SHORT-TERM GAINS, LONG-TERM LOSS: INVESTIGATING EFL STUDENTS' RETENTION OF ACADEMIC ARTICLES AFTER GUIDED WRITING

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Abstract: *Guided academic writing courses have become common in EFL higher education, often helping students produce publishable articles. However, whether such instruction leads to lasting understanding or merely short-term task completion remains unclear. This study investigated how well undergraduate EFL students retained the content of their self-written academic articles after completing a one-semester guided writing course. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the research involved 40 students who completed a final exam task requiring them to reconstruct the abstract and main argument of their article without referring to the original. Their performance was then followed by semi-structured interviews with a stratified sample, supported by semester-long observational field notes. Results indicated that over 85% of students were unable to recall the core ideas from their own articles accurately. Thematic analysis, interpreted through the lenses of constructivist learning theory, levels of processing, and authorial identity, revealed several contributing factors: shallow cognitive engagement, limited topic relevance, over-reliance on templates and AI tools, and a lack of personal ownership in the writing process. These findings highlight a disconnection between writing performance and long-term learning. Unlike prior studies focusing primarily on writing quality or output, this research addressed post-writing memory, a dimension rarely explored in EFL writing research. The study calls for a pedagogical shift toward more reflective, cognitively engaging, and identity-driven writing practices that promote meaningful retention and deeper academic development.*

Keywords: *academic writing; guided writing; memory recall; writing ownership*

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a key skill for university students, supporting critical thinking, subject learning, and preparation for research and professional tasks (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Khairuddin et al, 2025; Teng & Yue, 2023). Developing strong academic writing competence is not only a curricular goal but also a stepping stone for publication, international engagement, and long-term academic success.

In response to this growing need, many universities in Indonesia and other countries have implemented guided academic writing programs designed to prepare undergraduate students to write publishable articles within one semester. These programs combine structured instruction, guided feedback, and step-by-step supervision throughout the writing process (Alfianika et al, 2019; Fhonna, 2020; Guo et al., 2022; Lasminiar, 2020; Sherpa, 2021). The underlying belief is that writing facilitates learning. As students engage in the writing process, they internalize content, improve reasoning, and develop a sense of academic identity (Arliyanti & Hapsari, 2022; Chukwuere, 2024; Keen, 2021; Qizi, 2021).

However, this assumption may not always be true in practice. When writing is too controlled, rushed by deadlines, and done just to finish a task, it may not help students understand deeply or remember what they learned for long (Krishnasamy et al, 2025; Levin, 2024; Repanovici & Koukourakis, 2024). In some cases, students may perform well during the writing process but fail to remember the content they wrote just weeks later. This raises a critical pedagogical question: *do students actually retain what they write?*

This study began with a classroom observation where students were asked to remember and rewrite their own academic articles during the final exam. The result was surprising: most students could not clearly recall the main points of their papers. This phenomenon highlights a possible gap between task completion and cognitive engagement, an area that remains underexplored in empirical studies on EFL academic writing.

Although there is extensive research on academic writing instruction, genre-based pedagogy, and guided writing in EFL contexts, little is known about students' ability to retain the content of what they have written after completing a guided writing project (Le et al, 2024; Zhao, Nimehchisalem, & Chan, 2024). Most studies have focused on writing quality, genre awareness, or publication outcomes, without evaluating whether students internalize the knowledge and concepts they have written about (Jiang et al, 2025; Wang & Jin, 2022). Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on how EFL students process and remember their own texts, particularly after completing guided writing instruction. This gap needs more study, as it relates to how well academic writing helps students learn deeply and remember over time.

This study offers a novel perspective by combining the dimensions of learning retention, authorial identity, and guided writing instruction in a single investigation. Rather than focusing solely on writing quality or academic achievement, it examines whether students remember what they have written and why they might forget. Through a recall-based final exam supported by semi-structured interviews and classroom observation, this study offers important insights into how EFL students think and feel during writing tasks. It contributes to the field by bridging the gap between writing as a

task and writing as a process of lasting knowledge construction, an area not often explored in EFL writing research (Giessler, 2023; Phan & Dao, 2023).

Despite receiving structured guidance, feedback, and support throughout a semester-long scientific writing course, many EFL students failed to retain what they had written. A week after submitting their argumentative essays, 40 undergraduate EFL students were asked to explain the main ideas of their own writing without seeing their papers. Most of them, 34 students or 85 percent, were unable to recall the main points of their own writing. This suggests that they completed the writing task, but their understanding of the content was not deep and lasting. When scholarly writing becomes an exercise in compliance rather than reflection, its pedagogical value is significantly reduced. This issue highlights the need to investigate how writing tasks are cognitively and emotionally experienced, and what factors influence students' ability to retain and internalize what they write.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent did EFL students recall their self-written academic articles after a semester of guided writing?
2. What factors contributed to the forgetting or retention of article content?
3. How did students perceive the guided writing process and their sense of ownership over their writing?

This study offers insights into the effectiveness of guided academic writing programs in EFL higher education. Pedagogically, it highlights the need to move beyond a product- and publication-oriented approach toward process-based instruction that fosters deeper understanding and authorial development (Aljasir, 2025; Wang & Kew, 2025). Theoretically, it contributes to ongoing discussions on deep versus surface learning (Beattie, Collins, & McInnes, 1997), self-authorship in writing (Hyland, 2002; Ivanic, 1998), and writing as a tool for knowledge construction and memory retention (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004). The emphasis on writing identity is supported by theories that view academic writing not only as a cognitive skill but also as a social and identity-forming practice (Lillis & Turner, 2001). Practically, this study encourages educators to reconsider the design, assessment, and reflection components of writing tasks to ensure that students do not merely complete assignments but engage in writing as a process of thinking, remembering, and developing their academic identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivism and the Internalization of Learning

Constructivism views learning as an active process where individuals construct meaning based on their experiences and interactions. In this perspective, knowledge is not passively received but actively built by the learner. Two foundational figures in

constructivist theory, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, have significantly influenced educational practices, particularly in language learning and academic writing.

Piaget (1972) emphasized that learners develop understanding through stages of cognitive development, where they assimilate and accommodate new information into existing mental frameworks. Meanwhile, Vygotsky (1978) introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the range of tasks that learners can perform with guidance but not yet independently. In academic writing, guided instruction helps students work within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), allowing them to write better than they could on their own (Lambright, 2023; Margolis, 2020).

However, for learning to be internalized, students must actively participate in meaning-making rather than merely following instructions. Students who rely too heavily on templates, formulas, or external assistance may complete writing tasks without fully processing the content (Nhung, 2024; Syazali et al., 2023). This study explores whether guided writing helps students truly understand or if they only perform well on paper without real thinking.

Levels of Processing Theory

The Levels of Processing (LoP) Theory, proposed by Craik & Lockhart (1972), explains memory retention as a function of how deeply information is processed. According to this theory, information processed at a shallow level, such as focusing on surface features or rote memorization, is less likely to be retained over time. In contrast, information processed at a deeper, semantic level, where meaning is analyzed and personally connected, is more likely to be remembered.

This theory has direct implications for academic writing in EFL settings. If students approach writing tasks focusing on formatting, structure, or fulfilling teacher expectations without engaging with the meaning of their arguments, they may process the task at a shallow level (Kim, Kim, Y., & Kang, 2024; Rawian & Huang, 2025). As a result, even if the final product meets formal academic standards, the content may not be retained after the task is completed. The surprising finding that many students could not recall their own written work may reflect shallow levels of processing. The final recall task helped show whether students had truly understood the ideas in their writing or if their work was shallow and short-lived.

Writing Identity and Ownership

Student engagement in writing involves both thinking skills and how they view themselves as authors and learners (Jin et al, 2022; Rahimi & Zhang, 2021). Academic writing is not just about conveying information, but also about expressing one's identity through language (He, 2020; Rahman et al, 2024; Wang, 2024). When students perceive themselves as the authors of their own texts, when they make choices, take stances, and

project their voice, they are more likely to engage deeply with the writing task and internalize its content (Lezhneva & Nikolaeva, 2024; Zhang & Wang, 2024). On the other hand, when writing becomes an exercise in compliance, such as reproducing generic structures, imitating sample texts, or relying on tools that generate content automatically, students may lack a sense of ownership over their work (Yang & McDonnell, 2024).

This study explores how students' perceived ownership of their academic articles influenced their ability to remember them. Previous research suggests that when learners see themselves as the authors of their texts, they are more likely to engage deeply and retain what they write(Kim, 2023; Wang et al, 2023). By combining recall results with interviews and classroom observations, this study explores how writing identity helps or hinders memory and understanding (Rahman et al, 2024; Schneider, 2021). Writing identity, shaped by students' sense of agency, voice, and authorship, has been shown to affect motivation, cognitive investment, and memory (Coulmas, 2020; Homan, 2019).

Related Empirical Studies

Although the cognitive and identity aspects of writing have been well studied, few empirical studies focus on how students remember their own academic writing, especially in EFL settings. Most writing research focuses on text quality, genre, or language accuracy, but rarely examines whether students remember what they have written (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Lahuerta, 2018; Staples et al, 2016; Tavanapour & Chalak, 2021).

Studies on guided writing have shown that structured instruction can support students' ability to complete academic texts and develop genre awareness (Gintings, 2020; Thongchalerm & Jarunthawatchai, 2020). However, these studies often focus on performance outcomes rather than cognitive retention. Similarly, research on reflective writing suggests that metacognitive engagement enhances memory and learning (Kim, 2024; Volkov, 2024), but the role of recall in research-oriented academic writing has been underexplored. Some studies have noted the risk of surface learning in writing, especially when students focus more on deadlines and formats than on understanding their ideas (Hammond & Barber, 2024; Mishra et al, 2024; Wynn-Williams et al, 2016). This study builds on past research using recall to measure learning depth, aiming to assess how guided academic writing affects EFL students' learning.

METHOD

Research Design

This study applied an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023), integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore EFL students' retention of academic article content after guided writing. The design was structured in two phases. First, quantitative data from a recall-based final exam were collected to measure how much of their written work students remembered. Second,

qualitative data from interviews and observational notes were analyzed to explain the patterns found in the initial results. This mixed-methods approach was chosen for its ability to offer both breadth and depth. While quantitative measures allowed the researcher to capture general trends in content retention, the qualitative component provided insights into the underlying cognitive, emotional, and instructional factors influencing student memory and engagement. This design also enabled triangulation between student performance, perceptions, and classroom realities, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings.

Participants

The participants were 40 undergraduate EFL students enrolled in a scientific writing course at the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, Indonesia, during one semester of instruction. They were purposefully selected because they had completed prerequisite courses in basic and intermediate writing and were in the process of developing publishable academic articles under structured guidance.

For the qualitative phase, stratified purposeful sampling was applied to select a smaller group of students for follow-up interviews. Five students were selected from each recall level category to ensure balanced representation. This approach supported cross-group comparison and analytic depth. Students were categorized based on their recall performance (high, moderate, and low), ensuring that perspectives from different achievement levels were represented. This strategy provided balanced insights while enabling meaningful thematic exploration (Patton, 2015). Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants, including their gender, age, and recall performance in the qualitative phase.

Table 1.
Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 40)

Category	Subgroup	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	30
	Female	28	70
Age	19–20	18	35
	21–22	20	50
	23-24	2	15
Recall Performance (n=15)	High	5	33.3
	Moderate	5	33.3
	Low	5	33.3

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of participants (N = 40). For the qualitative sample, percentages are calculated from the subsample of 15 students.

Instruments and Data Collection

To capture both the observable behaviors and internal experiences of students in relation to scientific writing and memory retention, this study employed multiple instruments: classroom observation notes, a recall-based final exam, and semi-structured interviews. This triangulated approach allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon from multiple dimensions: quantitative performance, qualitative perception, and classroom context, thereby enhancing the validity and richness of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

First, observation notes were taken systematically throughout the semester. As the instructor-researcher, the author recorded reflections and behavioral patterns related to students' engagement with the scientific writing process. These included signs of motivation, collaboration, overreliance on guidance, hesitation during revisions, and observable use of external tools such as templates and AI-generated content. Observation served as a contextual lens that revealed potential factors influencing whether students processed scientific writing tasks deeply or superficially. Such reflective documentation helped identify moments of surface compliance versus meaningful participation, two contrasting behaviors with implications for learning retention.

Second, the final exam recall task was designed as the central quantitative instrument. In this task, students were asked to reconstruct the abstract and the main argument of the academic article they had written earlier in the semester. Importantly, they were not allowed to access their original document. This task functioned as an indirect measure of semantic memory and the internalization of content, emphasizing whether students could recall their own academic work through conceptual understanding rather than surface-level memorization (Abhishek, 2022; Chen et al, 2024; Peng, Logie, & Della Sala, 2024). Their responses were evaluated based on coherence, accuracy, and thematic alignment with the original content of their submitted articles (Qizi, 2021).

Third, to gain deeper insight into the reasons behind varied recall performance, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with a stratified sample of 12 students. Interview questions explored students' emotional and cognitive engagement with their scientific writing, their strategies for organizing ideas, the challenges they encountered, and their sense of authorship or ownership over the article. This qualitative phase provided a window into the personal experiences and meaning-making processes that could not be captured through quantitative scores alone, as described by Braun and Clarke (2021). All instruments were reviewed for content relevance and clarity by two EFL colleagues with expertise in academic writing and qualitative research. Their input helped ensure alignment with the study's objectives, supporting ethical and purposeful data collection while maintaining academic rigor and respecting student agency and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The recall task was scored using descriptive statistics, focusing on three main indicators: (1) accuracy of reconstructed content, (2) coherence of ideas, and (3) alignment with the original argument. Scores were grouped into high, moderate, and low recall categories. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase process by Braun and Clarke (2021). Codes were generated inductively and then grouped into themes such as "*surface compliance*," "*lack of ownership*," and "*deep reflection*." This process allowed for a grounded exploration of how students experienced the writing process and why some retained more than others. Finally, the researcher triangulated findings by integrating insights from classroom observation. These notes enriched the analysis by revealing behavioral cues correlated with students' recall levels. This multi-angle analysis enhanced both trustworthiness and contextual validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To analyze recall levels, student responses were evaluated using a three-level rubric: high, partial, and low recall. This rubric was developed based on three criteria: content accuracy, coherence, and thematic alignment with the original article. Two trained raters independently assessed all responses. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (κ = .84), indicating strong reliability. The rubric is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Conceptual Recall Evaluation Rubric (CRER)

Recall Level	Description	Indicators
High Recall	Accurate and coherent reconstruction of the main argument, key points, and structure	Precise summary of abstract and argument, logically organized, consistent with original submission
Partial Recall	Some correct elements recalled, but with gaps or confusion	Mentions topic or 1–2 key points, but lacks clarity, completeness, or contains errors
Low Recall	Minimal or unrelated content recalled	Vague or off-topic answers, major omissions, or incorrect recall of core ideas

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully followed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, and their voluntary participation and anonymity were guaranteed through informed consent. Data were stored securely and reported without revealing personal identities. Special care was taken to preserve academic integrity. While the researcher served as the students' instructor, efforts were made to maintain neutrality and fairness, especially during grading and interviews. The study was conducted under the university's ethical research guidelines, and students were assured that their participation or performance would not impact their academic standing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Levels and Patterns of Conceptual Recall

Quantitative data were drawn from a final exam recall task in which 40 EFL students were instructed to reconstruct the abstract and main argument of their previously written academic article without referring to the original text. Analysis showed that only 4 students (10%) demonstrated high recall. Twelve students (30%) displayed partial recall, while the majority of students, 24 (60%), fell into the low recall category. It indicates that most students struggled to internalize and retrieve the content they had written, suggesting surface-level engagement with the writing task.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of student conceptual recall levels based on their performance in this task. The aim was to assess the extent to which students had internalized and could retrieve the central meaning of their writing, offering insight into long-term cognitive retention.
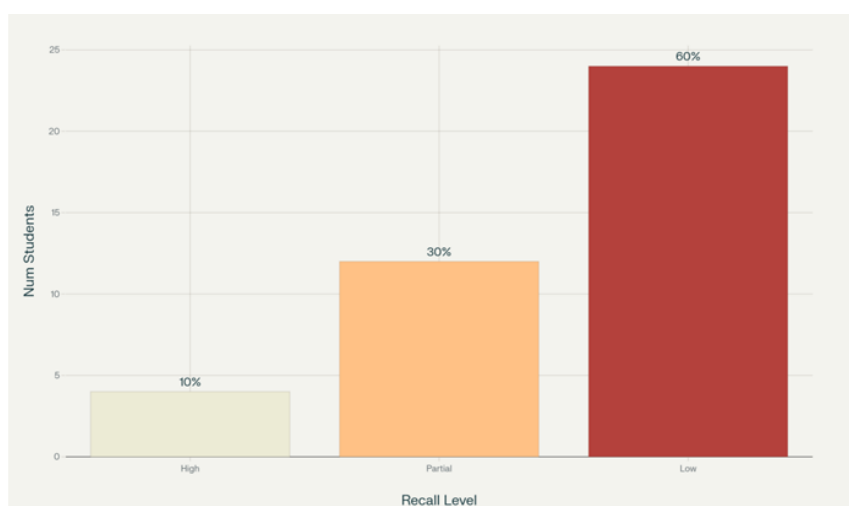

Figure 1. Distribution of Student Recall Levels

This figure illustrates the percentage of students categorized under High Recall, Partial Recall, and Low Recall according to the Conceptual Recall Evaluation Rubric (CRER), reflecting their ability to reconstruct the main argument and structure of their previously written academic article. Student responses were evaluated using the Conceptual Recall Evaluation Rubric (CRER), a three-level analytic tool comprising High, Partial, and Low Recalls. This rubric measured the accuracy, coherence, and conceptual depth of the recalled content.

Students achieving High Recall accurately reconstructed their main thesis, supporting arguments, and logical organization, reflecting deep semantic processing. In contrast, Partial Recall responses demonstrated a general awareness of the topic but

lacked clarity, coherence, or complete representation of key points. The most frequent pattern, Low Recall, included vague, fragmented, or inaccurate responses, with minimal resemblance to the original argument.

Factors Influencing Retention and Forgetting

The analysis of interview data identified three interrelated factors influencing students' ability to recall their academic writing: procedural orientation toward structure, time-constrained writing behavior, and reliance on digital tools. These patterns indicate that students' surface-level engagement with writing tasks, while sufficient for meeting immediate academic requirements, limits conceptual retention and impedes the development of long-term understanding.

First, structural compliance was prioritized over meaning-making. Many students reported that they followed the formal components of academic writing, such as including background, objectives, and methodology, not as a product of internalized genre knowledge, but as a response to instructional expectations. As one participant stated, "*I just followed the structure given by the lecturer background, objective, method. I didn't really think deeply about the content.*" This procedural mindset, reinforced by rubric-driven assessment and template-based instruction, appeared to displace deeper cognitive engagement. Students fulfilled structural expectations without constructing a coherent argument or reflecting on the logic of their content. The lack of semantic processing during the writing phase likely contributed to poor conceptual recall during the exam task. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that form-focused instruction can hinder deeper comprehension when not paired with reflective meaning construction.

Second, many students described performance-oriented behaviors shaped by time pressure. Writing was often treated as a task to complete rather than a cognitive process to internalize. One student confessed, "*I finished the article two days before the deadline. During the exam, I couldn't remember what I wrote.*" Such responses reflect a short-term, product-driven approach to academic tasks. Students aimed to meet deadlines and satisfy external requirements but had limited opportunity for iterative revision, elaboration, or self-explanation—all processes crucial to meaningful learning. This behavior is consistent with surface learning strategies, where immediate task completion precedes reflection and retention. As a result, writing became an externalized task rather than an internalized process, reducing the likelihood of content being encoded into long-term memory.

Finally, students' dependence on external digital tools, particularly AI-powered platforms, further impeded conceptual ownership of their writing. Several participants admitted to using tools like ChatGPT to generate or revise parts of their text. One student shared, "*I used ChatGPT to help make the abstract. I only edited it a little, so during the exam I didn't know what to write.*" While useful for linguistic accuracy and efficiency, these tools appeared to reduce students' active involvement in generating content and constructing

arguments. When the cognitive load of idea development is outsourced to digital aids, the likelihood of deep processing and retention diminishes. Tool-mediated writing contributed to the disjunction between students' written output and their subsequent ability to recall and reconstruct it.

Limited Ownership, Conflicted Guidance, and Emotional Engagement in Writing

Lack of Ownership and Authorial Identity

Students often viewed writing as a task rather than a meaningful process. Many expressed emotional detachment and limited authorial presence. One remarked, "*I wrote it just because it was an assignment,*" while another said, "*I followed the lecturer's example, but it wasn't truly my own writing.*" This lack of ownership may have reduced motivation to revisit their work and weakened memory retention. Cognitively, minimal personal engagement likely hindered long-term encoding of ideas.

Perceptions of Guided Instruction

Students appreciated structured guidance but felt it limited expression. One student stated, "*The steps were clear, but I wasn't given much room for expression.*" Another reflected, "*We depended too much on examples and templates, so we didn't get to think for ourselves*". Although lecturer guidance supported task completion, excessive reliance on templates limited critical thinking and reflective authorship, as seen in controlled writing environments.

Emotional Engagement Supports Memory Retention

Students with high recall often chose personally meaningful topics, which enhanced memory and engagement. One noted, "*I chose a topic related to technology because it's my passion... I remembered the content more easily.*" This aligns with cognitive theories linking emotional relevance to stronger semantic encoding. When writing is meaningful, students are more likely to retain, reflect on, and internalize their ideas. These findings highlight the value of promoting voice, choice, and personal connection in writing instruction.

Discussion

Levels of Recall in Academic Writing

The varied recall levels observed in students' responses suggest differing depths of cognitive engagement with writing (Chen & Hu, 2025; Fu, Yang, & Zhang, 2024). Although a few participants could retrieve key arguments and examples, the majority demonstrated only partial or minimal recall. This pattern reflects surface-level engagement, where writing is treated as task completion rather than a process of knowledge construction (Guo et al., 2022). Writing activities were often approached procedurally, focusing on

structural and lexical accuracy rather than conceptual ownership (Gu, Noordin, & Ismail, 2025). Consequently, ideas were processed shallowly and not consolidated into long-term memory (Ajabshir & Poorebrahim, 2021; Peng, Logie, & Della Sala, 2024)

These findings align with generative learning theory, which holds that deep understanding arises when learners actively integrate new information with existing knowledge (Anaktototy et al., 2023; Mishra et al, 2024). Students who viewed writing as a mechanical task rather than a reflective or meaning-making activity likely failed to engage in generative processes such as elaboration, self-explanation, or personalization. As a result, their ability to recall the content was limited and short-lived. It underscores the need for instructional strategies that shift students from performance-based output to reflective and conceptual engagement.

Factors Influencing Students' Ability to Recall

Several interrelated factors shaped students' ability to recall their writing content, including emotional connection, topic relevance, and the presence or absence of personal investment (Ke & Zhou, 2024). Students who selected topics aligned with their interests or classroom discourse demonstrated stronger recall. When students wrote about familiar or meaningful topics such as AI or digital technology, their writing became an extension of their voice and thinking, leading to deeper semantic encoding (Tournier, Jordan, & Ferring, 2016).

Conversely, students who relied on templates and lecturer examples recalled less. Although such guided support short-term performance, it often led to passive reception rather than active construction of meaning (Serra et al, 2023; Syazali et al, 2023). This finding aligns with studies showing that excessive reliance on guided instruction in controlled writing settings can reduce metacognitive awareness and limit learner autonomy (Aziz et al, 2024). Tool-mediated writing, while helpful in organizing content, appeared to externalize the task. Without meaningful internalization, students were less likely to process or retain the knowledge deeply (Matric, 2019).

Students' Reflections on Their Writing Process

Students' reflections revealed three major themes: limited ownership, conflicted responses to guidance, and the role of emotional engagement. Many participants described their writing as "not truly their own," pointing to a lack of authorial identity and minimal intrinsic motivation. This finding reflects earlier research on academic disengagement, where students comply with academic norms without developing a sense of intellectual ownership (Al-Shboul et al, 2023; Cheung et al, 2018). Emotional detachment not only reduced motivation to revisit the content but also diminished long-term retention.

Furthermore, students reported that structured instruction, while helpful, often constrained their creativity. This perception suggests that although lecturer guidance facilitated task completion, over-reliance on templates risked suppressing critical thinking and reflective authorship, echoing concerns in tightly controlled writing pedagogy (Wang, 2024). These experiences align with the tension described in sociocognitive models of writing, where balancing external scaffolding with personal expression is essential for learner development (Shen & Bai, 2022; Teng, 2022).

In contrast, students with stronger recall often linked their topics to personal experiences, which increased their engagement and memory (Dasenko, 2020). It suggests that emotionally meaningful writing tasks support deeper learning by encouraging reflection and interest (Hammad, 2022; Pekrun, 2006; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). It also shows the value of allowing students to choose relevant topics, as this can boost motivation, deepen understanding, and help develop lasting writing skills (Fan & Wang, 2024; Yang & McDonnell, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated EFL undergraduate students' ability to recall the content of their own academic articles after completing a semester of guided writing instruction. Despite structured support and successful article submissions, most students demonstrated only partial or low recall. The qualitative findings revealed that many approached academic writing as a formal requirement rather than a reflective learning process. Factors like template dependence, deadline pressure, over-reliance on AI tools, and limited emotional ownership contributed to surface-level engagement. These findings, interpreted through the lenses of constructivist learning, processing depth, and authorial identity, suggest a disconnect between writing as a performance task and writing as a medium for deep, lasting learning. Students who selected personally relevant topics such as AI in language education tended to recall their work more fully, highlighting the role of meaningful engagement and academic agency in retention.

By exploring post-writing memory, this study offers a novel contribution to EFL writing research, shifting attention toward the long-term cognitive consequences of guided instruction. It invites critical reflection on whether current pedagogical models, which often focus on structure, compliance, and textual output, adequately foster durable knowledge construction. Writing instruction should not only guide students toward producing coherent and assessable texts but also cultivate reflection, authorship, and meaningful retention of ideas. Future research should investigate post-writing recall across diverse student populations using longitudinal and experimental designs to examine how instructional strategies such as reflective journaling, personalized feedback, or AI-assisted revision affect memory and engagement. Examining students' metacognitive

and emotional responses may reveal how writing becomes internalized and contributes to sustained intellectual growth.

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