

Toward Reflective Authorship in Publication-Oriented EFL Writing: A Longitudinal Study of Indonesian Undergraduates' Reflective Journals

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Abstract

Writing an article for publication requires students to deal with both writing and research decisions. The study followed 35 Indonesian EFL undergraduates during 16 meetings of a Research Method in ELT course and examined how their reflective attention and writer positioning changed. After every meeting, the students wrote a reflective journal, resulting in 560 entries and 3,920 responses to the recurring prompts. The analysis generated six interrelated themes and showed changes across three project phases. Early reflections focused mainly on research purpose, topic feasibility, models and writing criteria. During article development, students gave more attention to literature synthesis, methodological alignment, data work, and relationships among article sections. In the final phase, some students showed greater attention to manuscript integration, revision, evaluative judgment, and future academic writing. However, workload, anxiety, methodological difficulties, and the need for guidance remained. Reflective authorial positioning became more visible, but guided participation also increased. These findings suggest that reflective authorship developed through responsible interdependence, as students took greater responsibility for writing decisions while continuing to use academic, social, and technological support.

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Introduction

Journal article writing has become an important part of higher education in recent years. In several institutions, it is associated with degree completion, especially in doctoral programs. Studies in China, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine show that publication requirements can affect students' academic progress (Hladchenko, 2023; Kuzhabekova, 2025; Quan et al., 2023). A similar situation also exists in Indonesian institutions. Several universities have even made journal article writing a compulsory final project and graduation requirement. A preliminary observation conducted by the researchers at an Indonesian university found that students may complete their final project through a journal article. And publication in certain accredited journals may also exempt students from a thesis examination. This condition certainly places considerable pressure on students, particularly novice writers (Fithriani et al., 2023; Indrayadi, 2023; Sahan et al., 2024).

For undergraduate EFL students, the challenge is not only how to write in English correctly. As writers and researchers, they also need to determine a researchable topic, identify a research gap, align research questions and methodology, analyze data, construct coherent arguments, use accurate citations, and cope with repeated revisions. Several studies have identified difficulties faced by EFL students in academic writing, including finding scholarly sources, constructing arguments, maintaining coherence, and producing appropriate academic language (Asnas & Hidayanti, 2024; Wang & Xie, 2022; Yasuda, 2023). The lack of feedback literacy also adds another challenge since students need to receive comments, understand them, judge their relevance, and do revision (Carless & Boud, 2018). Given these challenges, treating journal article writing as the primary output may be problematic. Students may focus more on meeting administrative requirements than on developing a deeper understanding of research and academic writing processes. Adiprasetyo (2026) similarly warns that publication pressure may become more performative if the emphasis is placed on the quantity of the outputs. The issue, therefore, is not only whether students can complete an article, but also whether they understand the reasons behind their research writing decisions.

Reflective journaling can be one of the ways to observe students' experiences in journal article writing. In the context of EFL writing, reflective journaling can be used to identify learning problems and inform teaching practices (Ahmed, 2019), examine changes in students' attitudes (Ahmed, 2020), as well as support students' self-reflection, metacognitive awareness, and writing skills development (Aliyu et al., 2023; Sudirman et al., 2021). A longitudinal study also found that reflective journaling can be used to observe students' self-regulated writing strategies (Zhang et al., 2022). Zhang and Hyland

(2023) used reflective journaling to identify students' engagement with peer feedback and revision. Almutawa and Alfahid (2024) also explain that systematic reflective journal writing supports professional reflection of EFL pre-service teachers. The most recent study about digital reflective journals found that they enhanced students' motivation, monitoring, and learner autonomy (Murdia et al., 2026). All these studies inform that reflective journaling helps learners understand their difficulties, respond to support, monitor their progress, and plan their next actions.

Despite these contributions, existing studies focused on general writing tasks, a small number of reflection sessions, particular feedback episodes, or practicum and professional development settings. Few studies have explained how students' reflective attention changes across the full process of developing journal article writing, from formulating a research problem to revising the final manuscript. It is also not yet clear how novice EFL writers position themselves as academic writers when making important writing decisions while still relying on writing models, peer support, teachers' guidance, and technological tools. This developing capacity to plan, evaluate, and take responsibility for writing decisions is referred to in this study as reflective authorship. This does not mean students work in isolation, but rather that they use available support more purposefully and independently.

This study addresses the gap by following the same 35 Indonesian EFL undergraduates across all 16 meetings of a *Research Method in ELT* course. In this course, students are required to individually write a journal-style article and write reflective journals at each meeting. Project-based Learning (PjBL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), and pedagogical Deep Learning are the context of the instruction, but they are not tested as separate causal variables. This study investigates how students' reflective attention and writer positioning change during the project of journal-style article writing, as well as on the factors supporting and constraining the emergence of reflective authorship from initial writing to final revision.

Literature Review

Publication-Oriented EFL Journal Article Writing and Reflective Authorship

Publication-oriented writing presents unique challenges for novice EFL writers. Unlike routine classroom tasks, writing for publication requires students to formulate researchable problems, engage with existing literature, align methodology, interpret results, and build coherent arguments (Wang & Xie, 2022; Yasuda, 2023). This means that completing the structural sections of an article does not automatically mean students understand the underlying research decisions.

Publication-oriented research writing can also be viewed through English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP), a field concerned with the needs and practices of researchers who use English to publish research (Flowerdew, 2026; Flowerdew &

Habibie, 2022). ERPP goes beyond language accuracy because research publication also involves disciplinary expectations, genre, argument, positioning, and participation in scholarly communities. This perspective is relevant to the present study because the students were developing journal-style research articles rather than completing general classroom writing tasks. They therefore had to make decisions about research questions, evidence, methods, claims, feedback, and revision. In this sense, reflective authorship is related to an ERPP concern: how novice writers learn to participate in research publication while developing judgment about the decisions behind the text.

This challenge is closely related to writer positioning. As writers, students need to decide what claims they can make, whether the evidence is sufficient, and how strongly they position themselves in relation to previous studies. Miao and Shi (2025) found that students' self-positioning in EAP writing was related to their cognitive beliefs and emotional attitudes, while Qi and Zhao (2023) showed that scholarly identity is constructed through discourse choice in research writing. Recent research with EFL undergraduates also shows that writer identity is shaped by institutional practices and access to material and symbolic resources (Naghdipour et al., 2026). Authorship is therefore built through repeated decision-making rather than gained simply by completing a manuscript. In this study, reflective authorship refers to students' developing capacity to reflect on, evaluate, explain, and take responsibility for their research-writing decisions. It does not require complete independence. Novice writers may still use models, criteria, lecturers, peers, and digital tools. The key question is whether these resources inform their judgment rather than replace it. This process can be understood as responsible interdependence.

Reflective Journaling, Self-Regulation, and Feedback Literacy

Reflective journaling has been used in EFL/ESL writing for several purposes. It can help identify writing difficulties and inform teaching practices, examine changes in students' attitudes, and support metacognitive awareness and writing development (Ahmed, 2019, 2020; Aliyu et al., 2023; Sudirman et al., 2021). These purposes imply that reflective journaling is more than a record of classroom experience. It can recognize what students notice about their learning, what problems they identify, and what actions they plan to address their problems.

Longitudinal research further links reflective journaling to self-regulated writing. Zhang et al. (2022) examined Chinese EFL students' self-regulated writing strategies through reflective journals and found that several strategies changed over time, although the development was uneven. More recently, Zhang and Chieh (2025) showed that reflective journal interventions can support self-regulated writing strategies, motivational beliefs, and writing performance. Longitudinal evidence also links peer feedback, self-regulation, and writing performance over time (Zhan & Teng, 2025). These studies strengthen the connection between reflection and self-regulation, but they examine strategy

development across isolated reflection points or specific interventions. They provide limited insight into how the focus of reflection changes repeatedly while students complete their research articles.

Reflective journals can also provide information about what students do with feedback. Receiving a comment does not always mean that a student has considered whether it is useful. Carless and Boud (2018) explain that feedback literacy involves judgment as well as action. More recent work also emphasizes that feedback literacy involves working with feedback information to improve current performance and future learning, rather than simply receiving comments (Carless, 2026). For novice writers, this may involve deciding which comments fit the purpose of the article, what needs to be changed, and whether a revision improves the manuscript. Writing about this decision in a journal can make part of this process visible.

Students and teachers might also have different understandings of feedback. For example, Apridayani et al. (2026) found differences in their perceptions of feedback and its use. Writing decisions are not always made alone. Su et al. (2026) describe co-regulation through shared planning, monitoring, evaluation and support. Their study, however, focused on collaborative writing. The students in this study wrote individual articles but they did discuss their work with lecturers and peers, and used texts and technology for support. The question is therefore not simply whether support was present, but how it was used when making their own decisions.

Varied experiences with reflective journaling have also been reported in other EFL contexts. For instance, Almutawa and Alfahid (2024) found that journals supported self-awareness among pre-service teachers, but noted issues with time and descriptive reflection. Murdia et al. (2026) reported improvements in motivation and learner autonomy in a Cross-Cultural Understanding course. These studies provide useful evidence, but neither followed students through the complete process of developing an academic research article.

Project-Based Differentiation and Phase-Sensitive Support

PjBL and DI address different aspects of publication-oriented writing. PjBL organizes learning around sustained inquiry, staged work, critique, revision, and a meaningful product. Meta-analytic and classroom evidence indicates that it can improve EFL writing when projects are well structured (Cahyono et al., 2024; Guo et al., 2020; Mujiono et al., 2024). DI, in contrast, provides varied routes toward common standards through models, resources, consultations, flexible grouping, and visible criteria (Fajariyah et al., 2023; Langelaan et al., 2024; Tomlinson, 2017). PjBL therefore provides the common project trajectory, whereas DI helps students address its demands through support responsive to readiness and emerging need.

It has been shown that when providing support to learners, it is beneficial to consider what they are working on. Studies have found that contextualized and process-focused support can enhance students' writing self-efficacy more than instruction focused mainly on language (Xu et al., 2026). Students also perceive feedback differently and have different preferences for how they receive it (Apridayani et al., 2026). In addition, support should address the cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and social aspects of learning regulation that students may require (Su et al., 2026). Together, these studies show that no single type of support works for all students and every situation. What few studies have examined is how models, criteria, feedback, peer assistance, and digital resources evolve as students move from beginning a task to making higher-level academic decisions.

What remains to be answered is not whether project work, reflection, feedback, or differentiated instruction can help students write, but how these tools work in conjunction with one another. It also concerns why some forms of support remain necessary as students become better at making judgments about their own writing, and where they continue to struggle to move toward greater authorial responsibility. Studies have examined students' writing difficulties, self-efficacy, feedback literacy, co-regulation, writer identity, and project outcomes. However, not many have followed students over the course of their writing journey—from research questions to the final product—to see how their reflection on writing, ability to position themselves as writers, use of feedback, and teacher support evolve together.

The Study

Previous studies have shown that reflective journaling supports writing development, self-regulation, feedback engagement, and learner reflection. Research on writer positioning and co-regulation similarly indicates that academic writing develops through a balance between individual judgement and social interaction. However, two issues remain unclear. First, longitudinal studies have often examined selected reflection points, general writing activities, or specific feedback episodes rather than repeated reflection across the whole process of producing a research article. Second, few studies have examined how novice EFL writers take greater responsibility for research-writing decisions while still relying on models, peers, lecturer guidance, feedback, and digital tools. This distinction is important in publication-oriented writing because completing an article does not mean students have developed the judgment needed to explain and defend their decisions.

The present study follows the same 35 Indonesian EFL undergraduates across all 16 meetings of a Research Method in ELT course. In this course, each student developed an individual journal-style research article and completed a reflective journal at the end of each meeting. PjBL, DI, reflective journaling, and a pedagogical Deep Learning orientation formed the instructional context. The reflective journal completed after each meeting

provided repeated data for examining how students' reflective attention and writer positioning changed during the process of completing the article.

This study contributes a phase-sensitive view of reflective authorship. It examines not only what students reflected on, but also how they used feedback and academic support while making complex writing decisions. Reflective authorship is therefore understood as a developing form of responsible interdependence, in which continued support coexists with stronger judgement and greater responsibility for the manuscript.

Based on these gaps, this study focused on two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How did Indonesian EFL undergraduates' reflective attention and writer positioning change as they worked through the 16-meeting research-article writing project?

RQ2: What instructional and self-regulatory factors supported or constrained the development of reflective authorship?

Methodology

Research Design and Context

This study used a qualitative longitudinal design because the main interest was to understand how students' reflective attention and writer positioning changed during the process of writing a research article. The study was conducted during a 16-meeting *Research Method in ELT* course. Each student developed an individual project to write a journal-style ELT research article. The project began with topic selection and research planning, followed by literature review, methodology and instrument preparation, data-related work, article-section writing, feedback, peer review, manuscript integration, and final revision. In this longitudinal study, the researchers followed changes from one meeting to another since the students also completed a reflection at the end of each meeting.

The participants were 35 fifth-semester students enrolled in an English education program at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. All students had previously taken *Academic Writing* and *Research Methodology* courses. Students entered the course with different levels of preparation. Some were already familiar with academic writing and research knowledge, while others still needed guidance. The course used PjBL, DI, and a Deep Learning framework. PjBL organized students' work around a continuing research-article project. DI was used to guide students based on their different needs through model articles, selected resources, guiding questions, and consultation. The Deep Learning framework encouraged students to engage in meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. In this study, PjBL, DI and Deep Learning formed only the instructional setting. They were not tested as separate variables.

Table 1*Study Context, Reflective Corpus, and Analytic Design*

Element	Description
Course and setting	Research Methods in ELT at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia
Participants	35 fifth-semester EFL undergraduates
Duration	16 meetings across one academic semester
Shared project	Individual journal-style ELT research article
Reflective corpus	560 journal entries (35 students x 16 meetings)
Prompt-level responses	3,920 responses (560 entries x 7 recurring prompts)
Primary coding unit	One complete response to one reflective-journal prompt
Coding structure	30 evolving, non-exclusive codes organized into six themes
Longitudinal comparison	Phase 1: Meetings 1-5; Phase 2: Meetings 6-13; Phase 3: Meetings 14-16
Analytic approach	Theoretically informed codebook thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's recursive six-phase process

Reflective Journal and Data Corpus

Two experts reviewed the reflective-journal template for content validity, clarity, relevance, practicality, and suitability for the course. The mean score was 3.72 on a four-point scale, which fell within the very valid category (3.26-4.00). Following their comments, the instructions were clarified and the response length was adjusted to make the journal manageable.

At the end of each meeting, students completed a reflective journal of about 120-180 words, which took around 15-25 minutes. They responded to seven recurring prompts about learning insights, self-awareness, enjoyment and engagement, challenges and strategies, feedback and revision, changes in attitude, and future learning goals. Students were allowed to write in English, Indonesian, or a combination of both so that what they wanted to express was not restricted due to language limitations. The journals were not assessed for language accuracy, and students were not expected to provide only positive responses. They were also informed that they could write about difficulties, uncertainty, or negative experiences.

The dataset included 560 reflective-journal entries and 3,920 responses to the recurring prompts. Students responded to the same prompts after each meeting to compare students' reflections across the course. However, the results were interpreted carefully because some of the themes were related to topics already included in the journal prompts.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a theoretically informed codebook thematic analysis and compared patterns across the three project phases. Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2020, 2022) recursive six-phase process guided the analysis: familiarization, coding, generating candidate themes, reviewing and developing themes, defining and naming themes, and analytic writing. The codebook helped organize the large dataset, but the themes were

not produced automatically from fixed categories. They were reviewed and developed during the analysis.

For familiarization, the data were read in two ways. First, each student's reflection was followed across the 16 meetings. Second, students' responses were compared within the same meeting. One complete response to one reflective-journal prompt was used as the main coding unit. Codes were non-exclusive, allowing a response to receive more than one code when interconnected processes were present. An evolving set of 30 codes was ultimately organized into six themes.

For longitudinal comparison, Meetings 1–5 were grouped as the orientation and project-planning phase, Meetings 6–13 as intensive inquiry and writing, and Meetings 14–16 as manuscript integration, peer review, revision, and future-oriented reflection. These groupings were analytical rather than instructional phases and did not replace the PjBL sequence used in the course. Themes were reviewed across students, meetings, prompt domains, phases, and less-positive or disconfirming cases.

Theme presence was counted once per response even when several subcodes from the same theme occurred. Because the three phases contained different numbers of responses, the reported percentages were treated descriptively. They indicate changes in the relative prominence of patterns over time rather than participant prevalence, statistical significance, or thematic importance.

Writer positioning was examined through four response-level indicators: task completer, guided participant, strategic reviser, and reflective authorial positioning. These represented, respectively, task completion without clear justification, reliance on explicit guidance, deliberate revision based on criteria or feedback, and evaluation or ownership of research-writing decisions. Each response was assigned the indicator that best represented its dominant positioning. Ambiguous responses were checked against surrounding journal entries and the student's longitudinal trajectory. The indicators were used as interpretive descriptors rather than fixed identities or developmental stages.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used at an early stage of analysis to assist with the organization of de-identified responses using researcher-defined keywords and rules. The researchers then checked these outputs against the original journal entries, including representative and less-positive cases. ChatGPT did not generate or modify students' responses or make final analytic decisions. The researchers remained responsible for the final codes, themes, quotations, descriptive calculations, and interpretation.

The researchers kept an audit trail to document how the data were organized and interpreted during the analysis. They also wrote reflexive memos to consider possible

influences from the lecturer-researcher role, and repeated journal prompts, and the use of bilingual data. These memos helped to check interpretations and avoid making overinterpretation. A senior qualitative researcher also reviewed the code boundaries and discussed alternative interpretations as a critical friend. Less-positive and unexpected responses were also kept in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Institutional approval was obtained before the study began, and all students provided written informed consent. Participation was voluntary. Students could choose not to participate or withdraw without any effect. They were also informed that critical comments or negative experiences written in their journals would not affect their grades or support provided by the lecturer.

For analysis, each student was identified using a code from S01-S35. All information that could reveal individual identities was also removed. Findings were reported through combined patterns and anonymized journal excerpts. Indonesian or mixed-language excerpts were translated into English while keeping the intended meaning. All data were kept in password-protected files with limited access.

Findings

Six themes were identified from the students' reflective journal: meaningful authentic inquiry, differentiated scaffolding and visible criteria, research-method competence and evidence-based reasoning, feedback-driven revision and reflective authorship, joyful but demanding engagement, and self-regulated future orientation and anticipated transfer. These themes appeared throughout the project, although their prominence changed across the three phases. The analysis therefore pays particular attention to how students' reflective focus and writer positioning changed over time.

RQ1: Changes in Reflective Attention and Writer Positioning Across Project Phases

Phase 1: research purpose, feasibility, and accessible standards

In the first five meetings, much of the reflection concerned decisions needed at the beginning of the research project. Meaningful Authentic Inquiry appeared in 38.2% of responses. 19.5% talked about the research problem or gap and whether it was feasible. Model articles or worked examples accounted for 28.8%, and checklists, rubrics, or templates made up 18.9%. Most students were looking to focus on their topic and get a better understanding of what the article should be. They were also looking for references to help start their project.

Revision was something students already did at this stage. They positioned themselves as strategic revisers 63.1% of the time, while guided participant positioning accounted for 30.5%. Model texts were still being used, along with peer input and lecturer guidance.

They also began to incorporate criteria and feedback when editing their writing. This is what S05 wrote about: choosing something they enjoyed but could also research.

Table 2

Response-Level Theme Presence Across Project Phases

Theme	Phase 1 n (%)	Phase 2 n (%)	Phase 3 n (%)	Trajectory Interpretation
Meaningful Authentic Inquiry	468 (38.2%)	538 (27.4%)	164 (22.3%)	Most prominent during orientation; later embedded in academic decision-making.
Differentiated Scaffolding and Visible Criteria	828 (67.6%)	1,148 (58.6%)	359 (48.8%)	Present across phases and gradually shifts from providing access to supporting self-checking.
Research-Method Competence and Evidence-Based Reasoning	523 (42.7%)	1,049 (53.5%)	350 (47.6%)	Increases during intensive production and remains important during final integration.
Feedback-Driven Revision and Reflective Authorship	791 (64.6%)	1,047 (53.4%)	385 (52.4%)	Present throughout the project; later reflections show stronger evaluative judgment and whole-manuscript awareness.
Joyful but Demanding Engagement	518 (42.3%)	926 (47.2%)	364 (49.5%)	Confidence grows over time, although challenges and pressure remain visible.
Self-Regulated Future Orientation and Anticipated Transfer	616 (50.3%)	767 (39.1%)	287 (39.0%)	Goal setting remains evident; explicit transfer and independent strategy use appear mainly in the final phase.

Note. Phase 1 contained 1,225 responses, Phase 2 contained 1,960 responses, and Phase 3 contained 735 responses. A theme was counted once in a response even when several related codes appeared in that response. The percentages show how often each theme appeared within a phase. They do not represent the percentage of students or the importance of one theme compared with another.

“This meeting helped me understand research focus and tradition alignment in a more systematic way. Through my topic on code switching in classroom interaction, I learned that making the focus narrower is important because research article needs clear logic, evidence, and a realistic scope.” (S05, Meeting 3, translated from a mixed-language entry)

Examples and checklists were mentioned by several students when they explained how they approached the task. After feedback on the research scope, S08 revised an unclear sentence and checked it against the research question. Other students wrote about enjoying the work when they could see progress or talk a problem over with a classmate. Their entries also indicated that further revision was needed.

Phase 2: research methods, evidence, and article development

During Meetings 6–13, the reflection related more directly to the work needed to develop the different sections of the article. Research-method competence and evidence-based reasoning increased from 42.7% in Phase 1 to 53.5% in Phase 2. Reference to source synthesis, paraphrasing, and citations increased from 3.2% to 15.8%. Instruments, data

collection, and analysis appeared in 21.9% of the responses. Reasoning, argumentation, and coherence within sections of the article increased from 18.1% to 26.4%. Finding relevant sources was no longer enough. Students also had to connect the sources, choose methods that matched their research questions, and use the information to build an argument. S04 discussed these concerns in Meeting 9.

"In the next phase, I want to improve the coherence of my article, especially in connecting my literature review to my methodology. I plan to focus on organizing my ideas more clearly and making sure each part of the article supports the research purpose. My next step will be refining my draft, preparing my instruments, and ensuring that my explanation is strong enough before I move to the collection stage." (S04, Meeting 9)

Feedback was mentioned frequently during this stage. Students wrote more about the revisions they had made to their drafts than about their judgements of the comments they had received. Feedback receipt was referred to in 27.9% of responses, and feedback uptake or revision in 35.7% of responses. Only 4.7% of responses included a clear judgement about whether a comment was relevant or not. In many cases, students commented on what they had changed, but wrote less about why they had accepted, adapted, or rejected feedback.

Not all problems were writing knowledge-based. S33 had issues with Mendeley and used a friend's laptop. The student also asked for examples more related to the research topic. S28 noted a similar device access concern. These situations suggest some students required practical resources in addition to academic advice.

Positioning data also shifted during this stage. Reflective authorial positioning increased to 10.2%, guided participant positioning to 42.3% and strategic reviser positioning to 45.2%. Students were assuming more responsibility for writing decisions, while still utilizing lecturer guidance, peer support and other resources.

Phase 3: manuscript integration, revision, and authorial judgement

In the final phase, students were more focused on the manuscript globally. Section-level reasoning, argumentation and coherence was at 28.4%. Interpretation of feedback was present in 5.3% of the responses. Prioritization of whole-manuscript revision was present in this phase at 1.5%. Evaluative judgment or authorial responsibility reached 7.8%. Although these indicators showed low percentages, some students had started to evaluate the manuscript more carefully and decide what needed to be revised first.

Students also began to consider whether changes made in one section remained consistent with the rest of the manuscript. S04 reflected on relationships among research

questions, design, participants, instruments, and analysis, while S28 described revising the conclusion, abstract, and manuscript integration against the research question.

Confidence increased from 6.7% of Phase 1 responses to 10.6% in Phase 2 and 13.5% in Phase 3. However, difficulty, anxiety, and workload remained relatively stable at approximately 26–27% across phases. Students therefore reported greater confidence without a corresponding disappearance of challenge. S10 captured this combination of progress and continuing academic demand:

"I felt motivated when I completed the final version of the project and could clearly see my progress from the beginning. I enjoyed this part of the project because it represented the outcome of my learning journey. What made the activity meaningful was realizing that I am now more capable of producing structured and evidence-based academic writing." (S10, Meeting 16)

Future-oriented reflection also became more visible. Anticipated transfer did not appear in Phase 1, emerged in only 0.5% of the Phase 2 responses, and became slightly more frequent in Phase 3 at 3.0%. A few students referred to using feedback or research-writing strategies in their future academic work, but these responses showed intention rather than actual transfer.

Table 3 shows the overall writer-positioning trajectory. In the final phase, responses exhibited more reflective authorial positioning and guided participant positioning. Reflective authorial positioning increased from 5.8% to 13.9%, and guided participant positioning from 30.5% to 47.5%. The number of strategic reviser responses declined from 63.1% in Phase 1 to 35.4% in the final phase. Responses indicating a primary focus on task completion remained uncommon.

Table 3

Writer-Positioning Indicators Across Project Phases

Writer-Positioning Indicator	Phase 1 n (%)	Phase 2 n (%)	Phase 3 n (%)
Task Completer	7 (0.6%)	45 (2.3%)	24 (3.3%)
Guided Participant	374 (30.5%)	830 (42.3%)	349 (47.5%)
Strategic Reviser	773 (63.1%)	885 (45.2%)	260 (35.4%)
Reflective Authorial Positioning	71 (5.8%)	200 (10.2%)	102 (13.9%)

During the initial sessions, students thought about why they were writing, whether it was possible, and how to write to good standards. As the reflections progressed, they discussed how they would go about researching and writing their article, the different parts of an article, and putting their manuscript together. They were also starting to check their own work. Students showed greater guided participation and reflective authorial positioning as they became more involved in their writing while still drawing on support from others, such as lecturers and peers.

RQ2: Supporting and Constraining Factors in Developing Reflective Authorship

The six themes were interconnected across the project. Students' reflective authorship was underpinned by clear research purposes, visible criteria, differentiated support, methodological guidance, feedback, peer interaction, and opportunities to manage their own learning. However, broad topics, difficulties with synthesis and methodological alignment, workload, technology problems, and uneven feedback continued to make the writing process difficult. Some students also still needed guidance during the later stages. Table 4 summarizes these relationships.

Table 4*Factors Supporting and Constraining the Development of Reflective Authorship*

Mechanism	Supporting Factors	Constraining Factors	Developmental Function
Meaningful Authentic Inquiry	ELT-related issues, student-selected topics, thesis and publication goals, audience awareness	Overly broad topics, uncertain feasibility, focus on task completion rather than research understanding	Helps students view article writing as a meaningful and researchable academic project
Differentiated Scaffolding and Visible Criteria	Model articles, examples, checklists, rubrics, templates, consultations, peer support, digital resources	Too many resources or criteria, continued reliance on examples, uneven access and usefulness	Makes academic standards more accessible and supports informed decision-making
Research-Method Competence and Evidence-Based Reasoning	Literature evaluation, synthesis, citation, methodological alignment, data work, argumentation	Difficulties with synthesis, paraphrasing, citation, interpretation, and coherence	Connects academic writing with research design, evidence, and knowledge construction
Feedback-Driven Revision and Reflective Authorship	Lecturer and peer feedback, revision cycles, comparison with criteria, self-evaluation	Excessive, unclear, conflicting, or uncritically accepted feedback; limited revision time	Supports the move from correction to interpretation, revision, and emerging judgment
Joyful but Demanding Engagement	Motivation, confidence, visible progress, peer encouragement, persistence	Anxiety, workload, time pressure, uneven confidence, publication expectations	Sustains engagement while acknowledging the challenges of academic writing
Self-Regulated Future Orientation and Anticipated Transfer	Goal setting, planning, monitoring, independent learning, future thesis or publication plans	Short-term task focus, weak time management, transfer beyond the course not yet evident	Connects current learning experiences with future academic writing practices

The first three mechanisms primarily concerned students' access to the academic and research demands of the project. Personally meaningful topics supported engagement when they remained feasible within available time and data. Models, rubrics, checklists, consultations, and peer support helped students interpret unfamiliar standards. As the project moved forward, the students' focus increasingly turned to the relationships among research questions, literature, methods, instruments, data, analysis and

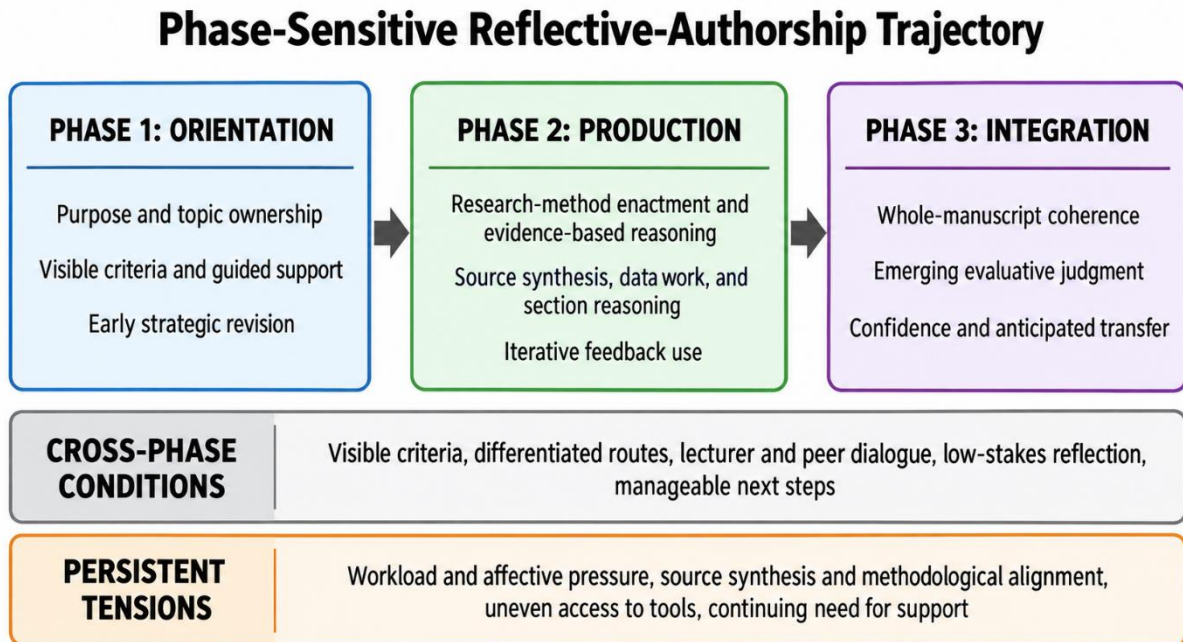
conclusions. Source synthesis, paraphrasing, citation, interpretation, and manuscript coherence continued to present problems for some students.

Students often mentioned comments from lecturers and peers when describing what they changed. Comments were useful when they addressed a specific issue in their writing. Journal entries discussed using comments more often than judging or prioritizing them. Some issues still remained, such as workload, time, stress, and technology. With clear guidance and peer discussion, some students were able to continue working on their manuscripts. Seeing progress in their manuscript also made the process feel easier.

There was also a change in what students wrote about as they worked on the project. In the early entries, students tended to mention having a schedule, meeting deadlines, and completing assigned tasks. Toward the end of the study, some students mentioned checking their drafts more carefully, using comments for revision, and deciding what to do next. Some even said that they would use these strategies when writing their thesis or preparing for publication in the future. Since the study ended when the course ended, we cannot claim that transfer had occurred; however, the comments indicate planned future use rather than providing evidence that transfer had already taken place.

Students did not develop in precisely the same manner. S18 appreciated smaller and more flexible steps but continued to require feedback to see gaps. S13 continued to have conversations about the work with peers, even after becoming more acquainted with the project. S16 came back to lecturer support when a previously identified topic was ruled out. Problems persisted towards the end, too. S03 continued to experience issues with clarity, coherence, academic style and publication expectations, while S19 still found objective self-evaluation extremely difficult. In all of these cases, heightened awareness did not eliminate the need for academic, social or practical support.

The RQ2 findings show that reflective authorship developed through clear research purposes, visible criteria, differentiated guidance, feedback, persistence, and self-regulation. Students continued to experience methodological difficulties, workloads, unequal access to research resources, and a continuing need for academic support. Thus, reflective authorship developed while support and difficulties were still present. Figure 1 summarizes these phase-sensitive patterns.

Figure 1*Phase-Sensitive Reflective-Authorship Trajectory*

Note. The figure shows how students' main areas of reflection changed across the three phases and how different forms of support were involved.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that students did not reflect on the same issues throughout the course. Their focus changed as they moved through different stages of research-article writing. At the beginning, they reflected on topic feasibility, research purpose, and academic expectations. During article development, their attention moved toward methodology, evidence, and relationships among article sections. By the final meetings, some students paid more attention to manuscript integration, revisions, and their own writing decisions. This phase-sensitive pattern had been reported in earlier longitudinal studies. Zhang et al. (2022) found changes in self-regulated writing strategies and Zhang and Chieh (2025) reported that reflective-journal supported writing regulation and motivation. The present study adds another perspective by following these changes throughout the process of producing one complete research article.

Reflective journaling also helped reveal how students responded to different research and writing demands during the project. Previous studies have found that students can identify issues, evaluate their learning, and become more aware of their metacognition through a reflective journal (Ahmed, 2019, 2020; Aliyu et al., 2023; Sudirman et al., 2021). Students would reflect on whether their topic was narrowed down enough during the first few meetings. Later on, they began to focus on ensuring their methods matched their topic, supporting evidence, flow, and editing. This change, however, did not occur in the same way for all students. Some students began to reflect more carefully on their writing decisions, while others still needed examples or discussion with peers or the lecturer. Just

as Almutawa and Alfahid (2024) found, not all students reflected to the same extent. By collecting reflections after each meeting, we were able to see these differences throughout the process.

Writer positioning evolved further through the project. Even though their reflective authorial positioning became more pronounced, students still sought guidance. Learners began to take greater responsibility for research-writing decisions. They still asked lecturers and peers for advice and used model texts, checklists, feedback, and digital tools. They began combining these activities in ways that approximated what this study terms “responsible interdependence.” Prior research has described academic authorship as emerging from disciplinary and social engagement (Miao & Shi, 2025; Qi & Zhao, 2023). In this research, simply continuing to use scaffolds was not necessarily a sign of dependent authorship. The critical factor was how students used that support to shape their own choices. A learner could ask a lecturer for feedback but then decide which comments to implement. That student could also continue to read model articles but consult them to confirm their own choices.

Feedback was one area of this development. Students reported that they received comments and made revisions, but responses which showed that they evaluated the feedback before using it were fewer. It is not in line with Carless and Boud's (2018) view that feedback literacy involves more than receiving comments. Students also need to judge whether the feedback is relevant and decide how it should be used. Zhang and Hyland (2023) similarly showed that students differed in the extent to which revision was self-regulated or still guided by others. This pattern appeared in the present study. Students often acted on feedback, but only some later reflections explained why particular comments were accepted, modified, or rejected. Thus, their ability to evaluate feedback was becoming more visible, although it was not yet consistent. It is in line with Apridayani et al. (2026), who found that feedback uptake can be influenced by how students and teachers understand feedback.

The continued need for assistance also explains the variation in how reflective authorship developed among students. Su et al. (2026) define co-regulation as shared planning, monitoring, evaluation, and support in collaborative writing. Although students in this study each wrote individual articles, they continued to receive support from peers, lecturers, models, criteria, and technological tools. For example, S33 and S28 faced difficulties with devices and reference-management tools. Their cases highlight how writing difficulties did not always concern knowledge or academic skills. Students also required sufficient resources to apply what they had learned.

The combination of instructional contexts could also provide students with different forms of support. PjBL offered students the same procedure from inquiry to final manuscript submission. DI allowed instructors to support students based on their

different needs. Previous research found that PjBL supported students in EFL writing (Cahyono et al., 2024; Guo et al., 2020; Mujiono et al., 2024), and DI offered different supports to help students achieve similar academic goals (Fajariyah et al., 2023; Langelaan et al., 2024; Tomlinson, 2017). This study did not test PjBL and DI individually; therefore, the results could not suggest causal relationships. Qualitative results from students' reflections revealed that students received different types of support at different phases of the writing process. Explicit support in terms of examples, criteria, and instructor guidance assisted students in comprehending expectations and determining researchable topics that were not too ambitious. Later phases of the writing process required support more related to methodology, providing evidence, responding to feedback, revising drafts, and developing a cohesive manuscript. Xu et al. (2026) also found that when writing support was adaptive to students' needs throughout the writing process, students found it more useful.

Students wrote about the emotional element as well. Anxiety, workload, and lack of time were still present alongside confidence. The article had not become easier; students appeared better able to manage what was required. Joyful learning in this scenario was not synonymous with stress-free learning. Students wrote more positively when they felt they were making progress, when they were working with self-chosen topics, when they were helped by their classmates, and when they overcame problems that had been holding them back. It seemed more important to have enough support to keep going than to eliminate all struggle.

In their final reflection, a few of the students indicated that they were planning to use what they had learned at some later point for thesis writing or for publication. At this late stage, they were beginning to identify some of the strategies as potentially useful beyond the confines of the course. The study concluded at the final meeting, however, so it cannot demonstrate whether or not these plans were actually implemented. The statements in question are treated here as an instance of anticipated transfer.

Reflective authorship, then, was not a matter of students becoming completely independent. When the writing became more demanding, they took a larger part in making their own decisions but continued to use lecturers, peers, model articles, feedback, and other resources. The study characterizes this combination as responsible interdependence. Students were becoming more responsible for their writing without having to work entirely on their own.

Seen from an ERPP perspective, this pattern indicates that learning how to write for publication was more than just writing an acceptable article. Students were learning how to justify and explain decisions made about evidence, disciplinary expectations, feedback, and revision as they utilized available support (Flowerdew, 2026; Flowerdew & Habibie, 2022).

These findings have practical implications for publication-oriented EFL writing courses. In the early stages, students may need feasibility checks, model articles, and clear criteria to establish a manageable research direction. During article development, support can move toward source synthesis, methodological alignment, evidence use, and focused feedback. Near manuscript completion, students need opportunities to check whole-text coherence and explain why particular feedback is accepted, modified, or rejected. Structured feedback cycles that include reflection and clarification may support this process (Plengkham et al., 2026). Practical access should not be overlooked either, because devices, reference-management tools, and topic-specific resources can affect whether students are able to act on what they know.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The findings should be understood in light of the context in which the study took place. All of the 35 participants were drawn from one class at a private Indonesian university, so experiences may differ at other institutions. The study was also heavily reliant on students' reflective journals over the course of 16 meetings. While these repeated entries enabled trajectories of change to be traced, journal entries only record what students chose to write at the time and do not necessarily capture everything students were thinking about or doing as they made writing decisions. Additionally, because each meeting used the same prompts, it is possible that students' attention was drawn to particular issues. Finally, the lecturer also served as a researcher. While students were able to discuss challenges and negative experiences, some participants may still have held back from writing certain things.

Future studies could broaden participation to students at other universities and triangulate multiple sources of data. These could include reflective journals paired with article drafts, records of revisions, interviews, and notes of feedback received. Such triangulation would allow writing decisions to be analyzed from various forms of evidence. Tracking students beyond the course could also be beneficial, especially during thesis writing or future publishing endeavors, as the current study was only able to record plans for future use. Another inquiry might involve the kind of support students require later in the writing process. Would future research show that students apply that support to make more informed decisions or simply to comply with external suggestions? This type of evidence could help illustrate the development of responsible interdependence outside of a single course.

Conclusion

This study followed 35 Indonesian EFL undergraduates while they developed a research article over 16 course meetings. What students reflected on changed with the work they were doing. In the early meetings, many entries concerned research purpose, feasible topics, and academic expectations. Later entries dealt more with methods, evidence, article development, manuscript integration, and students' own writing decisions.

Reflective authorial positioning also became more visible, although guidance remained part of the process.

Students did not need to work completely on their own in order to take more responsibility for the article. They continued to use lecturers, peers, model articles, criteria, feedback, and technology while becoming more involved in making and evaluating writing decisions. The study understands this combination as responsible interdependence. Support remained available, but students increasingly used it as part of their own decision-making.

For EFL students writing for publication, completing an article is only one part of the learning process. Students also need opportunities to consider why they make particular research and writing decisions, how they respond to feedback, and when support is useful. Reflective journals can help make these processes visible while the writing is still developing. Publication-oriented writing can therefore contribute not only to a finished manuscript but also to students' growing responsibility for the decisions behind their work.

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ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used to assist with literature-search scoping, the organization of de-identified response-level data using researcher-defined keywords and rules, descriptive calculations, structural organization, and language editing. All AI-assisted outputs were checked against the original data by the authors. The authors made the final decisions regarding the codebook, themes, representative extracts, disconfirming cases, descriptive results, longitudinal interpretation, and scholarly claims. ChatGPT did not generate or alter student responses or quotations and did not independently determine the codes, themes, findings, or interpretations. All references were independently verified by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the manuscript.

Ethics Declarations

Formal institutional permission and written informed consent were obtained before the research use of reflective-journal data. Participation was voluntary, students could decline or withdraw without academic penalty, and all reported data were anonymized. The study followed the ethical principles of the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent for Publication

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants for the anonymized use and publication of excerpts from their reflective journals.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Data Availability

The complete reflective-journal dataset is not publicly available because it contains student narratives protected by confidentiality commitments. De-identified excerpts and analytic summaries supporting the findings may be requested from the corresponding author, subject to institutional and ethical restrictions.

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