Beyond correctness: Journeys towards scholarly identity for Indonesian postgraduates writing for publication

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Academic writing development is increasingly understood as a dynamic and recursive process rather than a linear progression toward linguistic accuracy. Drawing on this perspective, the present study investigates the visible journey of postgraduate students' academic writing by examining textual and rhetorical changes across successive drafts as a transformative journey of Indonesian postgraduate students, as they move from drafting academic manuscripts to achieving publication, by employing a longitudinal case study. Our study collects data from surveys, feedback history, reflective accounts, and semi-structured interviews from postgraduate students to analyse and reveal linguistic, rhetorical, and structural demands in academic writing. Findings show that postgraduate students make various rhetorical and textual transformations during academic writing, act differently to supervisor, peer as well as AI feedback, yet they still stand with their voices as author in the writing process. Overall, the study highlights revision as a transformative process that makes the development of academic writing visible. It underscores the pedagogical value of process-oriented writing instruction that foregrounds drafting, feedback, and reflection in supporting postgraduate writers' academic literacy development.

Introduction

Publication in refereed journals has become an institutional requirement and a key indicator of professional manifestation for graduate students in various disciplines. Successful publication not only shapes academic paths but also influences future employment opportunities, access to scholarships, and participation in the global academic community. Despite its central role, writing for publication remains a challenging learning task for novice researchers, who must simultaneously master highly specific genre conventions (Rofiqoh et al., 2022) meet disciplinary expectations, and develop an original academic voice (Wei & Liu, 2024). Furthermore, according to Indrayadi (2023), some researchers get challenges in several aspects to publish their articles in reputable international journals, such as lacking ability in formulating title, limited funding resources, lacking knowledge in methodological issues, as well as language problems. These complexity aspects often lead to significant writing anxiety, raise under-prepared and insecure feeling (Mistar 2026), particularly among graduate students adapting to unfamiliar academic norms (Razmi & Ghane, 2024). This challenge highlights that academic writing goes beyond the production of grammatically accurate texts; rather, it is a practice embedded in a social context, shaped by power relations, identity negotiations, and disciplinary norms, which are further reinforced by the need to meet reviewer expectations in the peer review process (Peng, 2025; Pribadi & Gafur, 2025; Xu & Zhang, 2023).

Academic writing for publication is inherently iterative, involving cycles of drafting, critique, and revision until the text meets journal standards. Feedback plays a central mediating role in the development of EFL graduate students' writing specifically (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019), enabling novice writers to align their texts with disciplinary conventions and rhetorical expectations. Recent studies highlight the value of peer and mentor feedback in promoting rhetorical development, learning autonomy, and genre awareness (Wei & Liu, 2024; Zhang, et al., 2023). However, feedback engagement is not without challenges, as issues of uneven participation, selective acceptance, and identity negotiation persist. Research on interactions between mentors and students further suggests that feedback serves not only as correction, but as a dialogic process that shapes developing academic identities and supports the internalisation of hidden academic practices (Erbilgin et al., 2023; Mekheimer, 2025).

Despite this increasing attention, several gaps remain in the literature. First, most studies have examined final products or isolated feedback moments rather than draft progressions. This orientation overlooks the cumulative, processual nature of writing development. As Xu and Zhang (2023) argued, research has often privileged perceptions of feedback or outcome measures of improvement while neglecting the dynamic incorporation of feedback into successive drafts. Second, while genre-based studies have carefully analysed rhetorical moves and linguistic features of published texts, there is limited research tracing how novice authors gradually acquire such features across iterative revisions (Flowerdew, 2022). Third, the literature on academic literacies emphasises that writing is inextricably linked to identity, power, and voice. Yet, very few studies have empirically mapped how postgraduate students negotiate their scholarly voice when enacting revisions suggested by supervisors, peers, or AI tools (Zhang et al., 2023). Fourth, the interaction of multiple feedback sources supervisory, peer, and automated has not been systematically investigated in the context of publication-oriented writing.

If left under-explored, these gaps risk of maintaining a narrow understanding of academic writing as adherence to surface conventions rather than as a process of development towards scientific knowledge. In reality, this can mean that advisors and institutions continue to evaluate student writing primarily based on accuracy and adherence to rigid formats, rather than on the development of an independent academic voice. For students, the implication is that they may learn to "fix" their drafts according to feedback without truly developing long-term rhetorical flexibility, critical judgment, or confidence in negotiating disciplinary norms. At a systemic level, ignoring the dynamics of draft development can result in teaching methods that are inadequate for preparing students for the complex realities of publication in international journals, where negotiation, revision, and identity formation are as important as textual accuracy.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how postgraduate writers' drafts evolve across revisions and how different feedback sources mediate this process. Specifically, our study addresses three questions:

1. What textual and rhetorical changes occur across successive drafts of postgraduate manuscripts?

2. How do different sources of feedback decisions and textual change?
3. How do writers describe their own negotiation of scholarly voice and identity during the drafting process?

By focusing on draft progression as data, this research offers novelty in tracing the temporal dynamics of feedback enactment, revealing both textual and identity trajectories. It will contribute not only to the theory of academic writing development but also to the practice of supervising and teaching postgraduate publication writing. Ultimately, the findings aim to inform more process-sensitive pedagogies that empower students to develop their own scholarly voices rather than merely reproduce the voices of others.

Literature review

Academic writing as a developmental and process-oriented practice

Academic writing is increasingly understood as an evolving and socially contextualized practice, shaped by participation in disciplinary communities, not simply linguistic ones (Hyland, 2019; Lea & Street, 2020). From an academic literacy perspective, writing development involves gradual alignment with disciplinary norms and the negotiation of scholarly positions, as students learn to construct arguments and claim legitimacy within the practices of academic knowledge-making.

From a developmental standpoint, tensions between individual meaning-making and institutional expectations are an inherent part of academic writing trajectories. Rather than interpreting these tensions through a deficit lens, scholars argue that novice writers engage in a process of discursive transformation, in which ideas are progressively reshaped to align with dominant academic conventions while retaining authorial agency (Badenhorst, 2015). Writing, in this sense, becomes a site of continuous negotiation, where writers refine their rhetorical choices and re-position themselves through successive writing attempts.

Writing for publication is a transformative learning experience in which graduate students gradually develop scholarly competence, confidence, and identity. Struggles with formality, argumentation, stance, and writing anxiety are integral to this developmental process, not signs of failure (Holmes, 2022). Continuous academic writing practice allows multilingual graduate writers to acquire rhetorical resources while reconstructing professional identities in relation to academic norms and linguistic repertoires, highlighting writing as a dynamic, process-oriented practice shaped through drafting, feedback, and the evolution of authorial positionality (Chen, et al., 2023).

Textual and rhetorical development across drafts in postgraduate writing

Textual development in academic writing is a dynamic and iterative process in which successive drafts allow writers to refine ideas, structure, and rhetorical coherence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) that view revision as a meaning-making activity. Revision serves not only as linguistic reorganisation but also as a space for rhetorical reflection involving audience awareness, argumentative clarity, and disciplinary alignment (Wu & Lei, 2023). Cognitive

models illustrate composing as a cycle of planning, translating, and reviewing, in which revision reflects a writer's growing sense of task and audience (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Rhetorical development across multiple drafts includes refinement of strategic argumentation, logistical organisation, and authorial voice, reflecting an increased awareness of scholarly positionality and contributions. Rhetorical development basically shows in growing control of disciplinary genre conventions (Swales, 1990) and of stance and engagement through metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005). Furthermore, these changes are also tied to academic socialisation into academic communities (Kamler & Thomson, 2006) and are scaffolded by dialogic feedback within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) during multi-draft revision which plays a crucial role in shaping textual and rhetorical development by fostering feedback literacy and expanding the author's rhetorical repertoire, leading to a more mature and cohesive academic text (Wu & Lei, 2023).

Feedback as scaffolding in writing development

Feedback functions as scaffolding within learners' *zones of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978), supporting the internalisation of genre conventions and rhetorical flexibility through supervisor and peer interaction (Zhang et al., 2023; Erbilgin et al., 2023). However, feedback engagement is dialogic and non-linear, as students selectively adopt, reinterpret, or resist comments based on ownership and disciplinary awareness (Supiani et al., 2023; Wei & Liu, 2024). Feedback also operates as dynamic scaffolding, enabling writers to attempt more complex rhetorical moves (Banihashem et al., 2024; Mafulah & Cahyono, 2023). While AI-based tools support micro-level editing, human feedback remains essential for mediating macro-rhetorical development, and without pedagogical guidance, automated feedback tends to result in surface-level revision (Marzuki et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2023).

However, despite revision being central to learning, research largely has focused on final texts rather than reading developmental drafts, leaving writers' "visible journeys" under-explored (Flowerdew, 2022). Drawing on genre-based pedagogy, academic literacy, and sociocultural theory (Hyland, 2019; Lea & Street, 2020; Swales, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978), our study addresses these issues by examining the evolution of drafts, feedback interactions, and writers' negotiation of our voices.

Negotiating scholarly voice and identity in postgraduate writing

In graduate academic writing, scholarly voice emerges through the negotiation of writerly identity within disciplinary norms (Wang & Parr, 2025). Empirical studies show that international graduate students develop this voice dialogically through engagement with academic practices, cross-cultural interactions, and institutional demands, enabling the construction of a hybrid yet authentic scholarly identity in a global academic context.

Academic identity develops through negotiating one's position within normative academic discourse, which is often dominated by English, particularly for multilingual graduate

writers (Langum & Sullivan, 2020). Doctoral researchers report that their multilingual experiences shape how their voices are embodied in their texts and how their complex identities interact with dominant disciplinary conventions.

Finally, the dynamics of scientific voice and identity also reflect the tension between academic requirements and the author's personal identity; several studies highlight how multilingual authors form transnational communities that support the development of their scientific identity through interrelated writing practices, as well as the use of virtual academic communities to expand their rhetorical repertoire (Langum & Sullivan, 2020). Thus, the negotiation of scientific voice and identity in graduate writing is a complex and reflective process, involving interactions between individual experiences, academic demands, and broader sociolinguistic contexts.

Method

Research design

This study employs a longitudinal case study design, following seventeen English language education postgraduate students enrolled in a semester-long course titled *Writing for Research Publication* in the first year, which was conducted in English as the medium of instruction, in order to capture the processual, developmental, and situated nature of academic writing contexts. At the end of the course, all participants received a passing grade and as the final writing products, their articles were specifically arranged for this course only, and did not have a relation with other courses in the same academic semester. Overall, this design is particularly appropriate because it investigates how textual transformation, feedback mediation, and writer identity emerge and interact over time, rather than measuring isolated outcomes at a single point (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Each participant produced a complete research article intended for submission to an international journal such as *Journal of Language, Identity & Education; CALLEJ; Language-Related Journal; Comparative Literature & Culture Journal; LLT Journal*, and others, enabling systematic tracing of draft-to-draft rhetorical change and evolving authorial positioning within an authentic publication-oriented setting.

Participants

Participants were purposively selected based on three inclusion criteria: (1) active enrolment in a postgraduate program in English Language Education and *Writing to Research Publication* course which must use English for the writing product language; (2) limited or no prior experience in academic publication; and (3) willingness to share successive writing drafts and associated feedback artefacts throughout the study. The participants took this course due to their degree requirements which required the course as compulsory one within their postgraduate program. To ensure ethical compliance, all participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Positionality

It is important to acknowledge the positionality of the research team in relation to this study. One of authors (Basthomi) served as the course supervisor for the *Writing for Research Publication* course, occupying a dual role as both practitioner and researcher. The other authors acted as external researchers who observed the course without direct instructional involvement. To manage potential bias arising from this dual role, the research team engaged in ongoing reflective discussions throughout the data collection and analysis process, drawing on member checking and peer debriefing as strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of findings.

Instruments and data sources

Multiple data sources were employed to provide a comprehensive account of participants' writing development and identity negotiation as provided in Table 1. First, sequential writing drafts (D1–D4) were collected, representing initial, mid-stage, near-final, and submission versions of participants' academic texts. Second, feedback artefacts consisted of written comments provided by supervisors and peers, as well as AI-mediated feedback where applicable (e.g., *Grammarly* outputs and *ChatGPT*-generated prompts). Third, stimulated-recall interviews were conducted to elicit participants' rationales for specific revision decisions by revisiting selected textual changes. Finally, reflective journals were collected on a weekly basis, documenting participants' emotional responses, negotiations of authorial identity, and shifts in writing confidence throughout the revision process.

Table 1: Data needed and collection methods

RQ	Data needed	Data collection methods
RQ1	Series of drafts; revision histories; rhetorical move changes	Collect drafts, track changes/version, history, genre coding
RQ2	Supervisor/peer/AI feedback; evidence of feedback uptake	Collect feedback artifacts, stimulated recall interviews, revision mapping
RQ3	Writers' perspectives on identity and voice	Semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall, reflective journals

Table 1 summarises the types of data and data collection methods used to answer each research question in this study. For RQ1, data in the form of drafts, revision histories, and rhetorical changes were collected through sequential draft collection, version change tracking, and genre coding to identify textual and rhetorical developments over time. RQ2 utilises feedback artefacts from supervisors, peers, and AI, combined with stimulated recall interviews and revision mapping to explore how feedback is interpreted and manifested in textual changes. Meanwhile, RQ3 focuses on the author's perspective on the negotiation of identity and academic voice, obtained through semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall, and reflective journals, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the author's subjective experience during the writing and revision process.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through two complementary and iterative stages to capture both textual development and participants' experiential dimensions of academic writing.

Genre analysis

In the first stage, a genre-based analysis was applied to all writing drafts (D1–D4) to examine rhetorical and linguistic development over time. Each draft was coded for rhetorical moves and steps using Swales' (1990) create a research space (CARS) model, focusing on how participants constructed research territory, established niches, and articulated research purposes across revisions. In addition, linguistic realisations of authorial stance were analysed using Hyland's (2019) framework, including hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers. Changes across drafts were systematically tracked to map patterns of textual transformation, allowing for longitudinal comparison of rhetorical structuring and voice construction.

Thematic analysis

The second stage involved a thematic analysis of interview transcripts and reflective journals to explore participants' perceptions and experiences during the revision process. Following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase approach, namely familiarisation, initial coding, theme searching, theme reviewing, theme defining, and reporting the data were analysed to identify recurring themes related to feedback enactment, voice negotiation, and identity development as academic writers. This analysis enabled the interpretation of how participants negotiated external feedback (peer, supervisor, and AI-mediated) while maintaining a sense of authorial ownership.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the rigour of the analysis, methodological triangulation was employed across multiple data sources, including writing drafts, feedback artefacts, interviews, and reflection journals. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to confirm accuracy, while peer debriefing with fellow researchers supported analytical reflexivity and credibility.

Data collection procedure

Data were collected longitudinally over a 15-week academic semester with four hours per week over one semester to capture the developmental trajectory of participants' writing and identity formation. During Weeks 1–2, participants received an orientation to the study, provided informed consent, and submitted their initial writing drafts (D1). In Weeks 3–6, participants engaged in structured peer feedback sessions and attended their first supervisor consultation. In the process of writing, structured peer feedback was conducted in a whole-class setting, in which all seventeen participants gathered together to listen as the supervisor provided individual spoken and written feedback to each students' manuscript in turn starting from abstract until conclusion section. This arrangement allowed every participant to observe and learn from the feedback given to their classmates, while the supervisor addressed each student's work one at a time within the shared classroom space; revised drafts (D2) and associated feedback artifacts were

collected. Weeks 7–10 involved multiple revision cycles, during which participants were encouraged to optionally integrate AI-based feedback tools; revised drafts (D3) and semi-structured interviews were conducted at this stage, each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. In Weeks 11–14, participants completed final rounds of feedback integration, submitted reflection journals, and produced their final drafts (D4). Finally, in Week 15, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceived identity trajectories and reflections on their writing development. All drafts and qualitative data were imported into *NVivo* for systematic coding, data management, and cross-case comparison.

Findings

The results were interpreted using many complementary theoretical frameworks that were in line with the study's research aims, in order to place the empirical findings within recognised scholarly traditions. This study uses a theory-informed analytic mapping instead of depending on a single viewpoint, to show how various aspects of the results relate to separate but connected bodies of theory. The alignment between each study topic, its main conclusions, the theoretical frameworks for interpretation, and the important academics who influenced the investigation are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: RQ findings theoretical frameworks

RQ	Findings	Framework	Experts
RQ1	Textual and rhetorical transformation	Genre theory and genre-based pedagogy	Swales, Hyland, Martin & Rose
RQ1 and RQ2	Feedback as mediation	Sociocultural theory	Vygotsky
RQ2	Feedback adoption/ adaptation/ resistance	Feedback literacy	Carless & Boud
RQ3	Identity, voice, authorship	Academic literacies	Lea & Street, Lillis & Scott
RQ3	Shifting writer identity	Authorship/ voice theory	Ivanic, Hyland

The results of all three study questions are supported by related theoretical stances that together account for the complexity of AI-assisted academic writing, as Table 2 illustrates. While sociocultural theory presents feedback as a mediational process influencing writers' revision practices (RQ1–RQ2), genre-based theories explain observable textual and rhetorical modifications (RQ1). Academic literacies and authorship theories shed light on how these processes contribute to changing scholarly voice and identity (RQ3). The criticism literacy framework further explains writers' agentive decisions to accept, modify, or reject criticism (RQ2). The study's integrative contribution to research on academic writing and feedback is strengthened by this theoretical alignment, which shows that writing development in AI-mediated environments is simultaneously textual, social, and identity-driven.

Textual and rhetorical transformation across drafts

Analysis of successive drafts reveals a shift from descriptive exposition to argument-driven academic discourse, reflecting an increasing alignment with the genre conventions of the discipline. Early drafts only partially embody the CARS steps, particularly in establishing a research niche, while later drafts demonstrate a clearer articulation of gaps and a stronger rhetorical stance. This development is accompanied by a more confident authorial voice, marked by the strategic use of position markers and improved cohesion, indicating a growing genre awareness and stronger epistemic confidence than superficial revisions.

Feedback trajectory and rhetorical development

Analysis of the supervisor's feedback during three rounds of revision demonstrates their central role in shaping the text's transformation as provided in Table 3. Initial feedback emphasised a lack of critical engagement, particularly the absence of explicit research gaps, a weak positioning of prior studies, and limited justification of significance. The supervisor's feedback across drafts revealed a clear trajectory aimed at improving students' rhetorical awareness, particularly in moving beyond surface level description toward critical scholarly argumentation. When reviewing one participant's introduction section, the supervisor remarked:

> This still sounds descriptive... try to be critical.... try to show aspects of the relevant body of knowledge which are still lacking if you don't do what you are proposing. (Supervisor feedback, Draft 1, Round 1)

In subsequent rounds, feedback shifted toward refining the argument and strengthening theoretical coherence, indicating that core genre expectations had been internalised and revisions were moving toward higher-level rhetorical refinement.

Table 3: Inferred rhetorical development across draft stages

Aspect	Early drafts (D1)	Later drafts (D2–D4)
Research gap	Implicit or vague	Explicit and well-articulated
Research rationale	Minimally stated	Problematised and theoretically justified
Authorial tone	Predominantly descriptive	Critical and analytical
Genre alignment	Partial realisation of CARS	Clear execution of CARS Moves 2–3
Stance markers	Limited and cautious	Strategically deployed hedges and self-mentions

The rhetorical development shown in Table 3 marks an important shift from textual compliance to more mature discursive participation in academic practices. The transition from implicit to more explicit statements of research gaps reflects the authors' increasing awareness of the expectations of the disciplinary discourse community, particularly in realising Moves 2 and 3 in the CARS model (Swales, 1990). Theoretically, this change can be understood as a process of genre socialisation, in which novice writers gradually internalise rhetorical conventions through social mediation and feedback. Thus, these findings confirm that revision is not mechanical, but rather a process of rhetorical and

identity development mediated by social interaction, feedback, and a deepening understanding of genre.

Textual and rhetorical changes across successive drafts

To further specify the nature of these transformations, Table 4 summarises the key textual and rhetorical changes observed between the initial and revised drafts. This was observed from the drafts by doctoral student P01.

Table 4: Textual and rhetorical changes across successive drafts

Dimension of change	Initial draft (D1)	Revised draft (D2)	Rhetorical/textual function
Overall rhetorical structure	Descriptive exposition of topic importance and prior studies	Argument-driven structure following a problem-gap rationale sequence	Strengthens persuasiveness and establishes scholarly necessity
Research gap articulation	General statement of limited prior studies	Explicit identification of methodological fragmentation and lack of synthesis	Reframes gap from thematic to methodological
Methodological justification	Meta-analysis presented as a procedural choice	Meta-analysis framed as a necessary response to fragmented evidence	Elevates method as an epistemic solution
Conceptual focus	Implicit comparison with multiple reading strategies	GIST positioned as the central focus; other strategies as contextual background	Aligns title, objectives, and analytical scope
Rhetorical positioning of literature	Sequential summary of prior studies	Synthesised literature highlighting inconsistency and unmet needs	Shifts from reporting to critical synthesis
Methodological transparency	Limited procedural detail	Expanded explanation of inclusion criteria, effect size calculation, and model choice	Enhances credibility and replicability
Presentation of findings	Primarily numerical reporting	Analytical framing of effect size magnitude and consistency	Moves from data display to pattern interpretation
Authorial stance	Cautious and implicit	More assertive and evaluative	Signals increased scholarly confidence

Table 4 shows that the revision from D1 to D2 reflects epistemic development and evolving academic identity, rather than merely technical improvements. The shift from a descriptive structure to problem-driven arguments and gaps indicates stronger genre mastery and critical engagement, consistent with the CARS perspective and academic literacy. Increased methodological transparency and a more assertive and evaluative stance further indicate that revision serves as a feedback-mediated process, supporting writers in moving toward disciplinary legitimacy and academic voice. Evidence of textual change across drafts was particularly visible in how students were guided to rearrange research

gaps as proof of rhetorical urgency. Rather than simply naming a gap, participants were directed to emphasise its consequences, as reflected in the supervisor's instruction:

> Try to explore possible negative implications of these gaps before stating the objective of your study... in other words, you need to answer a question of 'what has gone wrong and will persistently go wrong if those gaps remain?' (Supervisor feedback, Draft 1, Round 3)

Drawing on genre-based and academic literacies perspectives, revisions are interpreted not merely as surface-level corrections but as indicators of writers' developing scholarly competence and identity. Textual revisions were not limited to argumentation, they are also in relation with adherence to disciplinary norms and evidence standards. In one example, the supervisor challenged a participant's unverified claim:

> Try to consult a writing style guide, for instance APA 7, about when to use the abbreviation of given names... Do you have any references to back up this statement? How do you know 'many'? (Supervisor feedback, Draft 1, Round 1)

Table 5: Textual and rhetorical changes across drafts

Dimension of change	Initial draft (D1)	Revised draft (D2)	Rhetorical/textual function
Focus and purpose	Topic broadly stated without a clear research focus	Explicit articulation of research focus and scope	Establishes clarity of purpose and aligns text with research-oriented discourse
Thesis statement	Implicit or descriptive, often embedded in background information	Explicit, assertive thesis presented early in the text	Strengthens authorial stance and argumentative orientation
Organisation	Paragraphs loosely connected, limited use of logical progression	Improved coherence with clearer paragraph sequencing and transitions	Enhances readability and rhetorical flow
Use of evidence	Limited citation or reliance on general claims	Increased integration of relevant literature and empirical references	Positions the writer within scholarly conversations
Argument development	Predominantly descriptive with minimal critical engagement	More analytical and evaluative, showing cause–effect and justification	Demonstrates higher-order thinking and disciplinary reasoning
Authorial voice	Cautious and impersonal, heavy reliance on reported speech	More confident authorial presence with selective evaluation	Reflects growing scholarly identity and agency
Lexical and grammatical choices	Informal expressions and repetitive vocabulary	More precise academic lexis and varied sentence structures	Improves academic tone and linguistic sophistication

Furthermore, Table 5 summarises drafts from respondent P02 in which the major dimensions of change observed between D1 and D2, highlights how textual modifications serve specific rhetorical and communicative functions.

The changes in text and rhetoric in Table 5 are significant because they show the development of academic writing as a mediated social practice, not merely a technical improvement. The shift toward more explicit research objectives, stronger thesis statements, and better organisational cohesion indicates increasing mastery of genre conventions and authorial position, in line with academic literacy and sociocultural perspectives. These cross-draft revisions reflect not only an improvement in text quality but also a negotiation of academic identity and increased author autonomy, as authors move from descriptive reporting to confident arguments aligned with their discipline.

Feedback mediation and decision-making

In response to RQ2, findings indicate that different sources of feedback trigger different types of revisions across drafts. Feedback from supervisors primarily drives global, theory-oriented revisions related to argument structure, research gaps, and disciplinary appropriateness, while feedback from peers more influences changes at the local level, such as clarity, coherence, and linguistic accuracy. Authors selectively interacted with peer input, adopting suggestions that aligned with their intentions, highlighting revision as a mediated and non-linear process shaped by multiple feedback agents rather than a single authoritative source.

Across drafts, textual changes followed a progressive trajectory from surface correction to deeper rhetorical refinement. Early drafts were dominated by responses to explicit feedback, particularly corrections related to language accuracy and clarity. However, in later drafts, revisions increasingly reflected writer-initiated changes, such as strengthening warrants, refining theoretical framing, and enhancing coherence across sections. This shift suggests that feedback gradually became internalised, transforming from external guidance into internalised evaluative criteria. Table 6 summarises the relationship between feedback sources, revision focus, and types of textual change observed across drafts.

Table 6: Feedback sources, revision focus, and types of textual change

Feedback source	Primary focus of feedback	Dominant type of textual change
Supervisor	Argumentation, structure, disciplinary norms	Global revisions (reorganisation, stance, claims)
Peers	Clarity, language use, coherence	Local revisions (lexis, grammar, sentence clarity)
Self-reflection	Meaning alignment, voice, consistency	Strategic revisions (selective uptake, synthesis)

The findings in Table 6 show that sources of feedback not only influence what is revised, but also how and at what level textual changes are made, reflecting power relations, social mediation, and author agency in the academic writing process. Feedback from supervisors

mainly focuses on argumentation, structure, and disciplinary norms, which encourages global revisions such as reorganisation of arguments, sharpening of claims, and adjustment of the author's position. Theoretically, this is in line with the sociocultural perspective that views supervisors as expert mediators who facilitate the development of writers in the zone of proximal development, while also representing institutional authority and the expectations of the academic community. In contrast, peer feedback is more directed at clarity, language use, and local coherence, resulting in micro-revisions at the lexical, grammatical, and sentence levels.

To address RQ 2, which explores the types of writing tactics and feedback engagement employed during the revision process, feedback instances were systematically coded across participants and revision rounds. The analysis focused on five analytical dimensions: participant, revision round, feedback focus (e.g., content, argument, language), feedback function (directive or evaluative), feedback tone (neutral or critical), and targeted manuscript section. This multi-dimensional coding allowed for a fine-grained mapping of how feedback was distributed across different stages of writing, and which aspects of academic texts were most frequently targeted. Table 7 summarises representative feedback patterns observed in the dataset, providing an overview of how feedback characteristics varied across participants and revision contexts.

Table 7: Feedback patterns

Participant	Round	Feedback focus	Feedback function	Feedback tone	Target section
Student 1	1	Content	Directive	Neutral	Introduction
Student 2	1	Argument	Evaluative	Critical	Discussion
Student 3	1	Language	Directive	Neutral	Methods
Student 4	3	Content	Directive	Critical	Introduction

As shown in Table 7, feedback in earlier revision rounds tended to focus on content and argumentation, particularly in the Introduction and Discussion sections, reflecting supervisors' emphasis on establishing research positioning and argumentative clarity. Directive feedback with a neutral tone was commonly used to guide structural and content-related revisions, whereas evaluative and more critical feedback appeared when addressing higher-order concerns such as argument quality and interpretation. Language-focused feedback was more dominant in later rounds and was typically delivered in a directive but neutral manner, targeting methodological clarity and formal accuracy.

Furthermore, regarding feedback mediation and decision-making throughout all drafts, defined as evident in moments where the supervisors intervened at the level of linguistic micro-decisions, requiring students to evaluate and revise specific textual choices, in one case, a structural inconsistency in the title was marked:

> Draft is noun, publishable is adjective, not in parallel. (Supervisor feedback, Draft 2, Round 2)

In this step, the feedback, though brief, required the participant to actively engage in decision-making, not merely accepting the correction, but understanding the grammatical principle underlying it before revising their work. This pattern of mediated decision-making extended further into standards guiding academic reporting. The mediating role of supervisor feedback was also apparent in guiding students' decision-making around grammatical standards specific to academic reporting. One participant received the following directive feedback:

> If you're talking about the findings of your research, it is better to use present tense... this should be different from exemplifying the data as part of the findings, there you need to use past tense. (Supervisor feedback, Draft 2, Round 2)

Here, the supervisor's mediation went beyond correction, requiring the student to distinguish between two different rhetorical functions within the same text as a decision that demanded conscious authorial judgment rather than mechanical rule application. Feedback-mediated decision-making was not limited to linguistic choices alone, it also goes deeper into the epistemological choices, prompting them to critically interrogate the rationale behind the methodological selections:

> Why should it be this application? Are there any competitors? Have you critically reviewed the competitors so that you can show that this application is better than the others in the context of your research? (Supervisor feedback, Draft 1, Round 1)

Overall, the distribution of feedback across rounds and manuscript sections indicates a progression from global rhetorical concerns to more localised linguistic refinement, highlighting the staged nature of feedback enactment in the academic writing process

Negotiating scholarly voice and identity

Findings indicate a gradual transformation in graduate students' academic writing from standards-oriented practices toward increased authorial autonomy and academic identity. Through successive drafts, writing shifts from descriptive reporting to critical argumentation aligned with theory, driven primarily by supervisor feedback at the conceptual and rhetorical levels. The negotiation of scholarly voice was perhaps most visible in feedback that directed students to restructure their sentences so that their own argument, instead of received knowledge, dominated the rhetorical foreground. As the supervisor advised one participant:

> It is better to reframe this as an adverbial clause, for example: 'As writing is not merely about the product but also the process ,...', the main clause that follows should carry the core argument. (Supervisor feedback, Draft 2, Round 2)

This suggestion depicts how the construction of scholarly voice operates at the level of syntax itself, where the placement of an argument within a sentence signals the writer's epistemic confidence and disciplinary positioning. Yet the negotiation of identity was not limited to sentence structure alone, It also appeared in small choices of words that still carried meaning. Scholarly identity was also negotiated at the level of word choice, where

even a single term carried implications for how the writer positioned their work within the academic community. When one participant used the word *publishable* in their title, the supervisor gently restated:

> Good.... but recheck the use of the word 'publishable' in the title... how about 'publication'? (Supervisor feedback, Draft 2, Round 2)

Here, minor lexical substitution proposed carries consideration in terms of scholarly self-presentation. Where *publishable* frames the manuscript as still subject to external validation, *publication* asserts a more confident authorial stance, in which the writer claims legitimacy within the disciplinary discourse. In this process, even a single word becomes a identity negotiation, shaped through mediation from supervisory feedback.

Furthermore, from this proof, students seemingly always negotiate their academic voice by adapting to academic conventions, responding selectively to feedback including suggestions generated by artificial intelligence and developing methodological awareness. As revisions progress and feedback becomes more supportive, writers' confidence increases, signalling growing academic independence and fuller participation in the disciplinary community.

Discussion

The findings indicate academic writing as a transformative process rather than a linear path to correctness. Consistent with sociocultural theory, feedback acted as both mediation and constraint, scaffolding students' movement within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, agency remained central: writers selectively enacted feedback based on identity considerations.

In relation with research question 1 about textual and rhetorical transformation in academic revision, in which findings related to the shift from descriptive exposition to argumentative academic discourse indicate that the development of graduate students' writing is primarily mediated by mastery of disciplinary genres. This is in line with genre theory, which views academic writing as a structured and goal-oriented social practice (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2019). The consistent realisation of Move 2 and Move 3 in the CARS model in the subsequent draft indicates that students not only imitate textual structures but also begin to understand the rhetorical function of genre as a means of establishing scientific legitimacy.

From the perspective of genre-based pedagogy, these findings support the argument that genre awareness develops through repeated exposure to revision practices and explicit feedback, rather than through isolated language teaching (Martin & Rose, 2008). Thus, the textual transformation observed cannot be reduced to language polishing, but rather as an indicator of increased sensitivity to disciplinary discourse expectations. These findings confirm the literature emphasising that rhetorical control is a key characteristic of mature academic writers (Hyland, 2019).

RQ 2 explores feedback as mediation and revision decision-making, revealing findings regarding patterns of adoption, adaptation, and resistance to feedback. This reinforces the sociocultural theory framework, which views writing learning as the result of social mediation through interaction with more experienced parties (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). The shift in supervisors' feedback focus from structural issues to argumentative refinement indicates a progressive process of internalising academic norms. In line with literature emphasising the importance of feedback as a form of social mediation in cognitive and academic development, the results of our study indicate that supervisor feedback functions as the main mediation mechanism in student rhetorical transformation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). These findings support the claim that feedback not only corrects textual products but also shapes the way writers think and position themselves within the scientific discourse community.

Furthermore, patterns of adoption, adaptation, and resistance to feedback confirm the relevance of the feedback literacy framework (Carless & Boud, 2018; Winstone & Carless, 2019) in the context of AI-assisted academic writing. Students do not act as passive recipients of feedback, but rather as agents who actively evaluate the credibility, relevance, and identity implications of each input. These findings expand the application of the feedback literacy framework in the context of AI-assisted writing. In line with Carless and Boud (2018), students act as agents who actively evaluate the credibility and relevance of feedback. Resistance to AI suggestions that are perceived as threatening text ownership confirms that feedback literacy encompasses dimensions of identity and affection, not just technical competence. This supports Winstone and Carless' (2019) finding that decision-making regarding feedback is a complex and contextual reflective practice.

The next finding, based on the academic literacies perspective and RQ 3 answers about the negotiation of scholarly voice, emerged as identity work. Writers' transition from compliance to ownership underscores that writing instruction must attend not only to textual outcomes but also to affective and epistemic growth. The presence of AI in the feedback ecology reconfigures traditional power dynamics, decentralising the supervisor's role while introducing new forms of authorship anxiety.

From the perspective of academic literacies, findings related to the negotiation of voice and writing identity show that academic writing is an arena for identity formation that is fraught with power relations and institutional legitimacy (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007). Identity strategies such as assimilation, hybridisation, and assertiveness reflect students' efforts to navigate the demands of academic conventions while maintaining personal meaning in the text. This reinforces the views of Ivanič (1998) and Hyland (2019) that voice is not a static individual attribute, but rather the result of continuous social negotiation in writing practice.

In addition, findings regarding the shift in identity towards academic independence indicate that the development of voice is inseparable from methodological and rhetorical mastery. Feedback that demands methodological justification and theoretical coherence forces students to adopt an identity as epistemically responsible researchers. This is in line with literature which emphasises that academic legitimacy is built through the ability to

consistently link methods, theories, and knowledge claims (Coffin et al., 2003; Hyland, 2019).

Pedagogically, our study advocates process-sensitive supervision that values revision histories, encourages reflective dialogue, and integrates AI ethically as a supplementary, not substitutive, feedback source. Theoretically, it contributes to an integrated understanding of academic writing as the interplay between textual transformation, feedback mediation, and identity negotiation. The findings of this study reinforce the view in contemporary academic writing studies that the development of postgraduate writing cannot be understood solely as an improvement in language skills, but rather as an intertwined social, rhetorical, and identity process. The shift from descriptive exposition to argumentative academic discourse as observed in the successive drafts supports the main assumptions of genre theory and genre-based pedagogy, which view academic writing as a social practice structured by disciplinary conventions (Hyland, 2019; Martin & Rose, 2008; Swales, 1990). The consistency of the execution of Move 2 and Move 3 in the CARS model in the final draft shows that graduate students gradually internalise genre expectations as a tool for constructing scientific positions, not merely following textual formats.

Conclusion

Overall, this study bridges textual and sociocultural views of writing by empirically tracing the "visible journey" from draft to publication. It shows that feedback is not merely corrective but transformative for mediating both linguistic mastery and scholarly selfhood. It is affirmed that academic writing in an AI-mediated environment is a multidimensional process that encompasses textual transformation, social mediation through feedback, and the formation of author identity. By integrating genre theory, sociocultural theory, feedback literacy, and academic literacies, our study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how graduate students develop into agentive academic writers. These findings also challenge reductionist approaches to AI in academic writing, demonstrating that technology does not replace the learning process, but rather complicates and enriches the dynamics of rhetorical and identity negotiation.

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