



Students' L2 Writing Motivation and Self-Efficacy: A Case of Quality-Oriented Writing for Publication

Mutiara H. Saputri

Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia
mutiarahanifsaputri@student.uns.ac.id

Qurrotul Aini S

Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia
qurrotulainis@student.uns.ac.id

Zelvy Fauzan

Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia
zelvyfauzan@student.uns.ac.id

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Abstract

A growing body of research has investigated students' perceptions on corrective feedback in relation with their emotional state as well as satisfaction in writing, but few studies have considered students' writing motivation and self-efficacy upon receiving corrective feedback on the same writing section of their scholarly manuscript. In this article, students' perception of corrective feedback in relation with their writing motivation which in turn affects their writing self-efficacy are explored in the context of a scholarly article writing project. Drawing upon mixed qualitative studies of case study and auto-ethnography, learning portfolios and diaries were collected from three graduate students majoring in English Education Department, and were analyzed using open coding. The findings showed that students' writing motivation and self-efficacy in the first attempts of writing scholarly articles to be optimistic and highly motivated. However, as the students received multiple major revisions on their introduction section of their article over a certain period of time, their writing motivation and self-efficacy declined significantly. Upon successfully meeting the instructor's expectations on proper academic writing, some of the students' writing motivation and self-efficacy seemed to incline back to its former state.

Keywords:

*academic writing,
self-efficacy, writing
motivation*

INTRODUCTION

Graduate students are required to produce a scholarly article in order to graduate from several Indonesian universities. Therefore, it is essential for students to have a strong understanding of and significant experience with a wide range of scientific publications, including books, research articles, and scholarly journals. They have to put in mind that writing for a particular audience differs from producing an excellent course paper (Nolan & Rocco, 2009). Moreover, Vandrick & Casanave (2008) claimed that writing for scholarly papers is becoming more crucial for people in language instruction who want to land or keep a position in research. Students may not have had the required English writing skills to produce the desired results in reputable publications, which would have prevented them from producing and publishing their own research articles (Moldovan, 2011). Undoubtedly, graduate students in non-native English speaking countries frequently struggle with writing in English. An observation done by the researchers reported that a large number of students' errors can be found in writing scholarly articles. This led to a massive amount of corrective feedback the students received. As a result, the washback felt by students after getting such feedback will definitely influence them (Tang & Liu, 2018).

The effect of corrective feedback has been discussed in several studies. In feedback-giving practices, Wirantaka (2019) found that grammar is one of the corrective feedback which leads the students to produce better scientific articles. Students, in Wirantaka's work, believed that a clear, concise, and easy-to-understand written feedback is necessary for the students to be more effective in the process of writing their scientific article. Furthermore, Yaseeni (2021) found that academic writing performance of non-native English speaker students benefits from written feedback. It enables the instructor—who acts as supervisors—and students to communicate their viewpoints clearly. Wahyuni (2017) also mentioned in her study that students write better when they receive feedback, regardless of their cognitive styles or whether they are field reliant or independent. In addition, Wulandari (2022) in her study found that a sufficient amount of feedback can help students' writing abilities, both in terms of the quality of the final product and the writing process.

As aforementioned, academic writing which aimed for publications has gained a lot of attention recently. The policy in which postgraduate students publish a scholarly work has demanded the students to write scientific papers as a requirement to enroll in thesis examination. For this reason, faculty members are competing to increase their reputation by obligating the students to produce a high-quality scholarly manuscript. However, since the students are non-native speakers of English, they encounter hindrances in writing for scholarly articles which affect their self-efficacy, specifically caused by the corrective feedback given by the instructor. The literature in which feedback-giving practices affect students' L2 writing motivation and self-efficacy in EFL (English as Foreign Language) context is under-researched (see Yu, Jiang, & Zhou, 2020, for a context in Chinese EFL universities). With that in mind, this study offers a new insight in light of the current understudied body of literature. Hence, research questions emerged in the light of students' L2 writing motivation and self-efficacy in scholarly writing including:

1. How are the students' L2 writing motivation resulting from the feedback they receive on the same section recursively?
2. How are the students' sense of self-efficacy when getting corrective feedback from instructors recursively?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Construct of Self-Efficacy

A fundamental component of social cognitive theory is self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as “*an individual’s belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments*”. In short, it is about individuals’ confidence in their own ability to succeed. As a facilitator, teachers are attempting to build students’ better sense of belief in their own ability. This is crucial for teachers to understand because, despite having poor ability, students with high self-efficacy actively participate in tasks and perform better than those with low self-efficacy. Additionally, self-efficacy is a motivational factor in learning. It seems nearly difficult to evaluate some aspects of someone’s functioning, such as learning, motivation, and academic success, without taking into account the students’ own self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares & Urdan, 2006). Furthermore, Bandura (1997) suggested it is crucial to understanding causal structures because it influences behavior not just directly but also indirectly through its effects on determinants of students’ cognition, motivation, and emotion. Such ideas affect how productive, self-destructive, pessimistic, or optimistic they are, how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties, how susceptible they are to stress and depression, and the decisions they make in life.

Bandura (1986) proposed that between students’ learning, motivation, and academic success, students are invested with five capabilities which help them to determine their own action; (1) signifying ability, (2) awareness capability, (3) Self-regulatory capability, (4) vicarious capability, and (5) self-reflective capability. The most important and significant of the five capacities in influencing how people behave is self-reflection. People might analyze, understand, and evaluate their motivations, ideas, and behaviors through self-reflection. Self reflection is when students are conscious of and are able to communicate what they already know and what they still need to acquire, they are exhibiting cognitive awareness. Consequently, it explores how a student learns (Turkdogan, 2022). In addition, self-efficacy, which is a significant predictor of success, is one of the most influential factors in self-reflection (Bandura, 1986).

There are four main factors that influenced students’ self efficacy proposed by Bandura (1977). There are performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and psychological state. Performance outcomes related to students' past experiences will influence how confidently they anticipate performing a new activity. Success will boost their confidence, while failure will destroy it. Vicarious experiences or modeling related to observers' beliefs that they have the ability to master similar activities to succeed increase when they see people who are like themselves succeed via commitment. Verbal persuasion is about the influence of positive and negative reinforcement on a person's performance or capacity for performance (Redmond, 2010). Lastly, psychological state means that if students are stressed or anxious, they are less likely to feel confident.

Research results from several areas indicate that self-efficacy is a key factor that affects learners’ interest, persistence, extent of effort students invest in learning, the goals they choose to pursue and their use of self-regulated strategies in performing a task (Carmichael & Taylor, 2005; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Pajares, 1996, 2003; Schunk, 2003).

Writing Motivation

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Several studies have mentioned some ideas regarding the L2 writing feedback. According to Feren et al (2020), the majority of students' writing skills increase after receiving written feedback from their teachers, and they make less errors in their third draft than they did in their first. Hamidun *et al* (2013) stated that receiving direct feedback from the instructors while writing in class will help the students to develop their ideas, which will have a significant impact on their writing. Ellis (2009) suggests that one of the ways to motivate students in writing is to provide feedback on student writing. It is also suggested for teachers to be enthusiastic and supportive of writing because constructive feedback of students' written work can significantly boost student writing and improve students' motivation in writing. (Nation, 2009; Boscolo and Gelati, 2007).

In the first study, the majority of students' writing skills increase after receiving written feedback from their teachers, and they make less errors in their third draft than they did in their first. According to this study, it is important to promote the usage of teachers' written corrective feedback during writing assignments in order to help students become better writers (Feren *et al*, 2020). In the second study, it showed that even though some of the students lacked vocabulary and linguistic ability, they nevertheless had a strong desire to write in English. The direct, constructive, and formative feedback that the teachers provided throughout the camp received positive comments from the participants (Hamidun *et al*, 2013). The third study also mentioned that besides giving benefits for students to motivate them on their writing, corrective feedback also gives teachers the chance to investigate a particular area of their own teaching practices through reflection and practitioner research (Ellis, 2009). The fourth study also believed that using teachers' corrective feedback to inspire students to improve their writing skills is a key strategy. Lastly, the studies agreed that in order to motivate students in their writing, the teachers need to be keen and willing in giving corrective feedback. The collaboration between teacher and students can give the best result in students' work (Nation, 2009; Boscolo & Gelati, 2007).

Current Literature

A significant amount of research has shown the critical role self-efficacy beliefs play in successful writing performance in the particular area of writing (e.g., Bruning, Dempsey, Kaufman, McKim, & Zumbrunn, 2013; McCarthy, Meiter, & Rinderer, 1985; Pajares, 2003, 2007; Shell, Colvin, & Brunning, 1995; Teng, Sun, & Xu., 2017; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). It has been suggested that students who believe in their own abilities are more likely to adapt to the rapidly shifting demands of writing assignments, use the right tactics to meet their goals, and produce better writing (e.g., Bruning et al., 2013; Teng, Sun, & Xu, 2018; Teng & Zhang, 2016, 2018; Woodrow, 2006). For instance, Boscolo and Hidi (2007) contend that affective aspects like self-efficacy beliefs have a significant impact on all stages of writing, which is both an emotional and a cognitive activity that presents meaning. Although few empirical studies have looked into this theory, research suggests that revision, a specialized writing activity that uses all writing processes to reformulate what has been written (Hayes, 2012; Hayes & Berninger, 2017), may also be influenced by self-efficacy views.

The motivating component of teacher corrective feedback appears to be the most contentious and long-debated subject. For instance, 80 Spanish-speaking students at a U.S. university were studied by Cardelle and Corno (1981) to determine how corrective feedback affected their writing skills and motivation. According to their study's findings,

the majority of the experimental group students saw an improvement in their writing performance and motivation after receiving corrective feedback. However, the fact that the feedback was given by researchers rather than classroom teachers restricts the generalizability of their conclusions. Tang and Liu (2018) looked at whether providing indirect coded correction feedback together with succinct emotional comments improved the writing performance, assimilation, and motivation of L2 learners. According to their research, including affective instructor feedback in corrective feedback did not significantly improve the writing of L2 learners, but it did inspire students to take additional steps to make their writing better. In a recent large-scale survey study of students' writing experiences in Hong Kong, Lee, Yu, and Liu. (2018) found that "a focus on the written product (i.e., single drafting), and demotivational teacher feedback that consists primarily of detailed error feedback" in the students' writing environment may be responsible for the low levels of motivation to write (p. 8). They also observed a deterioration in writing effectiveness among students as they moved through the educational system, and they made the case that teachers' error-focused corrective feedback was to blame for the demotivating trend.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, existing study which intertwines students' writing self-efficacy and writing motivation to write a scholarly article for publication context is still inadequate. Most of the previous studies are too focused on quantitative approaches. This leaves knowledge paucity in the body of literature where qualitative investigation could complete.

METHOD

Research Design

This study aimed to explore master students' self-efficacy when getting corrective feedback on the same spot recursively for an extensive period of time from their instructor. In addition, the study aims to investigate students' L2 writing motivation resulting from the feedback they receive on the same section recursively. To explore such issues, a qualitative mixed-method approach was used to gain deep understanding of how students' L2 writing self-efficacy affects their writing motivation especially in the context of academic writing (Creswell, 2012). Drawing upon auto-ethnography and case study, we examined our own learning portfolio of writing a scholarly article extracted from a short particular period of time. Moreover, we focus upon one case in which all of the participants experienced the same learning process, that is, receiving corrective feedback in the same section recursively despite following the guidance of the feedback.

Settings and Participants

The participants of this study were three master degree students from one of the prominent universities in Central Java, Indonesia. There were one male student and two female students. The age of the participants ranged from 22 to 26 years. The master students in this context were enrolling a course focusing on scholarly writing aimed at publishing a scholarly article to a journal. In the first half of the semester, the students were equipped with strategies to write a scholarly article. Starting from the second half of the semester, the students started to group themselves and write their own article with the instructor taking the role as the supervisor for all of the group. In the beginning process of writing a scholarly article, the students wrote the introduction section of their manuscript. Due to

failing to meet the instructor's expectation, the students underwent five revisions for five weeks straight in the same section albeit following what the instructor had suggested.

Data Collection

Documentation of diary and student's learning portfolio were the primary data sources in this study. At the end of every meeting, students were required to write their reflection about the learning process. The students' learning portfolio includes the details of what the participants did, thought, and felt during the learning process. Then, the rationale behind those thoughts and percepts are recorded. According to Russell and Kelly (2002), keeping self-reflective journals during the analysis process is a strategy that facilitates reflexivity by using the participants' journals to examine "personal assumptions and goals" and to clarify "individual belief systems and subjectivities" (p. 2). The students' diary consisted of several topics such as how they perceive the corrective feedback from their instructor, their experience of reflecting from the other group's feedback session, and their motivation in writing scholarly articles. ...were priorly available right after each class meeting.

Data Analysis

The two kinds of documents, students' learning portfolio and diary, were organized into separate documents with one document for each participant. Once the diary and the students' learning are conjoined, open coding is then conducted. The open coding in this study follows those of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) as well as Adu (2019) where two main phases, namely open coding and axial coding, were carried out. In the first phase, open coding, description-focused and interpretation-focused coding were combined to identify emerging codes within the data (Adu, 2019). As of the second phase, axial coding, interpretation-focused coding were used to elicit categories, representing the subordinating codes (Adu, 2019). Each of the participants are checking each other's analysis results, making the open coding results to be triangulated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Major revision in the same spot over and over

In this study, the two research questions aimed to explore graduate students' writing motivation upon and self-efficacy after receiving corrective feedback on the same writing section recursively. Building upon the foundation to answering such research questions, the context in which the students perceive the corrective feedback is paramount to be constructed. As all of the participants experienced the same feedback procedure, they described the feedback-giving process to be real-time and direct on their manuscript. One of the participants further described that the instructor showed one group's manuscript in front of all the groups and then provided feedback directly on the manuscript. Scrutinizing on the common code occurrence from the three participants, it seems that the feedback was given based on perfectionism, that is, focusing on the same place of the manuscript over and over. The part in which the students' manuscripts often receive revisions, as the most occurring code from the three participants, was the introduction section.

There is an emerging code in which all three participants reported similarly. They had corrections on the part where it was previously known to be free from revisions, meaning that it had no issue in terms of cohesion, coherence, and idea organization but afterwards received corrections in the next supervision meeting. As participant 1 (P1) put

it, “However, sometimes he even corrected the part where he said it did not need correction last week”. Identical to P1, the second participant (P2) confessed that, “... sometimes the lecturer gave the feedback in the same place as he corrected before, even though I also corrected the writing according to the lecturer’s direction in the previous meeting”. More interestingly, participant three (P3) describes his experience by getting rejections “even the one [the instructor] wrote himself in the previous meeting”. This indicates that there is an inconsistency within the instructor’s feedback across meetings, which then led the student to confusion in writing their introduction. These findings contradict those of Feren et al. (2020) study where they posited that as the student received more revision, their writing would be less likely to have errors. In the case of this study, the students’ revisions are seemingly caused by the instructor’s inconsistent feedback content.

One coding category which deserves more attention is about the ‘colonial writing’ which appears multiple times in P3’s data. Colonial writing is a term used by the instructor to describe a particular writing style where academic writing flow, vocabulary, cohesion, and coherence is generally not in sync as well as ‘English wrapped in Indonesian grammar’. Although it is not explicitly mentioned in P1 and P2’s documentation, some excerpts which refers to ‘colonial writing’ can be found in their learning portfolios such as:

“... it turns out that there are still several paragraphs that are wordy in their sentence writing. ... not effective and need to be corrected so that they can be more easily understood. The lecturer gave a direct demonstration of how to shorten our ineffective writing by changing and deleting some sentences.” (Excerpt from P2).

“After being corrected, it turned out that our introduction was still not structured, lacked focus, and was not quite to the point.” (Excerpt from P1).

This feedback-giving practice, however, is followed by solutions from the instructor. All of the participants consolidated that the solution given by the instructor towards ‘colonial writing’ was overwriting the students’ manuscript as mentioned in the aforementioned excerpts. This practice of corrective feedback is believed to improve students’ writing performance (Chen, 2018; Pakbaz, 2014; Sermsook, 2017).

Looking at the specific code category, namely ‘major revision’, constructed by the participants, all of them experienced major revisions in some meetings. The revisions received by each group are different. P1 and P2’s group had their manuscript majorly revised two times at two different meetings. Whereas P3’s group, they had four major revisions in four different meetings, twice the amount of major revisions compared to other participants’ groups. At this rate, it seems that the corrective feedback practice, as previously discussed, is not working properly for P3’s group. This indicates that providing corrective feedback requires different strategies, inline with Chen (2018). Further, all of the participants agreed upon one voice that the cause of major revisions were because they failed to meet the instructor’s expectation, that is, to not write ‘colonially’. However, the fact that all of the groups received major revisions despite following the feedback as well as avoiding ‘colonial writing’ has led the students to revise the same section recursively. Overall, the findings in this study sheds new light on how corrective feedback practice could probably impact students’ motivation and self-efficacy

in scholarly writing due to the amount of major revisions the students had on the same section.

Students' Writing Motivation

Looking at the participants' initial motivation, all of them were eager to write academically, especially writing a scholarly article. Underlining all of the participants' remarks, they see this scholarly article project as a professional development as an academician. However, after undergoing several major revisions, each participant reacts differently and their motivational graph is unique in its way. Chronologically, the first major revision still had a positive impact on all of the participants. The major revisions, as discussed in the previous section, is accompanied by the solution on how to solve the suggestions. This feedback-giving practice had been investigated by de Kleijin et al. (2013) to be an effective approach to motivate students in writing academic work, engraving the students with positive motivation. In the second revision, all of the participants remained optimistic towards the major revisions they had in this meeting. However, P3 started to feel demotivation happening within him. He expressed that he also experienced a decreased level in his writing self-efficacy. Further, he added that such psychological and affective state was caused by the feedback-giving practice where the instructor deleted most of P3's introduction and was overwritten by the instructor's idea. The findings in P3's experience are consistent with those of Yu, Jiang, and Zhou's (2020) study where corrective feedback is believed to be discouraging students' motivation and engagement in L2 writing. On the other hand, contradicting findings are found in P1 and P2's data that they still had their optimism in revising their works, which at the same time challenged what Yu, Jiang, and Zhou (2020) have found.

After the first two meetings about revising the introduction section of the participants' manuscript, all of the participants had their motivation drained as the result of the major revisions they had in the third meeting and later meetings. They reported that they revised their manuscript based on the feedback they received in the previous meeting. Despite that fact, they received significant errors anyways, to be precise almost all of the introduction paragraphs were deleted. P3 further emphasized that not only one or two groups that received such demotivating feedback but also all of the groups, causing him to predict lower motivation to happen to himself. These findings are supported by those of Lee, Yu, and Liu (2018) which stipulated that detailed corrective feedback may affect students' writing motivation in a bad manner.

Students' demotivation after receiving such feedback is to be expected as in Yu, Jiang, and Zhou's (2020) study. In their study, written corrective feedback would make students self-destruct, leading to a feeling of unpredictability and low self-worth. As a result, students would use failure avoidance techniques by refraining from using written corrective feedback in their writing tasks. Our findings add to the empirical evidence of how corrective feedback demotivates students' motivational drive in writing a scholarly article. Referring to the emerged code categories (major revisions), it supplements to the existing literature that failing to meet the instructor's expectation in a quality-oriented manuscript writing as well as getting revision on the same section of the students' writing despite following the feedback that was given has led and caused the students to gain demotivation in writing, or revising their manuscript. Responding to the debate whether corrective feedback should be provided in a comprehensive manner (Lee, 2019; Yu, Jiang, & Zhou, 2020), our study provides empirical evidence in favor of a targeted and

selected approach to corrective feedback because it may help students feel more in control and valued when they work on scholarly article.

Students' Writing Self-Efficacy

To explore how the students' self-efficacy after getting corrective feedback on their scholarly article writing, this study fetched some interesting findings within the data garnered. Zooming on how the students describe their feeling upon receiving major revisions after major revisions, their motivation seemed to be declining which affected their 'psychological and affective state' and in turn their self-efficacy in general (Bandura, 1986). Despite their unsuccessful attempts at the first two drafts, all of the participants' psychological and affective state seemed to be resilient in handling the corrective feedback. This finding is somehow inconsistent with the theory in which Bandura (1986) emphasized that unsuccessful attempt completing the first task would engrave a negative sense of self-efficacy to one's self-belief of completing subsequent tasks in the future. Albeit the data shows an optimistic start point in revising the first major revision, the students remained optimistic, even enthusiastic to get more corrections. However, this interpretation only applies to some degree. In later revisions, the students started to feel degradation in their motivation to continue revising their manuscript. Considering that the revision which the students had was on the first section of an entire scholarly article, therefore, the introduction section could still be considered 'the first task'. Inferring that, Bandura's (1986) claim about unsuccessful first attempt could lead to a decrease in self-efficacy in general resonates with the qualitative findings in this study.

In the context of this study, another worth-noting finding is the practice of writing a learning portfolio. The students were required to write a learning portfolio which describes and reflects what they have learnt in each of the meetings. Interestingly, Chung, Chen, and Olson (2021) found that assigning the students to write a reflection after getting feedback will positively impact their subsequent behavior in revising a manuscript. Relating to this study, despite all of the participants writing a learning portfolio for every week in the course, the findings fetched in this study shows contradictory empirical evidence to those of Chung, Chen, and Olson (2021). Every participant in this study found their self-efficacy to be decreasing every week as they receive major revisions. This phenomenon was probably due to the lack of implementation of what is written on the learning portfolio and what action is done by the students. Drawing upon such findings, it is advised to confirm or reevaluate the students learning portfolio, whether or not they learn from their reflection to improve their current writing.

Zooming out on the students' self-efficacy journey in several major revisions which involves highs and lows of emotional fluctuations, this study reported that such experience is highly dependent on personal differences. While all of the participants were optimistic at the initial two progresses of their writing, P3 had his self-efficacy to degrade earlier compared to the other students. Moving forward to the third meeting and so on, P1 and P2 started to feel a decrease in their self-efficacy. This was indicated by the emerging code of 'uselessness', 'less confident', 'overwhelmed', and 'failure' found in all of the participants' data. The declining of students' self-efficacy has been argued to lead the students to spend less time working on the learning activities (Bassi, Steca, Fave, & Caprara, 2007), i.e. reflecting through learning portfolio and revising their manuscript. However, in the last meeting of the introduction section review, it seemed that the groups who had their writing accepted by the instructor gained their self-efficacy back, while the

groups who were still unable to meet the instructor's expectation had their self-efficacy in completing the revisions decreased. This phenomenon of different highs and lows of students' self-efficacy shows how major revision on the same section recursively could potentially lead the students to self-efficacy, which in turn affects the students' academic performance in general. The empirical findings in this study contribute to the underexplored literature of students' self-efficacy on revising scholarly articles with major revisions recursively (Lee, Yu, and Liu, 2018; Yu, Jiang, and Zhou, 2020; Chung, Chen, and Olson, 2021).

Conclusion

This study set out to explore graduate students' writing motivation when they receive corrective feedback recursively in the same section for a relatively long period of time. Each student has different highs and lows of writing motivation but identical patterns could be seen upon students' declining motivation on receiving major revisions over and over in the same section of their writing. The second aim of this study was to investigate the students' self-efficacy in writing a scholarly article resulting from the corrective feedback the students' received recursively. This study has found that generally corrective feedback provided on the same section of the students' writing could lead to a reduction in the students' self-efficacy to write a scholarly article. However, students' writing self-efficacy seemed to incline back as they successfully and completely revised their writing. Taken together, these findings suggest that corrective feedback might cause students to get demotivated in academic writing (Lee, Yu, and Liu, 2018; Yu, Jiang, and Zhou, 2020), therefore a different or combinations of other variants of feedback is advised to be implemented when supervising students on academic writing oriented to scholarly publications. The contribution of this study has been to enrich the underexplored qualitative empirical evidence on feedback-giving practices in relation to students' writing motivation and self-efficacy. The most important limitation lies in the fact that this study was carried out in a limited timeframe and small number of participants, making the empirical note unable to be generalized in a broader context. Considerably more work will need to be done to explore students' writing outcomes in relation to corrective feedback and/or students' resilience in overcoming their writing demotivation resulting from manuscript revisions.

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