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Feedback mechanisms and collaborative strategies in academic writing instruction: A study of lecturers' practices

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the feedback mechanisms and collaborative strategies used by lecturers in teaching academic writing at a selected university in South Africa, focusing on their perceived effectiveness, challenges, and ways of improvement. Despite its importance, many students struggle with academic writing due to diverse linguistic backgrounds, limited previous writing experience, and discipline-specific conventions. These challenges place increasing pressure on lecturers to provide support that goes beyond error correction to foster deeper learning and independent writing skills. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten lecturers from various academic disciplines. The data was analysed thematically, revealing six interconnected themes. The findings indicate that while traditional feedback practices such as written comments and corrections remain dominant, there is a gradual shift towards collaborative strategies, including peer review, co-constructed writing activities, and technology-mediated feedback. The effectiveness of these strategies is largely dependent on student engagement, manageable workloads for lecturers, and institutional support. Collaborative practices were also found to promote a sense of academic community and encourage active participation in the writing process. The study recommends that higher education institutions provide professional development opportunities, ensure manageable workloads, and adopt flexible curricula to enable lecturers to integrate traditional and collaborative approaches effectively. This study contributes to scholarship by extending the understanding of lecturers' perceptions and practices in academic writing instruction within the South African higher education context. It provides empirical insights into how traditional and collaborative feedback approaches can be integrated to strengthen academic writing pedagogy.

Keywords: Academic writing, feedback mechanisms, collaborative strategies, higher education and pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a fundamental aspect of student success in higher education, equipping students with the skills to express complex ideas, develop coherent arguments, and critically analyze scholarly

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texts.[1] Supporting this view, Ellis and Johnson emphasize that proficiency in academic writing is especially important in settings where English is the primary language of instruction, as it directly impacts students' academic performance, retention, and progression.[2] Similarly, many students encounter significant challenges in developing these skills due to diverse linguistic backgrounds, limited exposure to academic genres, and varying familiarity with discipline-specific conventions.[3] Without effective academic support, these challenges can lead to superficial engagement with writing tasks, decreased motivation, and lower academic achievement, ultimately hindering students' overall learning experience and long-term academic growth.[4] Additionally, they noted that lecturers play a crucial role in guiding students' academic writing development by modeling disciplinary conventions, providing iterative, scaffolded feedback, and employing collaborative strategies that foster independent, confident, and competent writers. Traditional feedback methods, such as written comments and in-text corrections, continue to dominate academic writing instruction, offering guidance on grammar, structure, and clarity.[5]

Although these methods remain valuable, recent research highlights the potential of more collaborative, technology-enhanced approaches, including peer review, AI-mediated feedback, and online writing platforms, to boost engagement, reflection, and the development of higher-order cognitive skills.[6] Without research exploring lecturers' perspectives on these innovations, higher education institutions risk continuing outdated, product-focused practices that prioritize surface-level accuracy over critical thinking, creativity, and deep engagement with academic conventions.[7] Furthermore, failing to investigate contextual factors such as multilingual classrooms, large class sizes, heavy lecturer workloads, and discipline-specific expectations may lead to inequitable and ineffective writing support. Empirical studies of this nature are essential, as they offer insights into lecturers' pedagogical strategies, challenges, and decision-making processes, informing evidence-based interventions, professional development, and institutional policies. By highlighting lecturers' experiences and practices, such research helps create inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered academic writing pedagogies that support diverse student populations as they navigate the complexities of higher education. Therefore, this study aims to examine the feedback mechanisms and collaborative strategies used by lecturers in academic writing instruction, exploring their perceived effectiveness and the challenges faced in practice. The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

- What feedback mechanisms do lecturers employ in teaching academic writing?
- How do lecturers integrate collaborative strategies into their teaching practices?
- What challenges do lecturers face when providing effective feedback and encouraging collaborative practices?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent research emphasizes the complexity and educational importance of feedback mechanisms in teaching academic writing. Traditionally, feedback has been seen mainly as a correction tool aimed at improving students' surface accuracy and writing quality.[8] However, current scholarship stresses that effective feedback goes beyond simple correction to promote metacognitive awareness, reflective

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[6] K.Wang, L. J. Zhang, and M. Cooper, "Collaborative Writing Strategies for Academic Success.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 117, no. 3 (2025): 345–59.

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[8] Harris and Ng, "Feedback Practices in Academic Writing: A Critical Review."

practice, and self-regulation. Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo argue that feedback is most effective when students are encouraged to critically engage with comments, explore alternative approaches, and revise their work through multiple iterations.[9] This process supports deeper cognitive and rhetorical growth. Similarly, integrated models of feedback that combine formative, dialogic, and student-centered methods have been shown to help students internalize academic conventions, transfer feedback across different tasks, and develop their authorial voice.[10] These models see feedback as a social and interactive process rather than a one-sided evaluation, aligning with sociocultural views on learning that consider knowledge construction to be mediated through interaction with more knowledgeable others.[11] Recent studies also highlight the importance of feedback literacy, the ability of students to understand, interpret, and use feedback effectively, as a key factor in improving writing. They point out that even high-quality feedback can have little effect if students lack strategies to engage with it.[12]

In parallel, collaborative strategies have become essential in the effective teaching of academic writing. Engaging students in activities like collaborative writing, structured peer review, and co-constructed projects helps them articulate their reasoning, negotiate meaning, and learn from each other's writing approaches.[13] These methods not only enhance technical skills, such as grammar and structure, but also foster higher-order abilities, including audience awareness, argumentation, and metacognitive reflection.[14] Empirical evidence indicates that combining collaborative strategies with meaningful, dialogic feedback significantly boosts writing outcomes, particularly in multilingual and diverse classrooms.[15] Students who participate in peer review report increased confidence, motivation, and willingness to experiment with new ideas, which are crucial for developing independent writing skills.[16] Furthermore, technology-driven collaboration through online discussion boards, document-sharing platforms, and AI-supported peer feedback facilitates asynchronous interaction, broadens access to diverse perspectives, and supports reflective revision, especially for students with limited face-to-face learning opportunities.[17]

Overall, research indicates that combining traditional feedback with collaborative methods offers the most effective way to enhance academic writing in higher education. Instead of treating feedback and collaboration as separate strategies, studies highlight that their educational value is maximized when integrated into structured, reflective, and socially engaging learning environments.[18] This combined approach is especially vital in multilingual and discipline-specific contexts, where students come from diverse backgrounds, have varying language skills, and differ in familiarity with academic genres.[19] Merging collaborative techniques with reflective feedback can help bridge gaps in

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[9] Tipaya Peungcharoenkun and Budi Waluyo, "Writing Pedagogy in Higher Education: The Efficacy of Mediating Feedback with Technology," *Reading & Writing* 15, no. 1 (2024): 1–12.

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[11] Lev S Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, vol. 86 (Harvard university press, 1978); J. P. Lantolf and S. L. Thorne, *Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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[18] K. Hyland, *Second Language Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2019); Wang, Zhang, and Cooper, "Metacognitive Instruction for Improving the Effectiveness of Collaborative Writing for EFL Learners' Writing Development."

[19] Nguyen and Moore, "Multilingualism and Academic Writing: Challenges and Opportunities."; Sato and Kleinsasser, "Technology-Mediated Peer Interaction and Writing Development."

student readiness and foster equitable development of writing skills among diverse learners.[20] Furthermore, evidence shows that when technology aligns with teaching goals, it can enhance both feedback and collaboration, enabling teachers to support writing development more effectively, even in large or remote classes.[21]

Finally, recent research emphasizes that lecturer agency, institutional support, and thoughtful instructional design are crucial for the success of feedback and collaborative writing initiatives. Without proper professional development, manageable workloads, and flexible curricula, even evidence-based methods risk being applied inconsistently or being reduced to superficial exercises.[22] Failing to explore or adopt integrated feedback and collaboration strategies in higher education could lead to reliance on traditional, product-oriented approaches that prioritize correctness over cognitive engagement, ultimately limiting students' ability to develop independent, critical, and transferable writing skills. These limitations have wider implications, as academic writing proficiency is closely linked to academic success, retention, and progression, especially for students writing in a second language.[23] Therefore, research that captures the perspectives of lecturers, investigates the relationship between feedback, collaboration, and technology, and situates writing instruction within local linguistic and disciplinary contexts is essential to advance both scholarship and practice in higher education. This study aims to address this gap.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) offers a strong perspective for understanding how this study conceptualizes academic writing instruction in higher education. By emphasizing the socially mediated nature of learning, SCT highlights the importance of lecturers, peers, and digital tools as mediators in developing students' writing skills.[24] In this framework, academic writing is seen not just as an individual cognitive task but as a socially and culturally embedded practice shaped by interaction, scaffolding, and the use of cultural artifacts such as digital platforms and AI-mediated feedback. Applying SCT in this study enables a detailed exploration of how lecturers guide students through repeated writing cycles, model disciplinary norms, and encourage reflective and metacognitive thinking, especially in multilingual and technology-enhanced environments. It also emphasizes the dynamic relationship between personal agency, institutional systems, and environmental factors, viewing academic writing development as the result of ongoing reciprocal interactions rather than isolated efforts.

On the contrary, this study helps to improve and apply SCT in higher education by providing empirical insights into how lecturers mediate social interaction in modern, digitally enhanced learning environments. Although SCT typically emphasizes face-to-face, culturally mediated interactions, the findings show how technology, ranging from AI-assisted feedback to online collaboration platforms, expands the scope of mediation, enabling support across time, space, and formats. By highlighting lecturers' strategies, challenges, and adaptive practices, the study demonstrates the dynamic interplay between social, cognitive, and technological factors in writing instruction. These insights extend SCT's explanatory power, showing that successful mediation in academic writing involves not only social interaction but also the careful integration of digital tools, awareness of linguistic diversity, and institutional support. In this way, the study connects theory and teaching practice, reinforcing SCT's importance while illustrating how mediation is evolving in contemporary higher education.

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METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

For this study, a qualitative research approach was used, allowing an in-depth exploration of lecturers' experiences, perceptions, and teaching practices in academic writing. Qualitative research is especially suitable for understanding complex social phenomena because it emphasizes the subjective experiences and meanings that participants assign to their actions.[25] Using this approach, the study aimed to gather rich, detailed insights into lecturers' pedagogical strategies, feedback methods, and collaborative efforts in teaching academic writing. A case study design was applied, focusing on a single higher education institution that offers a diverse range of academic programs. Case studies allow researchers to examine a phenomenon within its real-life context, supporting a comprehensive understanding of the processes and practices being studied.[26] This design was particularly fitting for exploring the subtle ways in which lecturers manage academic writing instruction within a specific institutional setting.

Research Participants

The study involved ten lecturers purposively selected from various academic disciplines. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to ensure that participants have specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research question.[27] The inclusion criteria focused on lecturers who were actively involved in teaching academic writing courses or integrating academic writing instruction within their discipline. Participants were also selected based on their willingness to share in-depth insights into their pedagogical practices, feedback mechanisms, and experiences of collaboration. The diverse disciplinary backgrounds of the participants allowed for a broader understanding of the strategies used in different academic contexts.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with lecturers at a South African university where the study was undertaken, with each interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. These interviews provided flexibility, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key topics were consistently addressed in all interviews.[28] The interview protocol was carefully designed to collect detailed insights into lecturers' feedback methods, collaboration strategies, challenges faced in teaching academic writing, and perceived best practices within the institutional context of the selected South African university. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim to support thorough analysis.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, a common method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data.[29] The process was systematic, starting with familiarization with the data, which involved reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain a deep understanding of participants' narratives. This was followed by the generation of initial codes, where significant statements, ideas, and patterns related to academic writing pedagogy and collaboration were identified and categorized. The codes were then combined to develop broader themes that reflected the strategies, challenges, and experiences of the lecturers in providing feedback and fostering collaboration. Throughout the process, themes were continuously reviewed, refined and compared against the raw data to ensure that they accurately represented the perspectives of participants, allowing a thorough and nuanced understanding of the instructional practices of lecturers in academic writing.

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[25] John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).
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[27] Lawrence A Palinkas et al., "Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 42, no. 5 (2015): 533–44.
[28] A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford University Press, 2016).
[29] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics board before data collection. Participants received informed consent forms detailing the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any point, and confidentiality assurances. Personal identifiers were removed from transcripts, and data were stored securely following ethical research standards. These measures helped protect the privacy of the participants and ensured the research upheld high ethical standards.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of interviews with 10 lecturers provided a rich, nuanced understanding of how academic writing is taught, emphasizing both the strategies used and the challenges faced. By closely examining participants' stories, six interconnected themes emerged that reflect lecturers' methods for giving feedback, working together, and fostering students' writing skills. Each theme is supported with direct quotations, providing genuine insights into the experiences, perceptions, and teaching choices of the lecturers. This thematic overview not only highlights common patterns among participants but also sheds light on the complexities and contextual factors influencing teaching practices in higher education writing courses.

Theme 1: Predominance of Traditional Feedback Mechanisms

The findings show a strong dependence on traditional feedback methods, especially written comments and corrections, which lecturers consistently see as crucial to improving students' writing skills. This dependence reflects a long-established teaching tradition in higher education, where detailed written feedback is viewed as the main way to guide students toward greater precision, clarity, and adherence to academic standards. Lecturers pointed out that these methods are effective for identifying and correcting technical errors, such as grammar, syntax, and referencing, and for offering clear advice on how students can enhance their writing. However, while these approaches are appreciated for their clarity and simplicity, lecturers also recognized that traditional feedback often focuses more on error correction than fostering deeper engagement or critical thinking. Sometimes, this leads students to prioritize grades over the developmental process of writing. This indicates that although traditional feedback remains a key part of teaching, there is growing awareness of its limitations in promoting long-term writing growth and student independence.

In support of the statement above, LF3 pointed out that:

"I primarily provide written comments and corrections to help students improve their academic writing; it's the approach I have always used and feel comfortable with."

The statement above made by participant LF3 was supported by another research participant, LM7, who explained that:

"Feedback is essential for students' learning because it guides them on how to improve their writing. However, I sometimes feel it doesn't lead to meaningful improvements, especially when students focus more on the grade than on understanding and applying the suggestions."

Additionally, LF1 stated that:

"Students often focus only on the grade and overlook the detailed comments I provide, which can be very frustrating because the feedback is meant to help them improve their writing skills, not just achieve a score."

Based on the statements above, traditional feedback mechanisms remain a key part of teaching academic writing, but their limitations in promoting deep learning and student engagement are becoming clearer. Lecturers recognize the importance of written comments and corrections for fixing technical errors, but they also admit that such feedback alone might not fully help students develop into independent, reflective writers. These findings emphasize the need for a more balanced approach, combining the clarity and structure of traditional feedback with strategies that promote active student participation, critical thinking, and long-term skill growth. By considering the strengths and weaknesses of established methods, lecturers can begin exploring more innovative and integrated approaches to teaching academic writing that better address students' diverse needs.

Theme 2: Integration of Collaborative Strategies

Lecturers reported a growing integration of collaborative learning strategies in their teaching, such as peer review sessions, structured group discussions, and co-constructed writing exercises. These methods are considered valuable for promoting peer-to-peer learning, allowing students to learn from each other's strengths, perspectives, and mistakes rather than relying solely on instructor guidance. Lecturers emphasized that collaborative activities not only increase engagement with the writing process but also foster critical thinking, self-assessment, and reflective skills. Additionally, these strategies help build a stronger academic community, as students feel more comfortable sharing their work, discussing ideas, and supporting each other's growth. However, the lecturers also pointed out that the success of collaborative strategies can depend on factors such as class size, student motivation, and logistical challenges. This indicates that while collaboration has great potential, its implementation requires careful planning and ongoing support.

In this regard, participants shared the following remarks:

LF1 elaborated as follows:

"I encourage peer review sessions because they provide students with the chance to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses, discuss different writing approaches, and gain new perspectives on improving their work."

LM9 exemplified the elaboration provided by LF1 by stating that:

"Collaboration builds a sense of community among students, making them feel more at ease sharing their work, openly discussing ideas, and supporting each other's learning."

In contrast to the statements averred by LF1 and LM9, LF5 pointed out that:

"Logistical issues can sometimes impede effective collaboration, especially in large classes, where organizing group activities and ensuring every student participates fully can be difficult."

Based on the above quotations, the integration of collaborative learning strategies signifies a promising shift in academic writing instruction, moving beyond purely individual feedback to more interactive and participatory methods. Peer review, group discussions, and co-constructed writing exercises not only boost students' engagement and critical thinking but also build a supportive academic community where learning is shared and reinforced collectively. Although lecturers recognized practical challenges, such as large class sizes and time constraints, the overall benefits of collaboration indicate that, when carefully implemented, these strategies can complement traditional feedback methods and lead to more meaningful and lasting improvements in students' writing skills, without lecturers having to worry about class sizes.

Theme 3: Contextual Challenges in Feedback and Collaboration

The findings of this study show that lecturers face various contextual barriers that greatly limit the effectiveness of both feedback and collaborative learning strategies. One common challenge is large class sizes, which make it hard to provide personalized feedback, monitor group activities, or engage students in meaningful one-on-one interactions. Time constraints make this even more difficult, as lecturers often struggle to balance grading, lesson planning, and administrative tasks with the demands of providing detailed and timely feedback or facilitating collaborative exercises. Additionally, limited institutional support, including a lack of professional development opportunities, insufficient access to digital tools, and inadequate recognition of the time needed for high-quality writing instruction, restricts lecturers' ability to innovate or implement best practices effectively. These contextual factors create a complex environment in which lecturers must navigate competing priorities, often relying on traditional methods that are easier to manage but may not fully meet the learning needs of students. Understanding these challenges is essential to create institutional policies and teaching strategies that can help lecturers deliver more effective and sustainable academic writing instruction.

In this regard, the views of the following participants reiterate this point:

LF4 concurs by stating that:

"Large class sizes make it hard to give individual feedback or to run group activities effectively, as it's tough to provide each student with the attention and guidance they need to improve their writing skills."

Furthermore, LM10 stated that:
"Time constraints often hinder our ability to engage in meaningful collaborative practices, making it hard to organize peer reviews, group discussions, or co-writing activities that genuinely support students' learning and growth."

Expressing similar sentiments, LM8 confirmed that:
"Institutional support for writing instruction is sometimes insufficient, which hampers the implementation of new teaching strategies, the provision of adequate feedback, or effective collaboration among students."

This presentation clearly shows that various contextual barriers faced by lecturers, such as large class sizes, limited time, and insufficient institutional support, create significant obstacles to the implementation of effective feedback and collaborative strategies. These challenges emphasize the need for systemic solutions, including professional development, adequate resources, and structural support, to help lecturers move beyond traditional methods and adopt more innovative, student-centered approaches. Overcoming these barriers is crucial not only to improve the quality of academic writing instruction, but also to create an environment where both lecturers and students can fully engage in the teaching and learning process.

Theme 4: Emphasis on Formative Feedback for Student Development
A recurring emphasis among lecturers was the importance of formative feedback as a tool for ongoing learning rather than just summative assessment. Lecturers highlighted strategies aimed at helping students identify weaknesses and actively improve their writing, such as targeted comments, guided revision tasks, and iterative drafts. They noted that formative feedback not only addresses immediate errors but also encourages students to reflect on their writing process, develop self-regulation, and build long-term skills, fostering greater independence and confidence as writers.
Discussing this phenomenon, one of the research participants in this study, LF2, explained that:
"I try to give constructive feedback that students can actually use before submitting their next assignment, so they can learn from their mistakes, improve their skills, and make real progress in their writing rather than just receiving marks."

Similarly, LF4 stated that:
"The goal is not only to correct errors but also to help students understand the reasoning behind them, so they can use this knowledge for future writing tasks and build stronger, more independent writing skills."

Lastly, LM9 is of the view that:
"Some students take time to implement suggestions, but those who do show remarkable improvement, demonstrating that carefully considered feedback can significantly improve their writing skills when students actively engage with it."

Formative feedback plays a crucial role in effective academic writing instruction, helping students actively engage in their learning and become independent, reflective writers. By focusing on ongoing guidance rather than just grades, lecturers can help students internalize constructive suggestions, identify patterns in their mistakes, and gradually improve their writing skills. This approach emphasizes feedback as a growth tool, showing the potential for continuous improvement when students are encouraged to respond thoughtfully and repeatedly to guidance.

Theme 5: Technology-Mediated Feedback and Innovation

Some lecturers have started exploring digital platforms and tools to improve feedback and foster collaboration in academic writing instruction. These include online annotation software, learning management systems, collaborative documents, and discussion forums, which enable lecturers to offer more detailed, timely, and interactive feedback. Using these platforms, students can engage directly with comments, track revisions, and participate in peer review activities more efficiently, even in large or geographically dispersed classes. Lecturers noted that digital tools not only simplify the feedback process but also promote greater student interaction, reflection, and independence, supporting a more participatory and flexible approach to writing instruction.

Commenting on the phenomenon of this study concerning the aforementioned theme, LM7 stated that:

"*Using online platforms allows me to give more detailed and timely feedback, even for large groups of students, making it easier to track progress, identify key areas for improvement, and ensure that each student gets guidance tailored to their needs."*

Similarly, LF5 stated that:

"Students can comment on each other's drafts online, which often leads to more discussion and deeper reflection than face-to-face sessions, as they have more time to consider feedback, respond thoughtfully, and engage with different perspectives."

Another interviewee, identified as LF3, believes that:

"There is a learning curve for both students and lecturers when using digital tools, but the advantages are evident, as these platforms encourage interaction, enable more efficient feedback, and support collaborative learning in ways traditional methods cannot match."

Based on the data analysis, the use of digital platforms and tools offers significant opportunities to enhance both feedback and collaborative learning in academic writing. These technologies enable more timely, detailed, and interactive engagement with students' work, while also supporting peer-to-peer interaction and reflective practices. Although lecturers noted that effective integration requires training and careful planning, the adoption of digital tools can complement traditional methods, making feedback more accessible, scalable, and impactful for students' ongoing development as independent writers.

Theme 6: Reflective Practice and Continuous Professional Development

Lecturers highlighted the vital role of reflective practice in refining and enhancing their instructional strategies in academic writing. They emphasized the importance of critically assessing their own teaching methods, learning from past experiences, and recognizing which approaches are effective or require adjustments. Peer observation and collaborative discussions with colleagues were also viewed as valuable methods to gain new perspectives and insights into alternative strategies to provide feedback and encourage collaborative learning. Additionally, participation in professional development activities, workshops, and training sessions was seen as essential for staying updated with new pedagogical techniques, digital tools, and research-based best practices. Through reflective practice, lecturers can continuously adapt their methods, improve the quality of feedback, and foster more meaningful student engagement, ultimately supporting students' growth as capable and confident writers.

Participants' perspectives were as follows:

LF3 indicated the following:

"I often reflect on what went well and what didn't after each semester, as this helps me identify areas for improvement, adapt my teaching strategies, and provide more effective feedback and support to students in future courses."

Additionally, LM6 stated that:
"Attending workshops on academic writing pedagogy has given me new ideas for providing feedback and creating peer activities, enabling me to try different methods and improve students' engagement and learning results."

Expressing a similar sentiment, LF5 stated that:
"Working with colleagues from various disciplines provides new perspectives and insights on teaching practices, helping me improve my approach to guiding students and applying strategies that better meet diverse learning needs."

Based on the data collected, reflective practice plays a crucial role in ongoing improvement in teaching academic writing. By critically examining their own instruction, participating in peer observation and engaging in professional development, lecturers can refine feedback techniques, improve collaborative activities, and adjust their methods to meet changing needs of students. This continuous process of reflection and learning not only enhances lecturers' teaching skills but also creates a more dynamic and responsive learning environment, ultimately helping students become independent, confident, and capable writers.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show a dual trend in academic writing instruction, such as continued reliance on traditional feedback methods along with a growing interest in collaborative learning strategies. The lecturers strongly stressed the importance of feedback in improving student writing skills, especially through written comments and corrections. However, concerns were raised about the effectiveness of feedback, particularly when students focused primarily on grades rather than the learning process. This aligns with earlier research showing that feedback works best when students are encouraged to reflect and revise, rather than just receive evaluative comments.[30] Without active participation, feedback can become superficial and serve only as a performance marker rather than as a tool for skill development.

The integration of collaborative strategies, such as peer review, group discussions, and co-constructed writing exercises, was found to significantly enhance peer-to-peer learning and foster a strong sense of academic community among students. Through these collaborative practices, students are encouraged to articulate their understanding of academic writing conventions, critically engage in one another's work, and negotiate meaning collectively, moving beyond passive reception of lecturer feedback. Such interaction not only promotes deeper cognitive engagement but also supports the co-construction of knowledge, as students learn to internalise disciplinary norms and writing expectations through dialogue and shared reflection. Moreover, collaborative learning environments help reduce students' dependence on lecturers as the sole source of authority, empowering learners to take greater responsibility for their writing development. Despite these pedagogical benefits, the effective implementation of collaborative strategies is frequently constrained by practical challenges. Large class sizes often limit opportunities for meaningful interaction and individual participation, while heavy teaching workloads and time constraints restrict lecturers' ability to design, monitor, and evaluate collaborative activities effectively. In addition, limited institutional support, particularly in terms of training, resources, and technological infrastructure can further hinder the sustainable integration of collaborative approaches. These constraints mirror broader concerns in the literature regarding the difficulty of scaling collaborative learning in higher-education contexts without adequate structural and institutional backing.[31]

[30] Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo, "Writing Pedagogy in Higher Education: The Efficacy of Mediating Feedback with Technology"; Mahmoudi and Storch, "Feedback Literacy and Peer Interaction: Enhancing EAP Writing through Reflective Practices "; Li and Evans, "Dialogic Feedback and Student Engagement in Academic Writing: A Mixed-Methods Study."

[31] Azmar and Razali, "Teaching and Learning English Academic Writing in Malaysian Tertiary Context"; Aljuaid, "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence Tools on Academic Writing Instruction in Higher Education: A Systematic Review"; Xinran Zhu, Cong Wang, and Duane Searsmith, "Writing With Machines and Peers: Designing for Critical Engagement with Generative AI," *ArXiv Preprint ArXiv:2511.15750*, 2025.

The findings of this study can be effectively explained through the lens of Sociocultural Theory (SCT), especially Vygotsky's ideas of social interaction, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding. SCT argues that learning is mainly social and occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable peers or instructors, who provide support that helps learners perform tasks beyond their independent abilities.[32] In academic writing, traditional feedback serves as scaffolding, guiding students' growth by pointing out errors and offering suggestions. However, the study indicates that this scaffolding works best when combined with opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and repeated practice, which help students internalize the feedback and use it independently.

Collaborative learning strategies, meanwhile, exemplify SCT's emphasis on social mediation and co-creation of knowledge. Peer review and group writing activities foster environments in which students interact within their ZPD, learning from each other's strengths while negotiating meanings and resolving misunderstandings. These social interactions help internalize skills that would otherwise be difficult to develop on one's own, reinforcing the idea that cognitive development is linked to social engagement. However, as the findings show, the success of these strategies depends on supportive contexts, manageable class sizes, enough time for interaction, and institutional recognition of the pedagogical effort involved, aligning with SCT's view that learning occurs within specific social and cultural contexts.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of combining traditional and collaborative approaches to writing instruction. Although traditional feedback provides crucial support for fixing errors and guiding improvement, collaborative strategies enhance the social and cognitive aspects of learning, encouraging reflection, peer learning, and community building. SCT offers a valuable framework for understanding these dynamics, highlighting the interaction between social engagement, scaffolding, and the gradual internalization of academic writing skills. The findings indicate that higher education institutions must adopt supportive pedagogical frameworks and professional development initiatives to help lecturers effectively incorporate feedback and collaboration, ultimately improving student learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that higher education institutions provide targeted professional development programs to equip lecturers with the skills needed to deliver effective feedback and implement collaborative teaching strategies. Institutions should also consider managing lecturers' workloads to allow sufficient time for designing, monitoring, and evaluating both traditional and collaborative instructional practices. Additionally, curricula should be made flexible to support the integration of innovative approaches, such as peer review, group discussions, co-constructed writing activities, and technology-enhanced feedback, alongside conventional methods. By addressing these institutional and pedagogical factors, lecturers will be better positioned to blend traditional and collaborative methods effectively, thereby enhancing the quality of academic writing instruction and supporting students' long-term development of writing skills.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the feedback mechanisms lecturers use in teaching academic writing, the ways collaborative strategies are integrated into their teaching practices, and the challenges lecturers face in providing effective feedback while fostering collaborative learning. The findings highlight the complex interaction between teaching philosophies, contextual factors, and institutional constraints. The results show that, although traditional feedback methods—such as written comments and corrections remain common and valued for their clarity, there is a positive shift toward collaborative practices. Strategies such as peer review, group discussions, and co-constructed writing exercises, when combined with teaching and learning technologies, enhance student engagement, foster reflection, and build a sense of academic community. However, lecturers face significant challenges that can limit the effectiveness of both feedback and collaborative strategies. Large class sizes, limited instructional time, and insufficient institutional support were identified as key barriers. Overcoming these obstacles is

[32] Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*.

crucial to ensure that innovative pedagogical methods are not only introduced but are also sustainable and impactful.

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