**Introduction**

The increased changes in knowledge and education have caused a shift in the way teachers instruct their students and the standardized tests that measure student's success. Therefore, teachers have to find creative methods and strategies that improve learners' thinking in order to develop their learning in general and learning English as a foreign language in particular.

Mcloughlin and Marshall (2000) note that effective learning requires a number of skills to be mastered by students, and which include metacognitive strategies (e.g. self regulation and self evaluation). Generally metacognitive thinking is about our own cognitive processes and understanding of how to regulate them to maximize learning. Therefore, much attention should be paid to metacognitive strategies which learners can apply to new situations, as metacognition provides students with the opportunity to detect where their understanding was inadequate and to correct their mis-conceptions (Barb & Duffy, 2000).

Literature review shows that metacognitive learning strategies are among the most effective means of enhancing students' learning and increasing their understanding. (e.g. Jacobs, 1987; Fogarty, 1994; Fountas and Pinnell, 2000; Hartman, 2001; Nodoushan, 2007; Countinbo, 2007). Nodoushan (2007) proved that teaching for thinking and deep understanding of content can not be separated from each other and expert teachers simultaneously teach both to learners.

Also, Jacobs (1987) stated that metacognitive thinking contains three essential skills: (**1) Planning,** whichrefers to the appropriate selection of strategies and the correct allocation of resources that affect task performance; **(2) Monitoring,** whichrefers to one's awareness of comprehension and task performance;and **(3) Evaluation,** whichrefers to appraising the final product of a task and the efficiency at which the task was performed.

Fountas and Pinnell, (2000) proved that metacognition literally means "big thinking" (i.e. thinking about thinking), as during this process one examines his/her brain's processing. In the light of this, teachers should work to guide students into becoming more strategic thinkers by helping them to understand the ways in which they process information or linguistic input. Questioning, visualizing, and synthesizing information are all ways that students can examine their thinking process.

By practicing and applying metacognitive strategies, students are likely to become good learners. Thus there are two main reasons for teaching metacognitive strategies: (1) to take student's thinking to a higher level; and (2) to develop in students a deeper understanding of text (Fogarty, 1994).

Metacognition makes learners aware of what to do when they do not know what to do, in other words, metacognitive strategies are designed to monitor cognitive process and to control one's own cognitive activities to ensure that a cognitive goal has been met (Countinbo, 2007). As far as teaching is concerned, teaching with metacognitive strategies means that teachers will think about how their instruction will activate and develop student's learning (Hartman, 2001).

More specifically, second/foreign language researchers have questioned how language learners themselves contribute cognitively and metacognitively to language learning, and how they learn, comprehend, and store language and retrieve it for use (Aly, 2014).

Metacognitive knowledge contributes to successful EFL creative writing for many reasons: first of all, it influences the students' orientation to learning tasks; therefore metacognition allows students to believe in themselves (Schrow, 1998; Aleven, 2002).

Second, metacognitive instruction helps with raising EFL teachers' self- awareness in a way that trains students to become self- regulated learners (Hyland, 2002).

Third, as far as EFL creative writing is concerned, learners can be taught how to write creatively drawing on their metacognitive knowledge. This involves employing self-questioning and self-monitoring that would assist in performing literacy skills.

 In this regard, Johnston (2005) identifies creative teachers as those ones who: (1) are able to provide original and creative activities; and (2) involve students as active participants in their own learning. Therefore, teachers should be creative in their thinking to help students to achieve a particular progress in teaching English creative writing as the English language can be viewed as a good field for creativity and innovation in terms of style, vocabulary, structure, and other aspects of use.

Also, Jane and Mark (2007) argued that writing is an active process that needs creative thinking, and therefore creative writing is strongly linked to generating and communicating ideas. It can be viewed as a learning tool for elevating and refining thinking throughout the different stages of writing (i.e. planning, drafting, revising, and editing) creative writing is involved; for example, the writer needs to have a clear idea about why s/he is writing and which format the written piece will take (Anwer, 2002).

 Baradaran and sarfarazi (2011) maintained that the use of metacognitive teaching principles through modeling, contextualizing, and discussion can solve some EFL writing problems in teaching contexts. These techniques can improve students' performance in creative writing through generating ideas, structuring essays, drafting, writing, and editing.

 When instructors teach for metacognition, students can learn about what the strategies are, how to use the strategies, when and why to apply the strategies, and as a result, learn to regulate their cognitive activities (Hyland, 2002).

As far as language learners are concerned, creative writing is crucial for them as it helps them to:(1) express their own ideas; (2) understand written texts; (3) improve their thinking; (4) achieve success in school life; and (5) persuade others with opinions and thoughts (Hancock & McDonald, 2000; Chan, 2004).

**Background of the problem**

Generally literature indicates weaknesses in our students' creative writing skills. (e.g. Bishop, 1990; Khir and Marzukhi, 2009; and Shahlan, 2012). Khir and Marzukhi, (2009) reported that most students can not write a good, accurate sentences, and can not describe the content clearly. Shahlan, (2012)statesthat students' weakness in creative writing skills is often associated with their thinking skills since the writing activity involves high order thinking skills. Bishop, (1990) found little attention to the kind of teacher education programs necessary to develop the insights, abilities, and skills to become a creative teacher. Moreover, literature review has revealed that teaching creative writing is influenced by teaching metacognitive thinking. This led the researcher to conclude that some creative writing skills need to be improved for those learners. Throughout the researcher's work as an English language teacher, and throughout her classroom observation of students in many learning situations, she has noticed that secondary student's performance does not meet the minimum skills required for creative writing.

Due to importance of creative writing skills, many studies in the Egyptian context tackled them in terms of writing problems or experienced by EFL students during the writing process. More specifically, some studies employed metacognitive strategies in English language learning in general (e.g. El-Sayed, 2010; Hamdan's, 2010; Aly, 2014). In this regard, Hamdan's study (2010) suggested a program based on metacognitive strategies on developing reading and writing skills.

Also, El-sayed's study (2010) investigated the effectiveness of using a Blended Learning program based on metacognitive strategies in improving teaching competencies and problem solving skills; and Aly's study (2014) proved the effectiveness of Metacognitive strategy training in developing vocabulary learning.

Moreover, some studies employed creative writing instruction (e.g. Mossa's, 1994; Taha, 2009). Mossa's study (1994) investigated the effect of training in-service teachers of English in skills of teaching creative writing on their acquisition and use of these skills. Also, Taha's study (2009) evaluated the effect of a training program based some writing strategies on developing students' creative writing skills.

In addition, a pilot study (some open interviews conducted with English language teachers and supervisors) indicates that secondary- school students are poor in creative writing. This was attributed to their little experience that they have got along with their little exposure to a creative writing input, and therefore, they did not posses the ability to write correct texts.

To measure student's levels in creative writing skills and metacognitive thinking, the researcher conducted another pilot study. It was a task- based test in which students were asked to (1) write a short story using limited background information; (2) write about a film, a book, or a poem; (3) Suggest new titles for a given story; and (4) draw different endings for a given story. The results of the pilot study indicated that approximately 90% of the tested students had low creative writing skills; 30% of them were unable to use the required logical sequence of ideas; 35% did not employ correct vocabulary creatively; and 25% did not use grammatical structures functionally to express their creative ideas. These results were consistent with some previous studies (e.g. Mossa, 1994; Taha, 2009) that revealed that most common problems in EFL student's creative writing were: (1) inability to build well-constructed coherent texts; (2) lack of ability to sequence ideas in a logical manner; and (3) the production of grammatically incorrect sentences.

Based on this pilot study, it was found out that secondary- school students need a creative writing strategy to write effectively and to construct a program based on metacognitive thinking to develop the creative writing skills by training them through metacognitive strategies.

**Statement of the problem**

The research problem can be stated as follows:

Al-Azhar secondary stage students at El- Wasta Secondary Institute for Girls,

(El-Fath Town, Assuit), experience low levels of EFL creative writing and low levels of using metacognitive thinking during writing activities. Therefore, it is suggested that a program based on some metacognitive strategies might help those students to develop creative writing skills and metacognitive thinking.

**Objectives of the study**

In general, the proposed study aims at applying a metacognitive theory in EFL creative writing instruction to manage the EFL writing difficulties and problems encountered by secondary- stage students in the English class – This involves accomplishing the following objectives:

1- Identifying the EFL creative writing skills needed by Al-Azhar secondary- stage students of El-Wasta Institute at Assiut.

2– Identifying the effect of a program based on metacognitive strategies on developing Al-Azhar secondary- stage student's creative writing skills.

3 – Identifying the effect of the proposed program on Al-Azhar secondary- stage students' attitude towards metacognitive thinking.

**Questions of the study**

Based on the objectives stated above, the current study attempts to answer the following questions:

1-What are those EFl creative writing skills that Al-Azhar secondary students need to develop?

2– What is the effect of using metacognitive learning strategies- based program on developing students' creative writing skills?

3– What is the effect of using metacognitive based program on students' attitude towards metacognitive thinking?

**Hypotheses of the study**

**The following hypotheses will be tested:**

1– There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the students in the study group on each of the creative writing pre- and post- test in favour of the post administration.

2– There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of the students in the study group in the pre and post- administration of Attitude towards MetacognitiveThinking Scale in favour of the post administration.

**Significance of the study**

The significance of the present study stems from the following points:

1– The study is expected to produce a metacognitive strategies based- program that might contribute to the development of the creative writing skills at the secondary stage.

2– Results of the study might be used in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of in-service English language teachers.

3– The study should help English language learners to become better creative writers, which is a pre- requistite at this quite advanced educational stage.

4– It might improve creative writing skills which may contribute to students' academic achievement and develop metacognitive thinking.

5– It offers a creative- writing test that informs the process of language learning assessment.

6– It provides teachers with a systematic procedure to help students with different abilities to learn the strategies they need for writing good creative texts.

7- Students involved in the study are expected to change their attitudes towards metacognitive thinking and to have higher thinking abilities.

8- Creative writing provides EFL students with a comprehensible linguistic input; it is highly motivating and also serves to lower students' affective filters while increasing their self-esteem.

9- The findings of the present study can be both theoretically and practically significant for EFL curriculum designers, researchers, textbook developers, language planners, teachers as well as learners and their parents.

**Delimitations of the study**

The present study will be limited to:

1- A group of metacognitive strategies:

a) K- W- L strategy; b) Brainstorming strategy; c) Self planning and self regulation strategy; d) Self questioning strategy; and d) Co-operative learning strategies.

2-Twenty-five secondary two students at Al-Azhar institute as the study group.

3-An experimentation period that should last for 2 months during the 1st semester of the school year 2016/2017: two periods (100 minutes) a week: each period lasting for 50 minutes.

**Definitions of terms**

The following definitions are presented to facilitate reading and understanding:

 **1- Metacognitive thinking**

According to Schneider (2010) metacognitive thinking refers to a level of thinking that involves active control over the process of thinking that is used in learning situations, planning the way of a learning task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating the progress towards the completion of a task.

 According to Hartman (2001), metacognitive thinking enables teachers gain awareness about and control over how they think and teach. This involves monitoring, evaluating, and regulating their teaching activities in accordance with specific students' goals, contexts and thus exerting great impacts on their teaching.

For the purposes of the study, metacognitive thinking is the driving force that guides and directs the creative writing process. It is the ability of secondary- two students to generate and produce many different ideas or solutions during the writing process, while increasing learning skills as they select appropriate thinking strategies, and plan, monitor and evaluate their thinking processes.

2- **Metacognitive strategies**

Pilgerstorfer (2005) defines Metacognition as the knowledge and active control over one's own cognitive processes when engaged in learning.

Mark (2006) defines it as the underlying thought process of experts that enable them to learn from experience and ultimately to act on their intuition.

For the purposes of the study and in the light of the above definitions, the researcher defines metacognitive strategies operationally as "those mental steps and procedures followed by language learners while they are writing creatively. The teacher is expected to help his/her students while using the metacognitive strategies to identify the skills and abilities that would allow them to be aware of their own thinking, to monitor and regulate their own learning.

3- **Creative writing**

Creative writing refers to any form of writing done with the creativity of mind (e.g fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration of ideas); it includes fiction, poetry, short story writing, and many other literary forms; the purpose is to express feelings, thoughts, or emotions (Michael, 2015).

For the research purposes, creative writing is defined as a mental process by which students create ideas or generate a product that has certain characteristics such as originality, novelty, and flexibility. In addition creative writing is viewed as a tool for helping students discover their creative abilities; thus, students will learn to recognize ideas that can be turned into stories, plays, poems or journal; it is a process of continuous thinking.

**Research design**

The current study adopts the quasi- experimental research design which is based on using one experimental group and administrating pre-post test and other instruments on the study group to identify the effect of a metacognitive strategies-based program on developing creative writing skills and attitude towards metacognitive thinking.

The researcher used the quasi- experimental method as the main research framework that will guide the intervention and program evaluation, it has proven to be an effective scientific and experimental research design to ensure the existence of a scientific basis for program evaluation and to lead to a school- based outcome evaluation (Shadish & Cook, 2002).

In other words, this design may decrease threats (e.g. treatment diffusion, and bias) and ensure the validity and accuracy of results (Walser, 2014).

Further, the experimental method is the best and the most efficient scientific research method because it depends on the scientific experiment that ensure the validity and accuracy of results.

 **Tools of the study**

To accomplish research objectives, the following tools were employed, all of them will be prepared by the researcher:

1- A metacognitive Strategies- Based Training Program, which consists of the following components:

1. A Teacher's Guide

b- A Students' Book

2- A creative Writing Pre- Post Test to assess creative writing skills

3- An Attitude- Towards Metacognitive Thinking Scale.

**The study group**

The study group will include 25 Secondary- two students from El-Wasta Secondary Institute students of Al-Azhar, El-Fath Town, Assuit to be the main experimental group.

**Procedures of the study**

**The researcher will follow the following procedures:**

To answer the 1st question, that is; **"What are those EFL creative writing skills that secondary-two students of Al-Azhar Institute need to develop?",** the researcher will prepare a list of creative writing skills by following those procedures:

1. Reviewing some literature in the field of foreign language learning with a special focus on English creative writing.
2. Interviewing some students to know their opinions about which creative writing skills they need to develop.
3. Administerating opinionaires to curriculum and ELT instruction specialists as well as English language expert teachers at the secondary stage.
4. Suggesting a preliminary list of EFL creative writing skills.
5. Submitting the proposed list to some Jury members (e.g. EFL methodology specialists and secondary stage expert teachers).
6. Writing down the final list of creative writing skills based on the Jury's feedback suggestions.

To answer the 2nd question, "**What is the effect of using metacognitive learning strategies- based program on developing students' creative writing skills?"** ,the researcher will follow those procedures:

1. Preparing the suggested program that is based on metacognitive strategies to develop some creative writing skills using the following procedures:
2. Reviewing some literature dealing with program design, especially those which are based on metacognitive strategies in language- learning contexts.
3. Using the previously- designed list of creative writing skills as a baseline while designing the program.
4. Suggesting a framework for the proposed program.
5. Submitting the framework to Jury members.
6. Conducting any necessary modifications based on Jury's feedback.
7. Writing down the content of the proposed program.
8. Submitting the program to Jury members.
9. Conducting any necessary modifications based on Jury's feedback.
10. Identifying the effect of the proposed program on developing students' creative writing skills using the following procedures:
11. Designing the creative writing pre- post test.
12. Pre- administering the test to the study group
13. Collecting data and analyzing them using SPSS.
14. Teaching the program to the study group.
15. Post- administering the creative writing pre- post test.
16. Conducting data collection and analysis using SPSS.
17. To answer the 3rd question, that is; "**What is the effect of using metacognitive based program on students' attitude towards metacognitive thinking?"** the researcher will follow those procedures:

1- Preparing the suggested program that is based on metacognitive strategies to develop attitude towards metacognitive thinking using the following procedures:

1. Reviewing some previous literature dealing with program design, especially those which are based on attitude towards metacognitive thinking in language- learning contexts.
2. Using the previously- designed list of attitude towards metacognitive thinking as a baseline while designing the program.
3. Suggesting a framework for the proposed program.
4. Submitting the framework to Jury members.
5. Conducting any necessary modifications based on Jury's feedback.
6. Writing down the content of the proposed program.
7. Submitting the program to Jury members.
8. Conducting any necessary modifications based on Jury's feedback.

2- Identifying the effect of the proposed program on developing students' attitude towards metacognitive thinking using the following procedures:

1. Designing the attitude towards metacognitive thinking scale.

b- Pre- administering the scale to the study group.

1. Collecting data and analyzing them using SPSS.
2. Administerating the scale to the study group.
3. Post- administering the attitude towards metacognitive thinking scale.

f- Conducting data collection and analysis using SPSS.

 g - Register the scores and treat them statistically by using statistical treatment.

h - Analyzing the results and making recommendations and suggestions.

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