

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT TOWARDS LECTURER FEEDBACK IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

Teacher feedback plays an essential role in helping students develop academic writing skills, yet many students still struggle to engage fully with the feedback they receive. This study aims to explore how students engage with teacher feedback in academic writing classes and to identify factors that influence their engagement. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and documentation of actual teacher feedback. The participants were undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program who had previously taken an academic writing-related course. The findings reveal that students engage with feedback behaviorally by revising drafts step by step, cognitively by analyzing and interpreting comments, and emotionally through feelings of motivation, concern, or appreciation. Students' engagement is strongly influenced by the clarity, specificity, tone, and amount of feedback provided by the lecturer. Clear instructions, supportive language, and concrete examples increase students' motivation and willingness to revise. These findings highlight the importance of structured and accessible feedback to improve students' writing outcomes.

Keywords: teacher feedback, student engagement, academic writing, qualitative study

ABSTRACT

Lecturer feedback plays a crucial role in helping students develop their academic writing skills. However, some students still struggle to fully engage with the feedback they receive. This study aims to explore the extent to which students engage with lecturer feedback in academic writing classes and identify factors that influence this engagement. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and lecturer feedback documentation. Participants were English Language Education students who had taken courses related to academic writing. Findings indicate that students engaged behaviorally through gradual draft revision, cognitively through analysis and interpretation of comments, and emotionally through motivation, concern, or appreciation. Student engagement was influenced by the clarity, specificity, tone, and quantity of feedback. Clear instructions, supportive language, and concrete examples can increase students' motivation and willingness to revise their writing. These findings underscore the importance of structured and understandable feedback in improving the quality of students' academic writing.

Keywords: lecturer feedback, student engagement, academic writing, qualitative study

A. Introduction

Academic writing is one of the key skills that college students need to master. Through academic writing, students are not only required to express their ideas but also to structure arguments logically, use relevant references, and conduct ongoing revisions. In this process, instructor feedback plays a crucial role because it can help students understand weaknesses in their writing, refine their organization of ideas, and improve the quality of language and content. Hyland (2006) explains that feedback in writing lessons serves as a tool to help students identify areas for improvement. Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) emphasize that effective feedback can clarify learning objectives, indicate students' current achievements, and provide guidance on necessary corrective actions.

However, the benefits of feedback don't always emerge automatically. Feedback can only impact writing development if students truly read, understand, interpret, and apply it in the revision process. In reality, some students still treat feedback as a final correction, rather than as part of the learning process. Some students only

correct superficial aspects such as grammar and spelling, while paying less attention to content, organization, cohesion, and argumentation. Tang (2023) stated that students in EFL contexts often have difficulty understanding written comments, especially when the comments are too general, too technical, or lack examples of improvements.

Student engagement with feedback is an important concept for understanding how students respond to lecturers' comments. Fredricks et al. (2004) divide engagement into three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. Behavioral engagement is evident in students' concrete actions, such as reading comments, creating revision lists, revising drafts, or asking for clarification. Cognitive engagement relates to students' thought processes in interpreting comments, connecting feedback to writing theory, and making revision decisions. Meanwhile, emotional engagement relates to students' feelings when receiving feedback, such as feeling motivated, appreciated, anxious, confused, or lacking confidence.

In the context of academic writing, these three dimensions of engagement are interrelated.

Students who understand the intent of instructor comments are more likely to revise appropriately. Conversely, students who perceive instructor comments as too brief, unclear, or excessive may experience confusion and decreased motivation. Skinner and Belmont (1993) emphasize that student engagement is strongly influenced by the support and communication provided by teachers or instructors during the learning process. Therefore, clear, polite, and specific feedback can create a more positive learning experience than feedback that is vague or overly pressuring.

Studies on lecturer feedback in writing instruction generally discuss direct and indirect forms of feedback, and focus comments on aspects of language, content, organization, and academic style (Ferris, 2011). In practice, students often view lecturer feedback as more authoritative than peer feedback because lecturers are perceived as having clearer academic competencies and standards.

Previous research has shown that constructive feedback can improve student motivation and the quality of revisions. Nurfaidah (2021), Syahrianti et al. (2023), and Gonzalez-Torres

and Sarango (2023) emphasized that clear, detailed, and supportive comments help students identify writing weaknesses and encourage them to improve their drafts more purposefully.

Although the study of feedback in academic writing is quite extensive, research specifically examining how students engage with instructor feedback across behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions is still needed. Much previous research has focused on the type of feedback or the effectiveness of instructor strategies, while students' experiences in reading, interpreting, perceiving, and applying feedback have not always been thoroughly examined. Yet, the effectiveness of feedback depends heavily on how students interpret and use the comments in the revision process.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to explore students' engagement with lecturer feedback in academic writing classes. The research focuses on two main questions. First, how students engage behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally with lecturer feedback. Second, what factors shape or hinder student engagement in responding to such

feedback. Through this research, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of students' actual experiences when interacting with lecturer feedback and its implications for improving academic writing learning practices will be gained.

B. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. This design was chosen because the study aimed to describe and interpret students' experiences in responding to lecturer feedback from their own perspectives. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because student engagement in receiving feedback encompasses behavioral, cognitive, and emotional processes that cannot be fully explained through numerical data. Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative research allows researchers to understand the meanings participants construct about a phenomenon in depth and context.

The research participants were students in the English Language Education Study Program who had taken at least one course related to academic writing. Purposive sampling was used to select participants because the researchers needed participants with direct experience

receiving lecturer feedback on academic writing assignments. Six students participated in semi-structured interviews, while fifteen students completed an open-ended questionnaire. The combination of these two data sources was used to obtain in-depth data supported by a wider variety of responses.

The research instruments consisted of an interview guide, an open-ended questionnaire, and a documentation checklist. The interview guide contained open-ended questions about how students read, understand, respond to, and perceive lecturer feedback. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to ask follow-up questions if any answers needed clarification. The open-ended questionnaire was used to elicit responses from a broader group of participants regarding the types of feedback they found helpful, revision challenges, and factors influencing their motivation. The documentation checklist was used to analyze actual examples of feedback provided by lecturers on student writing assignments, such as written comments, highlighted sections, rubric notes, or correction marks.

Data collection was conducted in three stages. The first stage consisted of individual interviews with six students. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian so that participants could comfortably share their experiences and feelings. The second stage involved distributing an open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms to fifteen students. The questions were written in Indonesian so that respondents could understand them without misunderstanding. The third stage involved collecting documentation in the form of screenshots or digital copies of lecturers' feedback on students' academic writing assignments.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on simple steps from Braun and Clarke (2006). Researchers first reread interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, and documentation notes to understand the overall data. They then coded statements related to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, as well as enabling and inhibiting factors. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories,

such as revision strategies, the process of understanding comments, emotional reactions, clarity of feedback, and the need for examples of improvement. Emerging themes were then reviewed to ensure they remained consistent with participants' experiences. Documentation data was used to validate the findings from the interviews and questionnaires, enabling stronger data triangulation.

C. Research Results and

Discussion

Student Behavior Engagement

The results of the study indicate that students exhibited quite active behavioral engagement when receiving feedback from their lecturers. Based on interviews, all respondents stated that they read the comments first before making revisions. Reading the comments is an important first step because it helps students understand which parts need improvement. Some students stated that they did not immediately revise everything, but rather selected the parts they considered most important, such as content, argument structure, or compliance with assignment instructions. After revising the main parts, they then paid attention to

technical aspects such as spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.

Some students also demonstrated organized revision strategies. Some respondents created revision checklists to ensure they didn't miss any of the lecturer's comments. This strategy demonstrates that students weren't simply passive recipients of feedback but were striving to translate the comments into concrete action steps. However, not all comments were implemented. Some students admitted to skipping certain comments if their meaning was unclear or too difficult to understand. This suggests that student behavioral engagement is significantly influenced by the clarity of the lecturer's instructions.

Table 1 Interview Findings on Behavioral Engagement

Theme	Proof	Quote
Read the feedback first	6 out of 6 respondents read comments before revision	"I usually read all the comments first."
Prioritize revisions	Most respondents fix the most important parts first.	"I revised it according to the most important priorities."
Create a revision list	3 respondents made a revision checklist	"I made a revision checklist."
Not always implementing all comments	3 respondents did not apply the unclear comments	"Not always, because sometimes I don't understand

what it means."

The questionnaire findings corroborated the interview results. Most respondents stated that they read comments more than once to understand the lecturer's intent. Some students revised immediately after receiving feedback to ensure they didn't forget, while others preferred to save comments and work on them when they had more relaxed time. This pattern suggests that students need space to process feedback before implementing it. Thus, revision in academic writing is not simply a mechanical act, but a process that requires time, attention, and decision.

Table 2 Questionnaire Findings on Behavioral Engagement

Theme	Proof	Quote
Read and understand comments	About 10 out of 15 respondents	"I read it several times to understand what it means."
Gradual revision	Appears in many respondents' answers	"I revised it slowly while checking the comments."
Marking the revision section	4 respondents marked the parts that need improvement	"I checked each one and marked the parts that needed to be revised."
Revision soon	5 respondents immediately revised after receiving comments	"After receiving feedback, I immediately revised it

before I
forgot.”

Documentation of instructor feedback also shows that the comments given often require concrete action from students. Examples of comments such as "explain the purpose of this," "add a paragraph," "add a screenshot," "fix the spelling," or "just pick one" indicate that students need to make revisions to aspects of content, completeness of sections, writing technique, and consistency of ideas. This finding supports Ferris's (2011) view that feedback that identifies areas for improvement can encourage students to take more concrete revision steps.

Table 3 Documentation Findings on Revision Actions

Types of Feedback	Example Comments	Indications of Student Behavior
Request for clarification	"Explain what this is for."	Students need to clarify the contents of the writing.
Additional part request	"Add paragraph" or "Add screenshot."	Students need to complete the missing parts.
Technical correction	"Correct spelling" or "use capital letters."	Students correct linguistic details.
Consistency request	"Just pick one."	Students evaluate the structure of ideas.

Student Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement was evident in how students interpreted and processed lecturers' comments. Interviews revealed that all respondents stated that they not only read the comments but also attempted to understand the rationale behind them. Students attempted to analyze each comment individually, connecting it to theory or writing conventions, and comparing it to the assessment rubric. This process demonstrated that feedback encouraged students to think more reflectively about the quality of their writing.

However, cognitive engagement also faces challenges. Five respondents reported difficulties when lecturers' comments used overly technical academic terms. Terms like "cohesion," "coherence," "citation style," or "conceptual explanation" can cause confusion if not accompanied by additional explanation. In situations like this, students need to seek additional references, ask friends, or ask the lecturer for clarification. This suggests that feedback that encourages thinking needs to be delivered in language accessible to students.

Table 4 Interview Findings on Cognitive Engagement

Theme	Proof	Quote
Analyze comments one by one	Appears in all respondents	"I analyze them one by one and then connect them to the theory."
Compare with rubric or theory	3 respondents mentioned the use of rubrics	"I match it to the rubric."
Difficulty understanding academic terms	5 respondents experienced confusion	"I often get confused when the terms are technical."
Feedback triggers critical thinking	All respondents stated that there was a new awareness.	"Feedback makes me more aware of my mistakes."

The questionnaire responses indicated that students focused on different aspects depending on the needs of their writing. Some students paid more attention to grammar, others focused on cohesion and coherence, and still others focused on word choice and paragraph organization. Some respondents stated that lecturers' comments would be more easily understood if they were accompanied by rationale. This finding suggests that students need not only corrections but also explanations of why a section needs to be revised. This need for rationale demonstrates that cognitive engagement extends beyond receiving comments and

includes the process of reasoning and making revision decisions.

Table 5 Questionnaire Findings on Cognitive Engagement

Theme	Proof	Quote
Focus on a specific aspect	Consistent across multiple responses	"What I pay most attention to is cohesion."
Need a reason behind the comment	4 respondents emphasized the importance of reasons	"Feedback that provides reasons is more helpful."
Helped by step-by-step directions	3 respondents mentioned step-by-step feedback	"I find the gradual feedback most helpful."

Documentation analysis confirmed that some lecturer comments required higher cognitive processing. Comments such as "explain the stages of the analysis," "where is this taken from?", and "not in APA style" cannot be resolved simply by changing words or correcting spelling. Students must understand concepts, check sources, and evaluate the appropriateness of academic style. Thus, feedback can be a means of building students' academic awareness and metacognitive skills. This finding aligns with Fredricks et al. (2004) who stated that cognitive engagement involves mental effort, reflection, and the use of deeper learning strategies.

Table 6 Documentation Findings on Cognitive Processes

Types of Feedback	Example Comments	Cognitive Processes Required
Request for conceptual explanation	"Explain the stages of analysis."	Students need to reason concepts and analytical flows.
Request for reference sources	"Where did you get it from?"	Students need to verify sources and citations.
Academic style conformity	"Not APA style."	Students need to evaluate the reference format.

Student Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement was evident in students' feelings when receiving feedback. Interview results showed that students had varied reactions. Three respondents felt happy and motivated because the feedback helped them identify areas for improvement. Two respondents showed a neutral response because they considered feedback a normal part of the learning process. One respondent expressed concern that the comments received were too numerous or difficult to understand.

The tone of feedback is a crucial factor in shaping students' emotional responses. All respondents stated that comments delivered politely, constructively, and non-judgmentally

increased their enthusiasm for revision. Conversely, comments that were too brief, too harsh, or lacked direction could create anxiety and lower self-confidence. These findings demonstrate that the emotional aspect is inseparable from the academic revision process, as students' feelings can influence their willingness to continue improving their writing.

Table 7 Interview Findings on Emotional Engagement

Theme	Proof	Quote
Positive feelings	3 respondents felt happy and helped	"I tend to be happy because I feel helped."
Neutral response	2 respondents said it was normal	"I'm usually neutral."
Anxiety when there are lots of comments	1 respondent felt worried	"Sometimes I feel worried if there are too many comments."
Influenced by the tone of the comments	Appears in all respondents	"If it's conveyed politely, I'm more enthusiastic."

The questionnaire data also showed that students' emotions were directly related to their motivation to revise. Six respondents stated that they were motivated because revisions could improve their writing. Five respondents mentioned that positive comments from lecturers could boost their morale. However, three respondents felt less motivated

if revisions were excessive and the comments were unclear. This situation demonstrates that good feedback needs to be not only academically accurate but also consider its psychological impact on students.

Table 8 Questionnaire Findings on Emotional Engagement

Theme	Proof	Quote
Motivated by improving writing	6 respondents stated that motivation increased	"I am motivated when revisions make my writing better."
Motivated by positive comments	5 respondents mentioned lecturer support	"My motivation arises when the lecturer gives positive comments."
Less motivated when comments are unclear	3 respondents felt the revision was too heavy	"I'm not motivated if there are a lot of revisions but I don't understand them."

Factors Influencing Student Engagement

Research findings indicate that student engagement is influenced by a number of supporting and inhibiting factors. The primary supporting factor is clarity and detail in comments. Students are more likely to revise when instructors point out areas for improvement, explain the rationale for the improvements, and provide structured guidance. Examples of

improvements are also important because they help students understand the expected format of revision. Furthermore, a polite and supportive tone helps students feel valued, which increases their motivation to revise.

Another contributing factor is the availability of sufficient revision time. Students need time to reread drafts, understand comments, seek additional references, and make changes. If revision time is too short, students tend to fix only easy aspects and neglect revisions that require deeper thought. Thus, the quality of engagement depends not only on the content of the feedback but also on the learning conditions that allow students to optimally utilize the feedback.

Table 9 Factors Supporting Student Involvement

Factor	Data source	Example
Clear and detailed feedback	Interviews and questionnaires	"Detailed instructions from the lecturer."
Example of correct revision	Interviews and questionnaires	"It would be helpful if there were examples of revisions."
Polite and supportive tone	Interview	"If it's delivered politely, I'm more enthusiastic."
Structured revision instructions	Questionnaire	"Structured feedback is easier to understand."

Enough revision time	Questionnaire	"Time available for revision."
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On the other hand, the most common inhibiting factor is comments that are too brief or too general. Students often have difficulty understanding comments like "improve," "unclear," or "inappropriate" without further explanation. Overly technical academic terms also pose a barrier, especially for students who don't yet fully understand the concept of academic writing. Furthermore, illegible handwriting, excessively large comments, and a lack of examples of improvements can reduce students' motivation to revise.

Table 10 Factors Inhibiting Student Involvement

Factor	Data source	Example
Comments are too short or vague	Interviews and questionnaires	"I'm confused if the comments are too short."
Academic technical terms	Interview	"I often get confused when the terms are technical."
The writing is difficult to read	Questionnaire	"The small print is hard to read."
Too many comments	Interviews and questionnaires	"Motivation decreases if there are a lot of revisions."
No examples of repairs	Interview	"It's hard to implement feedback

without examples."

Discussion

In general, the results of this study confirm that lecturer feedback plays a significant role in developing students' academic writing skills. However, this influence is highly dependent on the extent to which students engage with the feedback. Findings on behavioral engagement indicate that students take concrete actions, such as reading comments, prioritizing revisions, and gradually improving drafts. These findings align with Hattie and Timperley (2007), who emphasize that effective feedback should provide information on what needs to be improved and how it can be achieved.

Students' cognitive engagement indicates that feedback serves not only as correction but also as a trigger for reflection. Students analyze comments, compare them to theory or a rubric, and attempt to understand the rationale behind revisions. This suggests that the process of receiving feedback is closely linked to metacognition in academic writing. These findings support Tang (2023) and Gonzalez-Torres and Sarango (2023) who stated that clear feedback can help students understand writing

standards and increase awareness of their writing quality.

Emotional engagement also plays a crucial role in this study. Students are more motivated to revise when feedback is delivered constructively. Polite language, positive comments, and non-judgmental guidance can boost student motivation. Conversely, unclear or excessive comments can make students feel anxious and less confident. This finding aligns with Gan et al. (2021), who stated that lecturer feedback practices are related to student motivation and behavior in responding to feedback.

The supporting and inhibiting factors identified in this study indicate that feedback quality needs to be viewed from two perspectives: academic and readability. Academically sound feedback may not be effective if students do not understand its intent. Therefore, instructors need to deliver comments clearly, specifically, and in a structured manner. Providing examples of improvements is also crucial, especially for comments related to the organization of ideas, citations, or academic style. In this regard, feedback serves not only as an evaluation tool but also as a learning

tool that helps students develop better writing strategies.

Thus, feedback practices need to consider clarity, specificity, tone, number of comments, and availability of revision time. The three dimensions of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement determine whether feedback is used meaningfully or simply read as a correction.

D. Conclusion

This study explores student engagement with instructor feedback in academic writing classes and the factors that influence it. The results indicate that students respond to feedback through three main dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. Behaviorally, students read comments, prioritize revisions, create a list of improvements, and gradually revise drafts. Cognitively, students analyze the meaning of comments, connect them to rubrics or writing theories, and seek clarification when comments are difficult to understand. Emotionally, students can feel motivated, helped, neutral, or anxious depending on how the feedback is delivered.

The factors that most influence student engagement are clarity, specificity, tone, number of comments,

and the availability of examples of improvements. Clear, detailed, structured feedback delivered in a supportive tone can increase student motivation to revise. Conversely, comments that are too brief, vague, overly technical, or excessively long can hinder comprehension and decrease motivation to revise. Therefore, instructors need to provide feedback that not only corrects errors but also helps students understand the reasons for and direction of improvement.

This study suggests that instructors provide specific comments, use accessible language, include brief examples when necessary, and prioritize the most important aspects of revision. Future researchers could expand the study to include different writing courses, other types of feedback, such as audio or peer feedback, and a larger number of participants.

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