
Mediating Academic Writing in The Age of Generative AI: EFL Lecturers' and Students' Perspectives on Proposal Writing Accuracy

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ABSTRACT

This study explores lecturer mediation in undergraduate academic writing within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) higher education context. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected from lecturers' written feedback on students' research proposals, semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students, and a focus group discussion (FGD). The study addresses four research questions examining the forms of lecturer mediation, its contribution to students' academic writing quality, and how such mediation is perceived and positioned by both students and lecturers. The findings reveal that lecturer mediation primarily focuses on higher-order academic concerns, including research focus, argumentation, and methodological coherence, rather than surface-level language correction. Lecturer feedback plays a central role in improving students' academic writing accuracy and guiding their academic reasoning. Both students and lecturers consistently position lecturer mediation as the most authoritative form of academic writing support, particularly for validating research direction and methodological soundness. Importantly, the study also demonstrates that lecturer mediation can be pedagogically integrated with the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing instruction. While students tend to use generative AI tools for linguistic support, such as grammar checking and paraphrasing, lecturer mediation remains essential for epistemic guidance, critical evaluation, and academic judgment. This integration highlights the continued relevance of lecturer mediation in ensuring that academic writing remains a meaningful learning process in EFL contexts. The study contributes to current discussions on academic writing pedagogy by proposing a mediated approach to the responsible use of generative AI in higher education.

KEYWORDS

Academic Writing, EFL, Lecturer Mediation, generative AI, Proposal Writing

ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengeksplorasi mediasi dosen dalam penulisan akademik mahasiswa S1 dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL). Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan

KATA KUNCI

Penulisan Akademik, Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL),

dari umpan balik tertulis dosen terhadap proposal penelitian mahasiswa, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan dosen dan mahasiswa, dan diskusi kelompok fokus (FGD). Studi ini membahas empat pertanyaan penelitian yang meneliti bentuk-bentuk mediasi dosen, kontribusinya terhadap kualitas penulisan akademik mahasiswa, dan bagaimana mediasi tersebut dipahami dan diposisikan oleh mahasiswa dan dosen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mediasi dosen terutama berfokus pada masalah akademik tingkat tinggi, termasuk fokus penelitian, argumentasi, dan koherensi metodologis, daripada koreksi bahasa tingkat permukaan. Umpan balik dosen memainkan peran sentral dalam meningkatkan akurasi penulisan akademik mahasiswa dan membimbing penalaran akademik mereka. Baik mahasiswa maupun dosen secara konsisten memposisikan mediasi dosen sebagai bentuk dukungan penulisan akademik yang paling berwibawa, khususnya untuk memvalidasi arah penelitian dan kebenaran metodologis. Yang penting, studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa mediasi dosen dapat diintegrasikan secara pedagogis dengan penggunaan kecerdasan buatan (AI) generatif dalam pengajaran penulisan akademik. Meskipun mahasiswa cenderung menggunakan alat AI generatif untuk dukungan linguistik, seperti pengecekan tata bahasa dan parafrase, mediasi dosen tetap penting untuk bimbingan epistemik, evaluasi kritis, dan penilaian akademis. Integrasi ini menyoroti relevansi berkelanjutan dari mediasi dosen dalam memastikan bahwa penulisan akademis tetap menjadi proses pembelajaran yang bermakna dalam konteks EFL. Studi ini berkontribusi pada diskusi terkini tentang pedagogi penulisan akademis dengan mengusulkan pendekatan mediasi terhadap penggunaan AI generatif yang bertanggung jawab di pendidikan tinggi.

Mediasi
Generatif,
Proposal

Dosen,
Penulisan

AI
Penulisan

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INTRODUCTION

Research proposal writing is among the most demanding academic tasks for undergraduate EFL students, requiring linguistic accuracy, genre awareness, critical argumentation, and adherence to academic conventions (Harjanto, 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). These challenges make lecturer guidance indispensable. Drawing on sociocultural theory, lecturer feedback constitutes pedagogical mediation—assistance from a more knowledgeable other that scaffolds learners’ cognitive development within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)—realized through written comments, oral explanations, and revision guidance that help students internalize disciplinary norms (Kohnke et al., 2023; Lee, 2017). Empirical research confirms that such mediation enhances writing accuracy, genre awareness, and metacognitive skills (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012), with students’ perceptions and engagement being central to its effectiveness.

Alongside lecturer mediation, writing instruction has been further transformed by generative AI (Gen-AI), which supports EFL students’ linguistic accuracy and drafting efficiency within the ZPD (Baidoo-anu & Ansah, 2023; Yan, 2023), yet raises concerns about overreliance, academic integrity, and writing autonomy (Darvin, 2025). Theorizing Gen-AI within this framework requires extending Vygotsky’s account of mediation to encompass

digital tools and artifacts (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). While both lecturer mediation and Gen-AI operate as scaffolding resources, they differ fundamentally: lecturer mediation is purposeful, dialogic, and adaptive, fostering critical reflection and the gradual internalization of disciplinary conventions, whereas Gen-AI mediation is reactive and context-independent, reducing cognitive load without inherently prompting metacognitive awareness or disciplinary engagement. The two are thus complementary rather than equivalent—lecturer mediation supplies the interpretive scaffolding Gen-AI cannot replicate, while Gen-AI frees cognitive resources for higher-order tasks.

Despite growing research on both lecturer feedback and Gen-AI-assisted writing (Alghasab, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024), no previous study has examined how these two forms of mediation interact within a single EFL proposal writing context. Prior studies treat them in isolation, leaving unaddressed how lecturers mediate writing when students actively use Gen-AI, how students perceive their complementary roles, and how this interaction shapes writing accuracy and academic awareness. This gap carries both empirical and theoretical significance: empirically, it leaves educators without evidence-based guidance for responsible Gen-AI integration; theoretically, existing ZPD accounts predate large-scale AI tools and do not address contexts in which learners are simultaneously scaffolded by human and technological agents within the same developmental space. The present study addresses this gap by extending ZPD theory to multiply-mediated writing environments, offering a novel account of how human and technological mediation interact—not merely complement—in shaping academic writing development. Drawing on evidence about lecturers' mediational strategies (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012) the role of student perceptions (Carless et al., 2011; Lee, 2017), and Gen-AI's affordances and risks (Darvin, 2025; Yan, 2023), the study investigates: (1) What mediation strategies do EFL lecturers employ in guiding students' research proposal writing? (2) How does lecturer mediation contribute to students' writing accuracy? (3) How do students perceive lecturer mediation during the proposal writing process? and (4) How can lecturer mediation be pedagogically integrated with the use of generative AI in academic writing instruction?

METHOD

To address these research questions, a qualitative descriptive methodology was adopted, as the study aimed to explore processes, experiences, and meanings rather than to test hypotheses or measure causal relationships. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives. The participants consisted of two EFL lecturers (D1, D2) who had more than five years of experience supervising undergraduate research proposals and teaching academic writing courses. Further, three undergraduate students (M1–M3) were at different stages of proposal writing, including pre-seminar, revision stage, and post-seminar proposal. To maintain ethical standards, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and pseudonyms or participant codes were used to ensure anonymity. Additionally, a focus group discussion (FGD) involving student participants was conducted to capture collective perspectives and shared experiences related to lecturer mediation and AI-assisted writing. To collect the data, the first research question was addressed through semi-structured interviews with lecturers, which enabled an in-depth exploration of pedagogical

strategies, feedback practices, and mediation techniques used during proposal supervision. These data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns of lecturer mediation. The second research question was examined by analyzing students' accounts of revision practices and perceived improvements in writing accuracy, triangulated with lecturers' reflections on students' development. Thematic analysis allowed the study to capture how mediation influenced students' awareness of structure, coherence, and linguistic accuracy. The third research question was explored using individual student interviews and a focus group discussion (FGD). This combination facilitated both personal reflections and collective perspectives on lecturer mediation, providing a richer understanding of students' experiences, challenges, and expectations. Lastly, fourth research question was addressed by examining participants' narratives regarding their use of generative AI tools. Interview and FGD data were analyzed to understand how AI was positioned as a complementary tool within the mediated academic writing process rather than as a replacement for lecturer guidance.

The study was conducted in an English Education undergraduate program at a private university in Indonesia, where English is used as a foreign language (EFL). The context was selected because proposal writing constitutes a critical academic milestone for students and involves intensive lecturer guidance. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: 1) *familiarization with the data*—all transcripts were read repeatedly to gain an overall understanding of the data; 2) *generating initial codes*—meaningful units related to lecturer mediation, writing accuracy, and AI use were coded systematically; 3) *searching for themes*—related codes were grouped into preliminary themes; 4) *Reviewing themes*—themes were refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the research questions; 5) *defining and naming themes*—Each theme was clearly defined and aligned with the study's conceptual framework; and 6) *producing the report*—themes were interpreted and supported by representative participant quotations. All quotations presented in the findings are labeled using participant codes (e.g., M1, D2, FGD-M) to maintain transparency and traceability of data sources.

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the qualitative findings, several trustworthiness strategies were employed: 1) *Credibility*—Achieved through prolonged engagement with the data and member checking, where participants were invited to confirm the accuracy of interview interpretations; 2) *Dependability*—Ensured by maintaining a clear audit trail documenting data collection and analysis procedures; 3) *Confirmability*—Supported through reflexive analysis and the use of verbatim quotations to ground interpretations in participants' voices; and 4) *Transferability*—Enhanced by providing detailed contextual descriptions, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar EFL contexts. To add, ethical approval was obtained before data collection. Participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Data were stored securely, and all identifying information was removed from the transcripts to protect participants' confidentiality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: What mediation strategies do EFL lecturers employ in guiding students' research proposal writing?

This subsection addresses RQ1 by examining the forms and characteristics of lecturer mediation as reflected in written feedback on students' research proposals. By presenting a cross-case analysis of lecturer mediation reflected in written feedback on three undergraduate research proposals (M1, M2, and M3). Although the proposals address different research topics and exhibit varying levels of academic readiness, the lecturer's feedback demonstrates consistent pedagogical patterns. These patterns indicate that lecturer mediation operates as a systematic academic practice aimed at developing students' genre awareness, writing accuracy, conceptual clarity, and methodological rigor. This document-based analysis triangulates interview and FGD data and provides empirical support for the broader findings discussed in the Discussion, particularly regarding lecturer mediation as pedagogical scaffolding in academic writing.

Theme1: Genre-Oriented Mediation and Structural Scaffolding

Across the three proposals, lecturer feedback consistently targeted the structural organization of the research proposal. Students initially tended to produce lengthy and descriptive background sections with limited argumentative focus. The lecturer's mediation guided students to narrow the research focus, reduce redundancy, and establish clearer logical links between the research background, problem statements, and research objectives. This form of genre-oriented mediation indicates that lecturers function as scaffolding agents who make implicit academic conventions explicit for novice researchers.

Theme2: Conceptual Mediation in Research Problem Formulation

A recurring issue across proposals M1–M3 was the formulation of research problems that were initially broad and insufficiently operationalized. The lecturer's feedback consistently guided students to refine their research questions, align them more closely with research objectives, and ensure their feasibility within the chosen research design. This form of mediation reflects the lecturer's role as an academic mentor who scaffolds students' research thinking. In the interview, a lecturer stated that *"The students usually know the topic, but they struggle to explain how the research will actually be conducted"* (D2, interview). Correspondingly, students acknowledged that methodological feedback was *"The most difficult but also the most helpful"* part of the revision process (FGD-M, student). The document analysis thus substantiates interview findings by showing how conceptual and methodological mediation is enacted in practice.

Theme3: Methodological Mediation and Quality Assurance

Methodological feedback emerged as one of the most intensive forms of mediation across the three proposals (M1–M3). Lecturers provided detailed guidance on aligning research design, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures with stated research objectives. Feedback also emphasized the clarity and operationalization of research procedures to ensure methodological coherence and rigor, particularly in sections describing research stages and instruments. This pattern is consistent with lecturers' accounts during interviews, in which they highlighted students' recurring difficulties in articulating methodological reasoning. One lecturer explained that *"The students usually mention a research method, but they cannot clearly explain how the data will be collected and analyzed in relation to their research"*

questions” (D2, interview). As a result, methodological feedback was often directed at prompting students to rethink the logical relationship between objectives, procedures, and expected outcomes. FGD data further reinforce this finding. The students collectively acknowledged that the methodology section was the most challenging part of proposal writing and required substantial lecturer guidance. As one participant stated, “*We often know which method we want to use, but explaining the steps systematically and in academic English is very difficult without the lecturer’s feedback*” (FGD-M). This shared perception indicates that lecturer mediation played a critical role in helping students translate methodological intentions into academically acceptable and operational research procedures. The document analysis, interview data, and FGD findings demonstrate that methodological mediation functions as a form of academic quality assurance. Lecturers did not merely correct technical inaccuracies but actively scaffold students’ methodological reasoning, ensuring that undergraduate research proposals meet minimum standards of academic rigor.

RQ2: How does lecturer mediation contribute to students’ writing accuracy?

Theme1: Linguistic Mediation and the Development of Academic Accuracy

Lecturer mediation also addressed linguistic aspects of the proposals, including sentence clarity, academic word choice, and consistency of terminology (see Figure 1 on the blue words). Importantly, feedback was not limited to surface-level correction. Instead, lecturers encouraged reflective revision by prompting students to reconsider how meaning was expressed in academically appropriate language, rather than merely replacing incorrect forms. This pattern is evident in proposals M1 and M2, where repeated feedback cycles resulted in clearer sentence construction and more precise academic diction. Interview data confirm that students perceived this form of mediation as particularly helpful in raising their awareness of recurring language problems. One student explained that “*after the lecturer pointed out similar mistakes several times, I started to notice them myself before submitting the draft*” (M1, interview). This indicates that lecturer feedback functioned as a mediational tool that fostered students’ metalinguistic awareness rather than short-term textual correction. FGD data further support this finding. During group discussions, students acknowledged that linguistic feedback helped them distinguish between everyday English and academic writing conventions. As one participant noted, “*sometimes our sentences are grammatically correct, but the lecturer explains that they are not academic enough, and that really changes how we revise our writing*” (FGD-M). This collective reflection suggests that linguistic mediation played a key role in shaping students’ understanding of academic discourse norms.

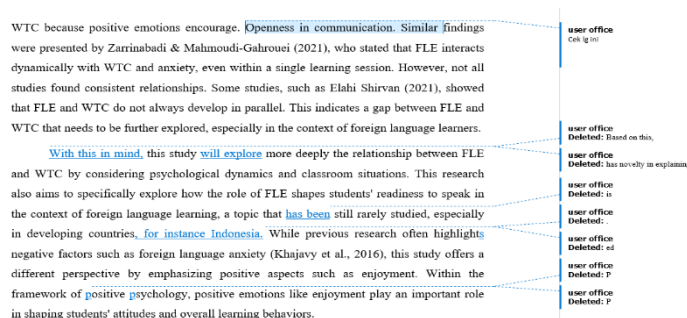


Figure 1. Linguistics mediation

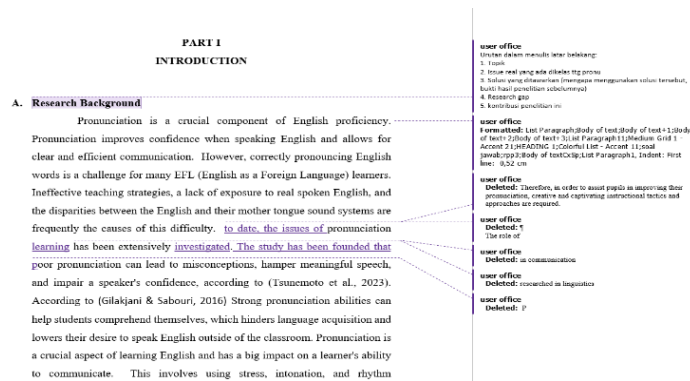


Figure 2. Organisation mediation

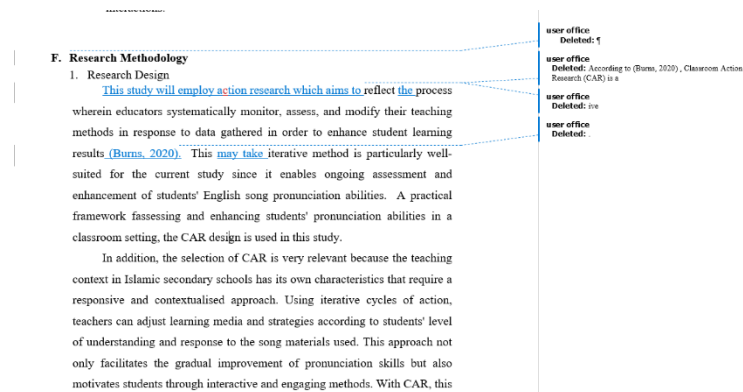


Figure 3. Organisation mediation

Theme2: Cross-Case Synthesis and Link to Discussion

The cross-case analysis of proposals M1–M3 demonstrated that the lecturer mediation is not incidental but systematic and multi-layered. Similar patterns of feedback across the three proposals indicate that mediation consistently addressed structural organization, conceptual clarity, linguistic accuracy, and methodological rigor (see Figures 2 and 3). This consistency suggests that lecturer mediation is embedded in lecturers’ pedagogical practices rather than being contingent on individual student performance or topic variation. This interpretation is supported by interview data in which the lecturers explicitly described mediation as a routine and intentional part of supervising proposal writing. One lecturer noted that *“The main issues are actually similar across students; what differs is only the level of detail needed in guiding them”* (D1, interview). This statement reinforces the document analysis by confirming that lecturers anticipate recurring academic writing difficulties and respond to them through systematic feedback practices. FGD data further corroborate this cross-case consistency from the students’ perspective. During group discussions, students acknowledged that although they worked on different proposal topics, the types of feedback they received were largely similar, particularly regarding research focus, methodological clarity, and academic language use. As one participant explained, *“Even though our topics were different, the lecturer’s comments were mostly about the same things—clarifying the problem, improving the method, and*

making the writing more academic” (FGD-M). This shared perception indicates that lecturer mediation functions as a common instructional framework rather than individualized ad hoc correction.

These converging data sources—reviewed proposals, lecturer interviews, and FGD findings—demonstrate that lecturer mediation operates as a structured pedagogical mechanism supporting students’ academic writing development. The consistency of mediation practices across cases strengthens the credibility of the findings and highlights the role of lecturer feedback as a central form of scaffolding in undergraduate research writing. These findings directly inform the discussion in Discussion, where lecturer mediation is conceptualized as a key mechanism in supporting academic writing development and critically positioned in relation to other forms of assistance, including technological tools such as generative AI. By providing concrete, cross-case evidence of mediated learning in practice, this section bridges the empirical findings and their theoretical interpretation in the Discussion chapter.

RQ3: How do students perceive lecturer mediation during the proposal writing process?

The focus here is on *reported experiences and perceptions*, while theoretical interpretation is reserved for the Discussion section. Interview and FGD data indicated that lecturer mediation is perceived as the primary and most authoritative form of support in proposal writing, particularly for higher-order academic concerns such as research focus, argumentation, and methodological reasoning. Students consistently reported that while various resources were available to assist their writing, lecturer feedback remained central to their revision process. One student emphasized that *“other tools can help with language, but only the lecturer can explain whether our research idea and method make sense”* (M2, interview). This perception highlights a clear distinction made by students between technical assistance and academic judgment.

Lecturers similarly positioned their mediation as essential for guiding students’ academic thinking rather than merely correcting texts. As one lecturer explained, *“My role is not just to fix their writing, but to help them understand how to think academically when designing research”* (D1, interview). This statement reflects lecturers’ self-positioning as academic mentors who support students’ intellectual development. FGD data further reinforce this positioning. Students collectively acknowledged that lecturer mediation provided a form of academic assurance that could not be substituted by peer feedback or technological tools. One participant stated, *“We may check grammar using applications, but we still rely on the lecturer to confirm whether our proposal is academically acceptable”* (FGD-M). This shared view indicates that lecturer mediation is perceived as legitimizing students’ academic work. Importantly, students did not reject the use of other forms of support, such as digital tools or peer discussion. However, these resources were consistently positioned as supplementary, particularly for surface-level language issues. Lecturer mediation, by contrast, was positioned as indispensable for validating research direction, methodological soundness, and academic conventions. Further, these findings also demonstrated that lecturer mediation occupies a central position in students’ academic writing practices, functioning as the primary reference point for academic decision-making. This explicit positioning provides an empirical basis for

the interpretation of lecturer mediation in relation to other forms of support, which is further elaborated in the Discussion.

RQ4: How can lecturer mediation be pedagogically integrated with the use of generative AI in academic writing instruction?

Theme1: Generative AI as Linguistic Support and Lecturer Mediation as Epistemic Guidance

Empirical data indicate that students predominantly used generative AI to address surface-level linguistic issues such as grammar, sentence structure, and lexical choice. One student explained that *“AI helps me check grammar and rephrase sentences, especially when I am not confident with my English”* (M1, interview). Similar views were echoed during the FGD, where students collectively agreed that AI tools were useful for improving fluency but insufficient for academic decision-making. At the same time, students clearly distinguished this linguistic support from the epistemic role played by lecturers. As one participant stated, *“even if AI can improve the language, only the lecturer can tell us whether our argument and method are correct”* (M2, interview). This distinction positions lecturer mediation as essential for validating research focus and methodological coherence. Lecturers themselves reinforced this positioning. One lecturer noted that *“AI may help students write more smoothly, but it cannot replace guidance in academic reasoning and research design”* (D1, interview). These empirical accounts support a pedagogical integration in which generative AI is framed as a **supporting linguistic tool**, while lecturer mediation functions as **epistemic guidance**.

Theme2: Guided and Critical Use of Generative AI through Lecturer Mediation

The findings further show that lecturer mediation is crucial in shaping how students critically engage with AI-generated output. Without guidance, students tended to accept AI suggestions uncritically, particularly when dealing with complex academic expressions. During the FGD, one student admitted that *“sometimes we just accept what AI gives because it sounds academic, even though we are not fully sure”* (FGD-M). Lecturer mediation intervenes in this process by prompting students to justify and reflect on their revisions. One lecturer described their role as *“asking students why they choose certain sentences or methods, not just whether the English is correct”* (D2, interview). This form of mediation encourages students to evaluate AI-generated text in relation to academic purpose and disciplinary conventions. Students also recognized this regulatory role. As one participant explained, *“after getting lecturer feedback, I became more careful in using AI and checking whether it really fits my research”* (M3, interview). These data suggest that effective pedagogical integration requires lecturers to explicitly guide students’ AI use, fostering critical awareness rather than dependency.

Theme3: A Mediated Pedagogical Model for EAP Academic Writing Instruction

Drawing on the empirical findings, a mediated pedagogical model can be proposed for EAP-oriented academic writing instruction. This model reflects participants’ shared understanding

that AI should function as a supplementary resource under lecturer supervision. Students repeatedly emphasized that AI was helpful but incomplete. As one student noted, *“AI can help with wording, but we still need lecturer feedback to make sure our proposal is acceptable academically”* (FGD-M). Lecturers similarly emphasized the importance of maintaining academic responsibility. One lecturer stated that *“students must understand that AI is only a tool; academic responsibility remains with them and must be guided by the lecturer”* (D1, interview). This perspective underpins a model in which lecturer mediation structures students’ engagement with AI throughout the writing process. Within this mediated model, lecturers guide students in determining appropriate uses of AI, aligning AI-assisted revisions with research objectives, and reflecting on academic conventions. Such practices resonate with EAP pedagogy, which prioritizes the development of academic literacy over mechanical correctness.

Theme4: Implications for Academic Writing Pedagogy in EFL Contexts

Empirical data further suggest that integrating lecturer mediation with generative AI offers pedagogical advantages in EFL contexts. Students reported that AI tools reduced linguistic barriers, allowing them to focus more on content development. One student reflected that *“because AI helps with language, I can focus more on explaining my ideas to the lecturer”* (M2, interview). However, this benefit is contingent upon sustained lecturer mediation. As emphasized by lecturers, academic writing remains a learning process that requires human judgment. One lecturer cautioned that *“without guidance, students may rely too much on AI and stop thinking critically”* (D2, interview). Taken together, these data demonstrate that the pedagogical integration of generative AI should be embedded within lecturer-mediated instruction. Addressing **RQ4**, the study shows that generative AI can enhance academic writing pedagogy when its use is carefully guided, critically framed, and aligned with broader educational goals.

DISCUSSION

Lecturer Mediation as Pedagogical Scaffolding

Lecturer mediation functions as scaffolding supporting academic writing development, guiding students to understand the rationale for revisions rather than merely correcting errors. This aligns with sociocultural theory emphasizing mediation's role in learning (Lee, 2017; Poehner, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). The process-oriented nature of such mediation resonates with genre-based approaches to academic writing instruction, where explicit teaching of disciplinary conventions is essential (Widodo, 2006; Yeh, 2014). Repeated mediation cycles enhanced written output and awareness of academic reasoning and genre conventions, playing dual roles: improving text quality and fostering cognitive development. This finding extends Wu et al.'s (2023) work on longitudinal writing development by demonstrating how sustained lecturer mediation creates opportunities for iterative learning in proposal writing contexts.

Writing Accuracy and Metacognitive Development

Mediation contributed to writing accuracy, encompassing organization, coherence, and appropriate language use. Students developed metacognitive awareness, becoming capable of identifying weaknesses before submission. This supports arguments that effective feedback promotes self-monitoring and regulation (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). The development of such metacognitive strategies is particularly crucial in academic writing contexts where students must navigate complex genre expectations (Yeh, 2014, 2014). In EFL contexts, mediation shifted focus from isolated errors to holistic academic quality, addressing concerns raised by Bacha (2002) and Wen et al. (2025) about surface-level versus content-level writing improvement. This holistic approach aligns with contemporary writing pedagogy that emphasizes meaning-making over mechanical correctness (Iskander et al., 2018).

Students' Perceptions and the Multidimensional Nature of Mediation

Students viewed mediation as supportive when clear, specific, and explained (Carless et al., 2011; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, some reported feeling overwhelmed by extensive feedback, highlighting the challenge of balancing guidance with autonomy—a tension also observed in Wu et al.'s (Wu et al., 2023) study on peer feedback in medical education. From multicultural and EFL perspectives, varied responses reflect differences in prior experiences, preferences, and expectations regarding teacher authority and learner roles (Bacha, 2002). These cultural dimensions of feedback reception underscore the importance of contextually sensitive pedagogy in international educational settings. Effective mediation requires lecturer sensitivity and flexibility to accommodate diverse learning orientations (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Wen et al., 2025), particularly in contexts where students may hold traditional expectations of direct instruction while being encouraged toward greater learner autonomy.

Generative AI as a Complementary Writing Tool

Students used Gen-AI primarily for linguistic accuracy and efficiency, reducing surface errors and improving fluency (Nguyen et al., 2024; Yan, 2023). These findings align with Gayed et al.'s (Gayed et al., 2022) research on AI-based writing assistants supporting English language learners. However, students emphasized that Gen-AI cannot replace lecturer guidance for content, argumentation, and methodology, reinforcing concerns about AI's pedagogical limitations in developing higher-order thinking skills (Alsalem, 2024; Darvin, 2025). Gen-AI becomes meaningful only within mediated learning environments where lecturers help students interpret AI suggestions critically. This perspective challenges purely instrumental views of technology in education and instead positions AI as one element within a broader pedagogical ecosystem (Alghasab, 2025). The distinction students made between linguistic and epistemic support resonates with debates about the boundaries of automated feedback in academic writing instruction.

Integrating Lecturer Mediation and Gen-AI: A Sociocultural Perspective

Both lecturer mediation and Gen-AI are mediational means, but their roles differ fundamentally. Gen-AI provides automated linguistic support while lecturer mediation facilitates conceptual understanding, ethical awareness, and academic socialization (Poehner,

2008; Vygotsky, 1978). This distinction reflects broader theoretical debates about tool-mediated learning in digital environments. Rather than disruption, AI can be integrated productively under pedagogical guidance, supporting what Nguyen et al. (2024) term "human-AI collaboration patterns" in academic writing. This extends prior work by showing that effective AI use depends on lecturer guidance (Alghasab, 2025; Alsalem, 2024). Without mediation, AI-assisted writing risks bypassing learning; with mediation, AI supports engagement while preserving integrity. The integration model proposed here resonates with calls for critical digital literacies in L2 writing (Darvin, 2025) and represents a pedagogically principled response to technological change in higher education.

Implications for EAP Pedagogy

Lecturer mediation should remain central in academic writing pedagogy, particularly for complex genres such as research proposals (Lee, 2017; Widodo, 2006). Feedback practices should prioritize dialogic engagement and metacognitive development over error correction, aligning with contemporary understanding of feedback as formative dialogue rather than one-way transmission (Carless et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2023). Gen-AI should be integrated as a complementary tool with explicit guidance on ethical and critical use, addressing concerns raised by scholars about academic integrity and authentic learning (Alsalem, 2024; Darvin, 2025). Lecturers help students understand AI limitations and encourage reflective engagement, functioning as mediators of both human and technological resources. EAP programs should provide professional development on mediated feedback and AI literacy, preparing instructors to navigate evolving technological landscapes while maintaining pedagogical priorities (Gayed et al., 2022). This professional development becomes increasingly crucial as institutions grapple with policy decisions regarding AI use in academic contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined lecturer mediation in undergraduate academic writing within an EFL higher education context through four research questions. Addressing **RQ1**, the findings revealed that lecturer mediation was primarily realized through written feedback focusing on higher-order academic concerns, including research focus, argumentation, and methodological coherence. These forms of mediation extended beyond linguistic correction and functioned as scaffolding for students' academic thinking. In response to **RQ2**, the study demonstrated that lecturer mediation played a crucial role in improving students' academic writing quality and accuracy. Lecturer feedback supported students in aligning research objectives, methods, and analytical procedures, while also fostering awareness of academic conventions. The findings indicate that such mediation is particularly important for EFL students, who often struggle to articulate complex academic reasoning in English. Addressing **RQ3**, the study found that both students and lecturers consistently positioned lecturer mediation as the most authoritative and indispensable form of academic writing support. While students utilized additional resources such as peer discussion and digital tools, lecturer mediation was perceived as the primary source of academic validation and decision-making. This positioning underscores the continued centrality of lecturers as academic mentors in the writing process.

Finally, addressing **RQ4**, the study showed that lecturer mediation can be pedagogically integrated with the use of generative AI by positioning AI as a supplementary linguistic tool rather than a substitute for academic guidance. Empirical data suggest that students primarily used generative AI to support surface-level language issues, while lecturer mediation remained essential for epistemic guidance, critical evaluation, and academic judgment. Effective integration, therefore, requires sustained lecturer mediation to guide students' critical and ethical use of AI in academic writing.

Overall, this study highlights the enduring importance of lecturer mediation in academic writing instruction, even in the presence of emerging writing technologies. By integrating generative AI within a lecturer-mediated pedagogical framework, academic writing instruction can support both linguistic development and deeper academic literacy in EFL contexts. Future research may further explore how such mediated integration models can be implemented across disciplines and educational settings.

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