Exploring Learners' Engagement with Feedback in L2 Academic Writing: Insights from a Multiple Case Study

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Abstract

Learners' engagement with feedback, recognized as an essential factor for influencing the learning process, is pivotal for enhancing learning outcomes. Despite its growing attention among researchers, it remains understudied in the field of second language acquisition, particularly within the context of learning Chinese as a second language (CSL). This study employs qualitative methods to explore CSL learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement with feedback in a Chinese academic writing class. Multiple sources of data were used to collect information from the focal participants, including learners' writing drafts, stimulated recalls, and interviews. The findings revealed that learners showed overall active behavioral engagement, positive emotional engagement, and deep cognitive engagement. Learners' motivation for academic writing and their Chinese proficiency were significant influencers of their engagement. Among the three dimensions of engagement, emotional engagement played a significant role in shaping learners' writing and revising process. This study elucidates the complex and dynamic nature of language learners' engagement and offers valuable insights for academic writing education.

Keywords: *Academic Writing, Learning Engagement, Written Feedback, Chinese as a Second Language*

[1]Introduction

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Feedback on second language (L2) learners' writing assignment is a significant area of focus for researchers and educators, as it is considered essential for supporting learning. While there is much research on how teachers should give feedback, it is 'how learners respond to the feedback they receive' (Ellis, 2010, p. 342) –engagement with feedback – that is key for their language acquisition and writing improvement (Zhang & Hyland, 2022). Therefore, learners' engagement with feedback is crucial as it connects how feedback is given with its impact on learning.

Learners' engagement with written feedback is a crucial but relatively under-researched area in L2 academic writing contexts. Originating in education area, engagement has become a key factor in understanding academic achievements, which encompasses learners' affective commitment to learning, cognitive investment, and behavioral involvement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Meanwhile, scholars in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have also directed their attention to engagement, conducting in-depth studies on its role in language learning (Hiver et al., 2024; Mercer, 2019). In the last decade, engagement was applied to L2 corrective feedback research (Ellis, 2010), offering a framework to examine how learners interact with feedback. This framework includes behavioral engagement, which looks at how learners incorporate feedback into their revisions; affective engagement, which considers their emotional responses to feedback; and cognitive engagement, which focuses on how learners utilize cognitive and metacognitive strategies when responding to feedback (Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

In China, a large number of international students are enrolled in programs that require them to read and write academic papers in Chinese. However, while substantial research exists on engagement in English academic writing, academic contexts involving Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) remain underexplored. In addition, the majority of existing studies related to academic Chinese have focused primarily on the linguistic features of academic production rather than on the learners who produce it, highlighting the need for research on Chinese learners (Luo, 2023; Qi et al., 2022; Xu & Zhang, 2023). Engagement is crucial to feedback on academic writing, as it "encompasses psychological, academic, social, emotional, and cognitive elements that can contribute to writing development" (Zhang & Hyland, 2023). Academic writing requires learners to follow academic standards, have sufficient disciplinary knowledge, and it also demands critical thinking, clarity, and the ability to present ideas coherently. Thus, engagement may be linked to numerous learner-related factors, including self-efficacy, motivation, and interest (Christenson et al., 2012). Therefore, to fully understand the dynamics of academic Chinese writing, it is essential to investigate learners' engagement and the factors that shape it.

To address these research gaps, the present study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement of Chinese learners' engagement with academic writing feedback, as well as the factors that influence their engagement.

Literature Review

Engagement originates from educational psychology as a possible antidote to declining academic motivation and achievement, and it has attracted increasing attention in various educational research fields (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hiver, Al-Hoorie, Vitta, & Wu, 2024).

Fredricks et al. (2004) classified this multifaceted construct into behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Behavioral engagement refers to learners' participation in academic and extracurricular activities. Emotional engagement encompasses learners' positive and negative reactions to their teachers, peers, and school environment. Cognitive engagement happens when learners put in the effort necessary to understand complex ideas and master challenging skills, largely requiring perseverance and the application of self-regulated strategies (Fredricks et al., 2004). In L2 learning settings, behavioral engagement is often demonstrated through learners' involvement in classroom interactions, time spent on tasks, and the amount of language production (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Indicators of cognitive engagement typically include learners' negotiation of meaning, such as questioning, exchanging ideas, offering feedback (Lambert et al., 2017; Svalberg, 2018). Emotionally engaged language learners tend to exhibit a positive disposition towards the language and learning tasks, with emotions such as enjoyment, enthusiasm, and anticipation serving as representations of learners' affective engagement (Svalberg, 2009; Mercer, 2019).

Ellis (2010) incorporated the concept of learner engagement into the framework for analyzing corrective feedback, and specifies that engagement should be examined from three perspectives: affective (focused on learners' attitudes towards feedback), behavioral (focused on whether and how learners revise drafts according to feedback), and cognitive (focused on how learners use cognitive strategies to understand feedback). Informed by Fredricks et al. (2004) and Ellis (2010), Zhang and Hyland (2018) proposed an engagement model, analyzing how L2 learners responded to teacher and automated writing evaluation (AWE) feedback. This model conceptualizes engagement as comprising three interrelated and overlapping dimensions: behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement. These dimensions are shaped by individual and contextual factors as learners respond to feedback from teachers or AWE (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Both Ellis (2010) and Zhang and Hyland (2018) have highlighted that learners' responsiveness to feedback is influenced by a variety of learner factors, such as language proficiency, beliefs about learning, motivation, and learning strategies.

Among all the individual factors, motivation and L2 proficiency are the most prominent elements that might influence learners' engagement with feedback in L2 writing. Motivation has been conceptualized as a learner's willingness to invest time on and persist in a learning activity (Dörnyei, 2001). Previous research has examined how learners' motivation influences their engagement with feedback in a EFL context. Han and Hyland (2015) adapted Ellis's (2010) framework to investigate EFL learners' engagement with written corrective feedback (WCF) and found that factors such as learners' L2 learning goals contribute to variations in learner engagement with WCF across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. Zhang and Hyland (2018) claims that motivation is often related to learners' engagement with AWE feedback, especially the cognitive engagement dimension. In the context of L2 academic writing, Han (2019) conducted a case study investigating how two students engaged with teacher-provided written corrective feedback (WCF) in a Chinese tertiary setting from an ecological perspective. The results suggested that learner-related factors, such as motivation, interact with contextual factors to influence learners' engagement with WCF. Luo (2023) found that learners' motivation for writing their undergraduate thesis influence the extent and manner of their engagement with supervisory feedback. Motivation serves as a driving force that affects how learners interpret and respond to learning activities. In the context of L2 learning,

motivated learners are more likely to invest time and effort, seek additional resources, and persist in challenging tasks.

Learners' L2 proficiency is another factor that scholars have discovered to influence learners' engagement with feedback. Zheng and Yu (2018) examined low proficiency learners' engagement with teacher WCF in EFL writing. They revealed that learners' limited English proficiency negatively influenced their behavioral and cognitive engagement, potentially leading to imbalances across the three dimensions of leaner engagement. Han (2019) and Luo (2023) both found that learners with lower English proficiency tended to lack a deep understanding of feedback, have superficial behavioral engagement, and sometimes produce mechanical or even unsuccessful revisions.

There are still some unanswered questions in the existing literature. Firstly, previous research has primarily addressed L2 learning contexts in broad terms, providing limited insights into how individual factors shape engagement with feedback in the specific context of L2 academic writing. While academic writing is indeed a subset of L2 learning, it differs significantly from general L2 learning due to its distinctive learning goals, methods, and assessment criteria. Consequently, learner engagement in academic writing exhibits unique characteristics that warrant closer investigation. Moreover, the scope of these investigations has been largely confined to learners of English, thus offering scant consideration to learners of other languages, including learners of Chinese. None of the studies has directly examined the influence of individual factors on Chinese L2 academic writing. To fill this gap, our research will investigate how individual factors, such as motivation and L2 proficiency, impact Chinese academic writing, as Macintyre and Blackie (2012) has mentioned "the motivational processes that affect language learning can be viewed from various perspectives" (p.533). Specifically, our study aims to answer the following research question:

RQ1: How do learners with varying levels of motivation and Chinese L2 proficiency engage with feedback on their academic writing?

Methodology

Participants

To examine the research question, the current study adopted a multiple case study approach, which has been widely employed in existing studies on engagement (Maxwell, 2012; Yu et al., 2019). Our data was collected at a comprehensive university in North China. We used purposive sampling to recruit three student participants: Michael, Yvonne and Zack (pseudonyms). They were selected from a class of 32 students based on their contrasting profiles and general typicality of the class. Consent forms were signed before the study.

Among the three participants, Michael demonstrates both a high level of motivation and advanced proficiency in learning Chinese. Yvonne, while highly motivated, is at a beginner level in terms of Chinese language proficiency. In contrast, Zack exhibits low motivation but possesses a relatively high level of Chinese proficiency, opposite to Yvonne's situation. Participants' Chinese proficiency was determined based on their previous Chinese learning experience and test scores. We followed previous research methods and used learners' self-reported motivation scores (ranging from 1 to 10) to represent their motivation levels (Luo, 2023). The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Student Participants

Name (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Chinese proficiency	Motivation	Nationality
Michael	Male	22	High	High	Malaysia
Yvonne	Female	21	Low	High	Russia
Zack	Male	22	High	Low	USA

Instructions

All participants were enrolled in the elective course named *Chinese Academic Writing*. During the 16-week semester, the course was taught by an expert teacher with 30 years' teaching and research experience in the School of Chinese as a Foreign Language Education of the university. A Chinese native graduate student in the same department worked as the teaching assistant (TA). The teacher presented the structure, format, and stylistic features of academic papers, detailing the specific methods for writing each section, including abstracts, introductions, and literature reviews, etc. Students were tasked with completing four writing assignments: a book review, an introduction for their final task, a paper summary for the mid-term exam, and a 3000–5000-word essay due at the end of the semester. Students had the freedom to choose the topics of their essays. The teacher and the TA worked together to give feedback and comments on students' essays within two weeks upon receiving the assignments. The feedback covered aspects such as format, language, grammar, content, logic, and so on. Based on the frameworks for direct and indirect feedback proposed by Han and Hyland (2015), as well as the form-based and content-based feedback classification by Yu et al. (2019), the feedback provided by the instructor in this Chinese academic writing course incorporates both direct and indirect forms of feedback. Additionally, the content of the feedback addresses both form-related and content-related aspects of student performance.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were used to collect information from the focal participants: students' essay drafts, stimulated recalls, student semi-structured interviews, teacher and TA interviews, and classroom observation. The researchers collected learners' essay drafts and feedback received as materials for text analysis, to determine the foci of feedback and students' revisions. Shortly after students received feedback on each of their assignment, they went through stimulated recalls and semi-structured interviews. They recalled how they wrote their initial drafts, understood the feedback, and revised their drafts accordingly. The semi-structured interviews were conducted immediately following the stimulated-recalls. The interview questions also prompted participants to share their overall perceptions of the feedback they received, how they acted upon it, their feelings toward it, and their evaluations of it. These aspects were closely linked to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of students' engagement with feedback, corresponding to three dimensions of engagement (Fredricks, 2004). In the middle of the semester, the researchers interviewed the instructor and the TA to obtain their beliefs and practices about Chinese academic writing and WCF. In addition, the researchers observed some of the class sessions and took notes. Teachers' syllabi, lesson plans, grading rubrics, teaching materials were also obtained for reference.

Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on the verbatim transcribed stimulated recalls and semi-structured interview transcripts. Data analysis moved through three phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2020). This inductive coding produced a list of seven subcategories across three categories. The data were independently coded by the two authors, and inter-coder reliability tests were performed, yielding a 91% agreement on the coding results. Table 2 shows the coding subcategories and categories.

The written feedback was coded in accordance with Han and Hyland's (2015) categorization for direct and indirect feedback categorization and Yu et al.'s (2019) taxonomy for form-focused and content-focused feedback. In this study, the feedback provided by the teacher and TA was categorized into direct feedback about form, indirect feedback about form, direct feedback about content, and indirect feedback about content. Additionally, feedback containing meta-linguistic cues, as identified by Sheen (2007), was marked separately. To analyze the students' engagement with feedback, we compared students' drafts, highlighted revisions between the initial and final drafts in terms of lexical, syntactic, and discourse changes.

Table 2

Examples of Data Coding

Original Data	Subcategory Code	Category Code
(1) It made me feel a bit worried.	(1) Emotional responses	Emotional engagement
(2) I think this feedback is reasonable.	(2) Attitudinal reactions	
(1) I read the teachers' suggestions one by one and revised my draft accordingly.	(1) Revision behaviors	
(2) My final essay was over 8000 words.	(2) Draft length and quality	Behavioral engagement
(1) To be honest, I didn't understand the feedback that much.	(1) Depth of understanding feedback	Cognitive engagement
(2) this, …I am going to check the dictionary.	(2) Planning	
(3) But I still don't think the teachers' correction is necessary.	(3) Evaluating and monitoring	

Results

The Case of Michael

Grown up in a Chinese community in Malaysia, Michael was able to speak and write fluently in Mandarin Chinese. Michael was an advanced Chinese learner and was highly motivated to performance well in his academic writing assignments. He was strongly motivated in his academic achievements and planned to work and live in mainland China after obtaining his bachelor's degree in journalism. As a junior student, he chose this course to "enhance writing skills" and "know what is a good academic paper in professors' eyes" (Michael, interview).

Michael's essay assignments were on the characteristics and social functions of Hong Kong popular music. He had positive emotional reactions towards feedback almost all the time. Each time receiving feedback, he felt "so excited", since that made him "know which part was good enough and which part still needed improvement", and he felt "grateful to the teacher". Meanwhile, he showed strong interest in the topic of his assignments. "I've always loved Hong

Kong pop music, and my favorite singer is Faye Wong, so I really enjoyed writing my essay on this topic", said Michael (interview).

Michael's behavioral engagement with teachers' feedback was intense: he not only responded to all the comments and made effective corrections on his drafts, but also avoided similar problems in his final paper and the assignments of other courses. His four assignments totaled 12,655 words, far exceeding the teacher's requirements for coursework. He carefully considered all the suggestions and spent a significant amount of time reading feedback, revising drafts, and discussing with the TA to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the feedback, and he even identified an error in the feedback.

> *Michael: Excuse, me. I have another question. When referring to an author as the subject of a sentence, should I use (name, year) or name (year)? I saw name (year) in the beginning and (name, year) later on. I'm a bit confused.*
> *TA: Sorry. It's our mistake. You may say name (year) when it is the subject. Your format is correct.*
> *Michael: All right, I understand now. Thank you.*

Michael responded to the feedback pro-actively with deep cognitive engagement. He endeavored to thoroughly understand all the feedback, and was able to give meta-cognitive explanations to the feedback during the stimulated recall and interviews. He also evaluated the correctness and reasonableness of the feedback to decide whether to adopt them or not. For instance, when receiving the suggestion on deleting the noun phrase "this country", he understood it was meant to avoid redundancy, but did not take it as a big problem, because "it won't cause any incoherence" (Michael, stimulated recall).

Michael demonstrated proactive engagement with feedback. He displayed a high level of emotional engagement by positively and enthusiastically embracing instructional content and feedback. His behavioral engagement was notably intense. To achieve the best result, he corrected all identified errors and even significantly exceeded the teacher's word count expectation. In terms of cognitive engagement, Michael employed cognitive and metacognitive strategies, indicating a deep processing of feedback. He engaged in meaningful discussions with the TA in order to thoroughly understand all aspects of the feedback, thus enhancing his learning outcomes.

Motivation and language proficiency could possibly explain Michael's deep engagement. Michael was an advanced Chinese learner and was able to read and write fluently in Chinese. As a third-year university student, he already had some experience in Chinese academic writing. Perhaps because of his high Chinese proficiency and writing experience, he was able to understand deeply all feedback, and was in favor of both types of feedback, on content and linguistic accuracy. "For me, feedback on content is very helpful, because it improves the logic of my essays. Feedback on language and format is also useful, because it tells me the correct expressions, and they are what I should master as a Chinese learner", Michael said (interview).

Michael had strong Chinese learning motivation, dreaming of working and living in mainland China after graduation. Possibly prompted by integrative motivation, he also demonstrated strong willingness of communicate, which is "the primary goal of language instruction" (Macintyre et al., 1998). To excel in completing his writing assignments, he

actively engaged in thoughtful reflection and utilized cognitive strategies to evaluate feedback throughout the process of writing and revising his papers, making judicious decisions about whether to adopt suggestions. In addition, he searched for literature and utilized translation software to achieve the most ideal writing results.

In short, his high level of Chinese proficiency and motivation prompted Michael to understand thoroughly all feedback and respond to the feedback proactively with deep engagement.

The Case of Yvonne

Yvonne was a highly motivated learner, but her Chinese proficiency was significantly lower compared to Michael's. She was fascinated with Chinese culture so she chose Chinese language and literature as her major in her university. Yvonne planned to work as a sinologist and live in mainland China after graduation. As a freshman, she had taken some courses that required academic writing tasks but received low grades. Consequently, she was keen to improve her academic writing skills through this course.

Yvonne showed overall quite positive emotional engagement toward Chinese academic writing and the teachers' feedback. She chose to write an essay on the comparison and contrast between Chinese and Russian diplomatic policies. Although international relations were not her major, she was deeply interested in this topic and displayed courage in "challenging myself (herself)" (Yvonne, interview). She said she often felt excited and happy when she received feedback from the teacher, especially detailed feedback on language forms. She appreciated the fact that the teacher and the TA gave such detailed, word-for-word feedback for her to correct her essays. Although her limited language proficiency occasionally caused frustration in initially understanding some of the feedback, she swiftly transformed this negative emotion into a driving force for further study.

Yvonne's behavioral engagement with feedback was intense. She carefully reviewed all comments and made corresponding revisions to her drafts. Beyond addressing typos and formal issues, she invested considerable effort in researching relevant literature and consulting dictionaries, incorporating new information into her revised drafts. A comparison between her initial and revised drafts reveals that she adhered to all suggestions and corrected each identified error.

Yvonne's cognitive engagement was slightly lower than other components of engagement. She readily embraced nearly all comments without hesitation, but followed the teachers' suggestions almost rigidly. For instance, the teacher suggested deleting expressions like "*zhide zhuyi de shi* (it's worth noting that...)" and "*keyi zhichu de shi* (It may be noted that)", Yvonne recalled that "Perhaps they are not commonly used in Chinese, I'm not sure. I will simply avoid using them in the future" (Yvonne, stimulated recall).

Yvonne sometimes struggled to understand the teachers' content-based indirect feedback, and employed cognitive strategies for a complete comprehension. For instance, the teacher's recommendation to combine the last two short paragraphs of her introduction of her essay confused Yvonne at first. However, after reviewing the instructional materials, Yvonne recognized that the end of the introduction session in an academic paper often presents the research question, which encapsulates the primary argument or objective and outlines the main

points for discussion. This realization clarified the rationale behind the teacher's suggestion, making the advice more comprehensible and reasonable to her.

Yvonne's overall positive emotional engagement, intense behavioral engagement, and partial cognitive engagement may be attributed to her high motivation paired with limited language proficiency. She demonstrated strong motivation in drafting and revising her essays, frequently consulting teachers' PowerPoint slides and instructional materials to enhance her work. Although the teachers' detailed feedback on language accuracy occasionally caused her slight frustration, it also drove her to recognize her weaknesses and further refine her essays. However, her low proficiency in Chinese posed challenges in fully comprehending certain feedback, especially indirect comments on content. As a result, she invested considerable effort in understanding the feedback—researching literature, consulting dictionaries, and more—while lacking sufficient resources to employ metacognitive strategies effectively.

The Case of Zack

Zack, whose Chinese proficiency was relatively high among the three participants, was neither highly motivated in academic writing nor deeply interested in his essay topic. He was a Chinese American, who regarded Chinese as his living language and English as his working language. He planned to pursue graduate studies in the United States after obtaining his undergraduate degree, and then return to China to work for a multinational corporation. His motivation to choose this Chinese academic writing course was very practical—to prepare for his thesis, since completing the thesis is compulsory for him to get a bachelor's degree, but he previously had no experience in Chinese academic writing. He believed that "the Chinese language does not play a significant role. Particularly in the scientific research area, Chinese may not offer much assistance for me. In the future, I believe Chinese may be useful in daily life, but not in working situations. For instance, if we consider companies like Microsoft and Google, Chinese is not extensively used. For me, Chinese might be used for daily communication, but all formal written communication is in English" (Zack, interview).

Zack experienced mood swings even if he did not admit it at the beginning of the interview. His essay topic was on the management policies of international students. He chose this topic because it was "convenient to collect data" (Zack, interview). He felt calm and peaceful when reading the feedback for the first time. He appreciated the teachers' feedback, but treated the writing and revising merely as "assignments that I have to complete if I want to get my grades, and I don't have much emotion attached to it" (Zack, interview). He chose to neglect his feelings, because "no matter how do I feel, I have to finish it anyway" (Zack, interview). He believed his previous English academic reading and writing experience had enabled him to be familiar with logic and structure of academic papers, therefore teachers' feedback on content and organization did not arouse much interest in him. However, he reported feeling slightly frustrated and boring during the mid-term because of the heavy workload of the course and scarcity of metalinguistic clues from the feedback.

In terms of behavioral engagement, Zack acted less on the feedback received than other two participants. He did not spend much time and effort to revise his drafts. During the stimulated recall, he mentioned that for those suggestions that did not require much work, he "took a glance, click 'accept all changes', and put it (the draft) aside" (Zack, interview), but for those comments that required much effort in reorganization or rewriting, he often chose to

neglect them. For instance, he rejected the teachers' suggestion to include more references on the latest developments in relevant research for the literature review section of his essay, stating that it "would require too much time, which was unnecessary" (Zack, interview). The word count of his final paper was least among that of three participants, only just enough to meet the minimum word count required by the teacher, because he felt that there was no need to write more words if the word count had been up to the standard.

Among all three participants, Zack's cognitive engagement with feedback was at the lowest level. When we compared Zack's four drafts, it was evident that some errors that he had received feedback on the first time, still existed in his later drafts. Although he accepted feedback most of the time, he did not understand deeply the reasoning of revisions. For instance, the teacher suggested substituting "*qian xi* (to briefly analyze)" with "*fen xi* (to analyze)" in this sentence "*This study will take the international students of X University as an example, and analyze the inconvenience of the university's international student management system and the insufficiency of its services.*" On seeing this, his attitude was "I remember that the teacher told us to use *qianxi* in the class, because we should be humble. I'm not sure why she suggested *fenxi* in the homework. Anyway, it is not a big deal" (Zack, stimulated recall). Even though he identified apparent inconsistencies between the corrective feedback and his impression of the instructor's classroom lectures, he did not employ any cognitive strategies, such as evaluation, to investigate the reasons behind these differences. Nor did he communicate with the teacher or TA to clarify this conflicting issue.

With a strong command of Chinese, Zack exhibited a low level of engagement across the three components, demonstrating a realistic approach towards feedback. Thus, it was not surprising that feedback on grammar or feedback with metalinguistic clues captured Zack's attention more than other types. Only such detailed feedback helped him "*zhi qi ran, zhi qi suo yi ran* (know what it is, and know why)" (Zack, interview), requiring minimal cognitive engagement from him. His lack of motivation could also explain why he was less engaged in revising his drafts, as rewriting or reorganizing required significant behavioral engagement, which was not aligned with his expectations.

Discussion

The current study investigated how learner factors affected their engagement with teachers' feedback on their Chinese academic writing drafts. Results indicated that learners' motivation and language proficiency significantly influenced the level and type of their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement.

Learners' motivation for learning Chinese and taking the academic writing course were found to impact their engagement with feedback. Highly motivated learners tend to demonstrate autonomy by actively utilizing feedback to improve their writing. In our study, Michael and Yvonne were both driven by a desire to work in China, sought to enhance their writing skills and produce high-quality academic papers. Both students engaged in intense revising efforts, ensuring that their assignments were of high quality, and invested cognitive effort in understanding and evaluating teacher feedback. In contrast, the less motivated student Zack showed a relatively passive engagement with feedback, relying mainly on the teachers' directions with metalinguistic clues, without significant cognitive involvement. The varied approaches between highly and less motivated learners, as seen in three cases' different

reactions to feedback, exemplify the influence of motivation on engagement. These findings support previous research (Han & Hyland, 2015; Luo, 2023), affirming that learners' motivation influenced how they process feedback. overall, motivated learners are more likely to experience positive emotions, exert sustained behavioral efforts, and demonstrate deep cognitive reasoning.

The study revealed that learners' Chinese language proficiency influenced their engagement with feedback. This was evident in the differing responses of Yvonne and Michael, both of whom exhibited high motivation but varied in language proficiency. Qualitative data revealed that the student with higher proficiency, Michael, demonstrated a greater depth of understanding and cognitive processing when interpreting feedback, displaying confidence in assessing the validity of teacher's comments. In contrast, Yvonne, with lower language proficiency, often exhibited less confidence, relying more heavily on authoritative opinions without critical evaluation. Qualitative data further illustrate that Michael, with stronger Chinese language skills, was able to accurately identify and deeply understand grammatical issues, while Yvonne tended to defer to external authority. Overall, language proficiency plays a pivotal role in influencing learners' feedback engagement behaviors, particularly by enhancing confidence and depth of cognitive engagement. These findings echo those of previous study that categories language abilities as capacity-related factors that influence learners' engagement with feedback (Han, 2019; Zheng & Yu, 2018).

The current study also provided empirical evidence of the role of learners' emotional engagement with feedback in academic writing contexts. The findings indicated that learners with positive emotional responses to both academic writing and teacher's feedback were more likely to demonstrate deep cognitive engagement and sustained behavioral engagement. For instance, both Michael and Yvonne, who showed interested in their essay topics, reported feeling "excited" (Michael) and "happy" (Yvonne) upon receiving feedback. They actively revised their drafts by consulting the TA or seeking additional resources to deepen their understanding. Conversely, Zack displayed limited interest in the course and did not engage with feedback actively, despite his advanced Chinese proficiency and ability to understand the rationale behind the comments. These results suggest that emotional responses to feedback are closely tied to learners' actions, as positive emotions can facilitate a more receptive and proactive approach to feedback (Värlander 2008). In sum, emotional engagement plays a crucial role in shaping learners' response to feedback, highlighting the intertwined nature of emotional and cognitive engagement in the learning process.

The findings of current study points to several pedagogical implications. Firstly, teachers should pay close attention to individual differences among learners. They should investigate learners' situations, including their motivation for academic writing and their language proficiency level, to fully grasp the individual needs of the learners and then establish teaching objectives and arrangements accordingly. For instance, for students with lower language proficiency, teachers should focus more on providing feedback that addresses language content, supplemented by meta-language clues. For high-level students, teachers can offer more challenging feedback to stimulate deep thinking and foster independent learning.

Secondly, teachers should strive to create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere by designing writing tasks that align with students' interests and conducting lively and engaging teaching sessions. This approach encourages students to have positive emotional experiences. When

giving feedback, it is important to acknowledge students' strengths while providing constructive suggestions. Additionally, the selection of teaching content should cater to students' interests.

Thirdly, teachers should guide students in thoroughly understanding the feedback and encourage them to actively inquire, ponder, and question. Teachers can facilitate students' engagement by promoting the use of external support, such as organizing group discussion sessions for students to share their perspectives on feedback and collaboratively solve problems. Moreover, students can benefit from utilizing automated revision tools for self-directed learning.

Conclusion

This study utilized qualitative approaches to probe into the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement of CSL learners with feedback in an academic Chinese writing class. Diverse data sources were meticulously gathered from key participants, learners' writing drafts, stimulated recalls, and interviews. The results demonstrated robust behavioral engagement, along with positive emotional responses and substantial cognitive involvement among the learners. Additionally, the study underscored the critical roles of learners' motivation for academic writing and their proficiency in Chinese as significant determinants of their engagement levels. Within the three dimensions of engagement with feedback, emotional engagement was also identified as crucial in influencing the writing and revision behaviors and cognitive strategies. These findings corroborated Macintyre's (2019) claim that the emergence of positive psychology is a potentially exciting addition to the field of SLA and education.

Despite the insights this study offers, it has several limitations. The primary constraint is its reliance on qualitative methods and a small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other second language learning contexts. Further research employing quantitative methods and involving a broader range of second languages could help validate and extend these findings. Moreover, although we have identified two individual factors, motivation and language proficiency, that might influence learners' engagement with teacher feedback, it is possible for future study to explore how students with different backgrounds and experiences engagement with various forms of feedback, such as peer feedback, automated feedback, and artificial intelligent feedback.

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