2022) suggested that the learning strategies should be developed in different learned languages to obtain a positive outcome in the case of TLA. Bianchini (2020) stated that metalinguistic reflections could be reinvested to comprehend the structure and functioning. In addition, Mousa et al. (2022) stated that MA can help to comprehend the importance of the messages students can consider. Conflicting studies are hard to find, and each researcher in a different field presents new aspects of MA. However, further studies are necessary to determine other dimensions of its effects on student learning. One can consider socio-cultural forms in developing metacognition in cognitive studies due to their potential effects to detect their metacognitive advantages in writing.

In addition, there are different models and theories based on metalinguistic awareness for writing. It is believed that MA development in multimodal writing has considerable potential for multilingual writers, and studies on MA models and the related effects are being developed. The multilingual abilities of students can impact the communities of a student through writing, research, and collaboration, and the use of expanded semiotic resources to improve the MA of students was determined to be very effective. It is recommended that teachers have to perform implement direct metalinguistic strategy instruction and the related effects should be better investigated.

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