

Teacher Feedback Across Thesis Writing Stages: The What and How

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Abstract

This paper explores the significance and impact of teacher feedback in the thesis writing process for master's students at Tribhuvan University in Nepal, particularly in the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics. The main objective of the study is to understand how feedback supports students across key stages of thesis writing, including topic selection, research design, drafting, and revisions. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive design, using in-depth interviews with recent graduates to gather detailed insights into their experiences with teacher feedback. The method focuses on exploring how feedback influences the development of research questions, the refinement of methodology, and the improvement of writing clarity and coherence. The study revealed that teacher feedback plays a significant developmental role, not only helping students refine their research and writing but also fostering critical thinking, self-assessment, and academic independence. Moreover, the paper claims that effective feedback significantly enhances the overall quality of theses, ensuring that they are well-structured, methodologically sound, and academically rigorous which prepares students for future academic and professional success.

Keywords: Teacher Feedback, Thesis Writing, English Language Teaching (ELT), Qualitative Descriptive Research, Academic Development

1. Introduction

Thesis writing at the master's level represents a significant academic milestone, requiring students to demonstrate their ability to conduct independent research and contribute meaningfully to their field of study. At Tribhuvan University in Nepal, the thesis is a major component of the Master of English Education program within the Faculty of Education. Students specializing in English Language teaching (ELT) and applied linguistics at the master's level are required to complete a thesis as an essential part of their academic studies. Students are expected to engage deeply with their chosen topic, develop a clear research focus, and present their findings in a well-structured academic document. However, many students encounter challenges at different stages of this process, particularly those related to topic selection, research design, data collection, and academic writing. According to Swales and Feak (2012), academic writing, especially at the thesis level, demands clarity, coherence, and critical engagement with literature, which many students find difficult without proper guidance. Given the complex nature of this task, the role of teacher feedback becomes integral in supporting students through the various stages of thesis writing. Furthermore, according to Partridge and Starfield 2007,

Academic writing at an advanced level is therefore more than 'just getting ideas down on paper' and being sure that they are in 'good English' (Atkinson and Curtis 1998, p. 17). What student writers need to grasp is that there is a reciprocal relationship between thinking and writing. Writing is an essential means of clarifying our thoughts, which

is why delaying writing can become an obstacle to the development of understanding and why, conversely, regular writing facilitates the development of understanding of a topic. (p. 46)

In the academic journey of thesis writing, particularly in fields like English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics, teacher feedback plays a pivotal role in guiding students through the various stages of research and writing. Feedback is not merely corrective but serves as a developmental tool that aids students in refining research questions, enhancing methodological approaches, and ensuring clarity and coherence in academic writing. Partridge and Starfield (2007) emphasize that feedback is essential in supporting students' academic growth, as it provides them with both constructive criticism and encouragement to develop their ideas and refine their writing: "Feedback not only serves as a means of correction but also enables students to critically engage with their own work, fostering deeper understanding" (p.46). They argue that feedback, when given effectively, "encourages critical thinking and autonomy in students, helping them navigate the complexities of academic writing" (Partridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 44). Deci and Ryan, 1985 (as cited in Terrell, 2016, p. 29) argues that "I found out students who receive timely feedback have higher levels of motivation." Furthermore, Starfield (2007) notes that "feedback is particularly important in higher education contexts where students are often learning to write in a new genre or discipline" (p. 165). Feedback helps them develop the specific academic literacy needed for their fields, making it a critical part of the learning process. Hyland (2003) similarly argue that feedback in writing contexts "should encourage students to become more reflective about their writing and on the feedback receive and foster a collaborative environment that supports learning" (p. 208). Together, these scholars emphasize the transformative potential of feedback as not merely a tool for correction, but "a means of developing students' confidence and capability in academic writing" (Partridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 45).

Throughout the various stages of thesis writing, feedback addresses specific challenges that students encounter. Teacher feedback during topic selection and proposal development ensures that students focus on feasible and academically relevant topics. Partridge and Starfield (2007) suggest that feedback at this stage "helps students clarify their research objectives and provides the necessary scaffolding to refine their research focus" (p. 168). As the thesis progresses, feedback on research design, data collection, and analysis becomes decisive in ensuring that the methodology is sound and aligned with the research goals. Starfield (2007) further asserts that feedback "helps students navigate these complex processes, providing them with the necessary tools to conduct rigorous research" (p. 170).

A feedback can be considered as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. A teacher or parent can provide corrective information, a peer can provide an alternative strategy, a book can provide information to clarify ideas, a parent can provide encouragement, and a learner can look up the answer to evaluate the correctness of a response. "Feedback is the response to efforts by the learners to communicate. Feedback can involve such functions as corrections, acknowledgement and request, for clarification" (Ellis, 1996, p. 296). Feedback thus is a "consequence" of performance. According to Gas and Selinker (2009), "feedback is an intervention in which information is provided to a learner that a prior utterance is correct or incorrect" (p. 517). It is the reaction of the teachers or parents or caretakers towards the faulty utterances of a language learner. It plays a vital role in both the first language acquisition and second language learning. It comes as a result of interaction. It is a kind of intervention for the speaker who commits errors during interaction. James (1998) views, "When we give feedback, we inform the learners that their attempt is wrong. . . ." (p. 237). That is to say, we provide feedback to the learners when they commit errors. Winne and Butler (1994) argue that "feedback is information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies" (p. 5740).

Teacher feedback plays a pivotal role in guiding Nepalese Master of English Education students who face challenges in thesis writing. In Nepal, where English is a second language for many, feedback from teachers becomes a vital tool for understanding academic conventions and improving language proficiency. Teachers provide personalized insights and corrective measures that help students refine their thesis structure, argumentation, and language use. This feedback not only enhances their current academic work but also equips them with skills necessary for their future scholarly and professional endeavors. This study holds significant value in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics, particularly for Master's students at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. It explores the impact of teacher feedback on thesis writing, highlighting its role in enhancing research quality, clarity, and academic skills. The discussion improves supervision practices, benefiting students, educators, and institutions aiming to achieve higher academic standards.

This article explores the role of teacher feedback across key stages of thesis writing in ELT and Applied Linguistics, focusing on both the "what" and "how" of feedback delivery. By drawing on students' perceptions and experiences, this study gives prominence to the essential role feedback plays in shaping successful academic writing and supporting students' growth in research and writing skills.

2. Theoretical Framework

Teacher feedback plays an integral role in facilitating student learning and academic development, especially in the context of thesis writing at the master's level. The process of providing feedback has been extensively explored in educational theory, with various scholars agreeing on its significant impact on student performance and writing proficiency. In the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics, feedback is seen not just as a corrective tool but as a developmental process that shapes students' abilities to engage critically with their research and writing tasks.

2.1. Feedback as a Dialogic and Developmental Process

The theoretical underpinnings of teacher feedback stem from constructivist theories of learning, where feedback is seen as an interactive, dialogic process between the teacher and student (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Rather than merely identifying errors, feedback encourages students to reflect critically on their work, engage in self-assessment, and take ownership of their learning. Hyland (2003) opines that feedback should "encourage students to become more reflective about their writing and foster a collaborative environment that supports learning" (p. 208). This view of feedback as dialogic aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Teacher feedback, thus, becomes a tool that helps students move from their current level of performance to a higher level of understanding through guided support.

2.2. The Role of Feedback across Key Stages of Thesis Writing

The thesis writing process is typically divided into several key stages: topic selection and proposal development, research design and methodology, data collection, data analysis, and finally, drafting and revising. Each of these stages requires distinct types of feedback that are tailored to the specific needs of the student at that point in the writing process. Partridge and Starfield (2007) suggest that feedback in the early stages of thesis writing, particularly during topic selection and proposal development, serves to refine broad ideas and help students focus on feasible, researchable topics. Feedback at this stage is significant for guiding students toward a well-defined research question, which is foundational for a successful thesis (Partridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 72).

During the later stages, such as research design and data analysis, feedback helps students ensure methodological rigor and coherence in their research. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) suggest that feedback acts as a form of scaffolding, supporting students as they develop their research into a structured, methodologically sound study. This scaffolding is critical in applied linguistics and ELT, where students may face challenges in aligning their methodology with their research questions and ensuring the validity of their findings. According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012), "feedback on research design and data analysis also helps students improve the presentation of their data and argumentation, which are essential components of high-quality academic writing" (p. 163).

2.3. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) and Its Impact on Writing Development

A central theoretical concept in the field of ELT and Applied Linguistics is Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), which refers to the practice of providing students with written comments aimed at improving their writing. Ferris (2011) emphasizes "Written corrective feedback (WCF) is particularly important for second language learners, as it helps them recognize patterns of errors and improve their grammatical accuracy and writing fluency over time" (p. 3). In the context of thesis writing, WCF not only addresses surface-level issues such as grammar and syntax but also provides students with insights into the structural and conceptual weaknesses in their writing. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) argue that "WCF, when combined with formative feedback, can help students revise their drafts more effectively and lead to overall improvement in writing quality" (p. 152).

2.4. Feedback and Student Autonomy

Another significant theoretical perspective on feedback focuses on its role in fostering student autonomy. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that feedback should encourage students to take control of their learning by promoting self-regulation. Feedback that promotes self-assessment and critical reflection allows students to identify their strengths and weaknesses independently, which is particularly important in thesis writing, where students are expected to produce a large, independently-researched piece of work.

2.5. Feedback Delivery: Timing, Specificity, and Student Engagement

The effectiveness of feedback is also influenced by how it is delivered. Carless et al. (2011) argue that "feedback must be timely, clear, and specific in order to have a meaningful impact on student learning" (p. 396). Feedback that is too vague or delayed may not provide students with the necessary guidance to make improvements in their writing. Moreover, engaging students in the feedback process is instrumental for ensuring that feedback is internalized and acted upon. According to Winstone et al. (2017), "students need to actively engage with feedback to understand its value and apply it effectively to their writing" (p. 17). The feedback process, therefore, should not be viewed as a one-way communication from teacher to student but as an interactive process where students play an active role in using feedback to improve their work.

Rooted in constructivist learning theories, feedback serves as a dialogic and developmental tool that helps students navigate the complexities of thesis writing. It is essential across all stages of the writing process, from topic selection to the final draft, providing both scaffolding and encouragement to foster student autonomy and improve writing quality. By delivering timely, specific, and engaging feedback, teachers can significantly impact the success of students' theses, particularly in fields like ELT and Applied Linguistics, where academic writing poses unique challenges.

3. Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to explore the transformative role of teacher feedback throughout the various stages of the thesis writing process. Specifically, the study aims to investigate how feedback at key stages, such as methodology development, data analysis, and conclusion writing, supports students in staying on track with their research. In order to shed light on the issues, the study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What role does teacher feedback play at key stages of the thesis writing process, such as methodology development, data analysis, and conclusion drafting?

2. What is the impact of teacher feedback on helping students refine their ideas and address challenges during the thesis writing process?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the role of teacher feedback across various stages of thesis writing. The qualitative descriptive approach is well-suited for this research as it aims to provide a detailed and straightforward description of the participants' experiences without requiring extensive theoretical abstraction. The goal of this design is to capture the participants' perceptions and experiences of how teacher feedback influenced their thesis writing process in English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics.

4.2. Research Method

The primary method of data collection in this study is in-depth interviews. This method allows for a thorough exploration of participants' personal experiences with teacher feedback, providing rich, detailed data. The semi-structured nature of the interviews offers flexibility in responses, enabling participants to reflect deeply on their experiences, while ensuring that key themes-such as feedback on methodology, data analysis, and conclusion writing-are systematically addressed. The interviews focus on the impact of feedback during different stages of thesis writing and how it contributed to students' academic progress.

4.3 Participants

The participants in this study are individuals who have recently completed their theses in ELT and Applied Linguistics within the past three months. All participants were from the Central Department of Education at Tribhuvan University and had majored in English. By selecting participants who have recently finished their thesis work, the study ensures that their recollections of the feedback process are fresh and detailed, which provides valuable insights into how teacher feedback was utilized throughout the thesis writing process. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants for this study. This method was chosen because it allows for the deliberate selection of individuals who have specific characteristics relevant to the research questions. In this case, the participants were chosen based on their recent experience with thesis writing in ELT and Applied Linguistics and their exposure to teacher feedback during the process. The study employs a qualitative descriptive research design because it aims to provide a clear and straightforward description of how teacher feedback influences thesis writing across different stages for Master's students in ELT and Applied Linguistics at Tribhuvan University. This design captures rich, detailed data through in-depth interviews, focusing on practical outcomes like refining research questions and enhancing writing skills. It centers the participants' voices, ensuring their perspectives on teacher feedback are accurately conveyed.

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants who had recently completed their theses in ELT and Applied Linguistics at the Central Department of Education, Tribhuvan University. The participants were purposefully selected to ensure that they had direct and recent experience with thesis writing and teacher feedback.

5. Results and Discussion

This study focuses on the role of teacher feedback across various stages of thesis writing, specifically within the English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics fields. This section underlines how students perceived feedback not just as evaluative comments but as essential guidance that informs their academic trajectory, shapes their writing, and enhances their research skills. By integrating feedback as a developmental tool, students can identify their strengths and areas for improvement, enabling them to refine their thesis with greater clarity and academic rigor. This study features the voices of students engaged in the thesis writing process, provides deep insights into how teacher feedback supports their academic growth, particularly in stages such as topic selection, research design, data analysis, and final revisions. Through the analysis of participant responses, this section aims to explore the transformative power of teacher feedback in ensuring the academic success of students.

5.1. Feedback as a Roadmap for Academic Progress

In the context of thesis writing, many students view feedback as an essential guide that helps them navigate the complexities of academic research and writing. This understanding conceptualizes feedback not simply as evaluative comments but as a structured form of support that directs students toward academic success. Specifically, feedback serves as a "roadmap" that provides clarity on where students currently stand in their thesis writing and what steps they need to take to reach their final destination.

For instance, P1 said, "For me, feedback is like a roadmap. It helps me know if I am on the right track with my thesis, offering guidance on what I need to improve or change." This statement emphasizes the guiding role of feedback, where students perceive feedback as a navigational tool. The student sees feedback as a means to evaluate progress and receive clear directions on how to refine and improve their work. Moreover, feedback acts as a form of reassurance, providing them with the confidence that they are moving in the right direction, while also offering specific areas for improvement.

Similarly, for P2, "Feedback, to me, is like GPS for my thesis. It shows me if I'm heading toward the right goal or if I need to take a different route to improve my research or writing." In this case, feedback is compared to a GPS system, reflecting how

students rely on feedback to adjust and fine-tune their approach to thesis writing. Consequently, it suggests that feedback provides continuous, real-time guidance, helping students course-correct and ensure they are meeting academic expectations. This perception emphasizes feedback's role in helping students make necessary adjustments during the writing process.

In addition, P3 reported, "I see feedback as a kind of map, showing me where I'm doing well and where I need to improve. Without it, I would feel lost, not knowing if my thesis is developing in the right way." Here, the response entails the sense of direction that feedback provides. The student acknowledges that without feedback, they would feel unsure about their academic progress. Thus, feedback becomes a critical tool for self-assessment and improvement, allowing students to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in the context of their thesis work.

Lastly, P4 said, "In my view, feedback is like a guidebook. It tells me the right path to take in my research and helps me avoid mistakes before they become bigger issues." This perspective reflects the preventive and corrective nature of feedback. The student views feedback as a guidebook, which offers proactive suggestions to improve their thesis before any significant problems arise. Therefore, it spotlights the importance of feedback in shaping the student's research process, preventing misunderstandings, and ensuring that the thesis meets academic standards.

In thesis writing, students perceive feedback as an essential tool that helps them navigate the complexities of research and writing. Rather than just evaluative comments, feedback is seen as structured support that guides students toward academic success. It acts as a roadmap, providing clarity on their progress and outlining the necessary steps for improvement. Feedback offers continuous guidance, allowing students to adjust their work as needed, ensuring they stay on track. Additionally, it serves a preventive and corrective function, helping students avoid mistakes and ensuring their thesis meets academic standards.

5.2. Teacher Feedback across Key Stages of Thesis Writing

Thesis writing is a complex process that requires students to pass through several key stages, each with its own challenges. From topic selection and proposal development to drafting and revisions, students often rely on teacher feedback to stay on track and meet academic standards. Feedback serves as a vital guide, helping students refine their research focus, develop appropriate methodologies, and maintain clarity and coherence in their writing. Throughout stages like the literature review, research design, data collection, and analysis, feedback helps students tackle complex concepts, avoid methodological errors, and ensure the rigor of their research. Additionally, teacher input during the drafting, structuring, and interpretation of findings is urgent for maintaining logical flow, objectivity, and effectively linking results to the existing literature. As students approach the conclusion and recommendations phase, feedback plays a pivotal role in shaping meaningful outcomes based on their research. Overall, teacher feedback acts as a roadmap that fosters academic growth and ensures the successful completion of a well-structured, impactful thesis.

5.2.1. The Role of Teacher Feedback in Topic Selection and Proposal Development

At the initial stages of thesis writing, topic selection and proposal development are stages where students require substantial feedback from their supervisors. This feedback helps refine broad or unclear research ideas and ensures that the proposed research is both feasible and academically relevant. Teacher feedback, during these stages, often serves to clarify research direction and strengthen the foundation of the thesis. In this regard, P1 mentioned, *"Feedback during topic selection was integral for me. I initially chose a very broad topic, and my supervisor helped me narrow it down to something more manageable and focused."* This demonstrates how students may begin with a wide-ranging interest, only to find that they lack the clarity and focus needed to frame an effective research question. Without feedback, students may struggle to align their ideas with academic expectations, potentially jeopardizing the success of their thesis. P3 further elaborated, *"Without that feedback, I would have struggled to frame a clear research question."* This shows how teacher input at this stage is essential for guiding students toward a specific and researchable topic. P3 reflected on the difficulty of structuring their proposal, stating, *"I was quite unsure about how to structure my proposal and formulate my research questions. My supervisor's feedback helped me understand the gaps in my initial proposal and guided me to better articulate my objectives."* This response stresses the student's reliance on feedback to identify weaknesses in their proposal and address them before moving forward. The proposal serves as the blueprint for the entire thesis, so clarity and academic rigor are essential at this point. The student explained further, *"The proposal lays the foundation for the entire thesis, so it's important to get it right."*

Both responses illustrate the need for teacher feedback to help students refine their research focus, articulate clear objectives, and ensure that their proposal is sound. Without this guidance, students may face challenges in producing a well-structured, viable research plan. Teacher feedback at this stage provides the necessary scaffolding that supports students in crafting a strong foundation for their academic work. The importance of feedback at this stage aligns with findings in ELT and applied linguistics. Hyland (2009) describes feedback as a key interaction that shapes students' ideas, while Ferris (2014) emphasizes its role in improving research clarity and structure. Similarly, Bitchener et al. (2010) found that early feedback improves proposal quality and thesis completion rates.

5.2.2. The Role of Teacher Feedback in the Literature Review Process

The literature review is a critical stage in thesis writing, providing the foundation by situating the research within existing scholarship. Students must not only identify relevant studies but also critically evaluate and synthesize them, a task that presents various challenges, such as selecting pertinent sources, structuring the review, and maintaining a critical stance rather than simply describing the literature. Teacher feedback proves essential in navigating these hurdles.

5.2.2.1. Identifying, Structuring, and Analyzing Literature

A common challenge faced by students is identifying the most relevant sources. Participant 2 (P2) shared, *"When I was writing my literature review, I struggled with identifying which sources were the most relevant to my topic. My supervisor's*

feedback helped me narrow down the most important studies and avoid unnecessary ones." This features the importance of teacher feedback in guiding students toward selecting pertinent studies that align with their research objectives. As Hyland (2003) points out, targeted feedback refines the literature selection process and ensures students avoid overwhelming their review with irrelevant sources.

Equally important is the structuring of the literature review. Participant 3 (P3) explained, *"The feedback I received on my literature review was significant because I wasn't sure how to structure it properly. My teacher showed me how to group studies by theme instead of just summarizing each one."* Teacher guidance transforms disorganized summaries into cohesive, theme-based narratives that maintain coherence, as discussed by Swales and Feak (2012). This thematic organization enables students to present a synthesized argument rather than isolated descriptions of studies.

Additionally, transitioning from descriptive to analytical writing remains a key challenge. Participant 4 (P4) noted, *"I wasn't confident about whether my review was critical enough. My supervisor's feedback pushed me to analyze the studies more deeply rather than just describing them."* Feedback not only deepens engagement with the literature but also fosters critical analysis, essential for academic rigor. As Bitchener and Ferris (2012) emphasize, feedback helps students move beyond surface-level descriptions and develop the evaluative skills necessary for robust academic writing.

Teacher feedback during the literature review stage is indispensable in guiding students through the complexities of the research process. Feedback provides necessary scaffolding in selecting relevant sources, structuring the review coherently, and ensuring a critical evaluation of the literature. As supported by Ferris (2006), feedback not only aids students in correcting errors but also helps them meet the academic standards required for a strong, impactful literature review.

In conclusion, teacher feedback plays a pivotal role in helping students navigate the complexities of the literature review. It ensures that they select relevant sources, structure their reviews coherently, and apply critical analysis. Without such feedback, students may find it difficult to meet the expectations of academic rigor, as seen in the experiences shared by P2, P3, and P4. This aligns with findings in ELT and applied linguistics research, where feedback is identified as a key element in the success of the literature review stage.

5.2.3. Teacher Feedback in the Development of Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology stage in thesis writing is critical because it forms the foundation for conducting a valid, reliable, and academically rigorous study. Students often encounter challenges in selecting appropriate research methods, ensuring methodological rigor, and aligning their design with their research objectives. Teacher feedback at this stage is invaluable for providing clarity and ensuring the methodology is sound. The following student verbatims underline the significance of feedback during this phase.

Teacher feedback in the Research Design and Methodology stage plays a pivotal role in shaping the research process. As Participant 1 (P1) noted, *"Feedback on the research design and methodology is essential because this section is the backbone of the entire thesis. My supervisor helped me choose the right data collection techniques and sampling methods, which were initially unclear to me."* This demonstrates how feedback clarifies complex concepts like data collection and sampling methods, which are fundamental for structuring a methodologically sound study. Without such guidance, students may struggle to grasp these critical components, thereby risking the quality and reliability of their research. As Dörnyei (2007) asserts, clear and constructive feedback is vital for ensuring that students approach their methodology with coherence and rigor.

In addition to clarification, feedback ensures the validity and reliability of the research. Participant 2 (P2) remarked, *"I needed feedback on my methodology to make sure my research approach was valid and reliable. My supervisor pointed out some potential biases in my sampling method and helped me adjust it to ensure the results would be credible."* This entails the corrective role of feedback in identifying and addressing methodological flaws, such as sampling biases. Creswell (2014) emphasizes that feedback at this stage is essential for maintaining the credibility of the research, ensuring that both the results and findings are valid and reliable.

Another vital aspect of feedback is its role in aligning research methods with research goals. Participant 3 (P3) shared, *"I was unsure if the methods I selected were the best for answering my research questions. My supervisor's feedback helped me fine-tune my methodology so it directly aligned with my research objectives."* This showcases how feedback provides essential direction, ensuring that the chosen methods are not only appropriate but also directly address the research questions. According to Mackey and Gass (2015), aligning methods with objectives is a fundamental part of the research process, and feedback plays a key role in achieving this alignment.

Teacher feedback in the research design and methodology stage is indispensable for several reasons. It clarifies complex concepts, ensures methodological validity and reliability, and aligns the chosen methods with the research objectives. As Hyland (2003) suggests, feedback not only strengthens the methodological rigor of the research but also boosts student confidence in the accuracy and effectiveness of their study. These insights reflect the transformative impact of feedback, guiding students toward developing well-structured and methodologically sound research plans, ultimately leading to the success of their thesis.

5.2.4. Teacher Feedback in Data Collection, Analysis, and Ensuring Accuracy

Teacher feedback plays an essential role across the stages of data collection, data analysis, and ensuring accuracy in thesis writing. Supervisors' guidance is invaluable in helping students implement appropriate research methods, accurately interpret their data, and identify and correct errors that may compromise their research. This feedback helps students maintain the academic rigor necessary for producing credible and valid research findings. Regarding the role of feedback in the stage of data collection, participant 1 (P1) shared, *"The data collection stage is where I felt the most uncertain. My supervisor's feedback helped me decide on the right tools and techniques, especially since I wasn't sure how to collect reliable data."* This gives

emphasis on the role of feedback in selecting appropriate tools and sampling methods, which are pressing for gathering relevant and accurate data. As Hyland (2013) notes, feedback offers necessary direction during the data collection stage, helping students avoid common pitfalls such as irrelevant or inaccurate data gathering. Mackey and Gass (2015) further emphasize that poor data collection procedures can lead to unreliable results, stressing the necessity of supervision during this phase.

Furthermore, participant 2 (P2) remarked, "When I started analyzing my data, I wasn't sure if I was interpreting it correctly. The feedback from my teacher helped me understand which statistical tests were appropriate and how to present the results clearly." This demonstrates the importance of teacher guidance in applying the correct analytical techniques. According to Creswell (2014), the misuse of data analysis methods can lead to flawed interpretations, making supervisor feedback critical for ensuring that students apply the appropriate techniques and accurately interpret their findings. In addition to this, Hyland (2003) also emphasizes the necessity of teacher input during the analysis stage to promote a deep understanding of data interpretation, contributing to more meaningful results.

Moreover, participant 3 (P3) stated, *"Feedback at the data analysis stage was fundamental because I needed to make sure I wasn't misinterpreting the results. My teacher pointed out some errors in my initial analysis."* This shows how feedback serves as a safeguard against misinterpretation and mistakes in data analysis. As Bitchener and Ferris (2012) argue, early identification of errors via feedback is key to improving accuracy and reliability in research. This view is supported by Ferris (2010), who contends that constructive feedback at this stage prevents students from drawing incorrect conclusions based on flawed interpretations.

In conclusion, teacher feedback during the data collection, analysis, and error correction stages is indispensable for guiding students toward appropriate methodologies, accurate data interpretation, and the correction of errors that might undermine their research. This feedback helps students ensure their research is both methodologically sound and credible. Mackey and Gass (2015), Hyland (2013), and Bitchener and Ferris (2012) all point to the critical role of teacher feedback in enhancing the academic rigor of research, ultimately contributing to the success of the thesis. Without this feedback, students may struggle to meet the demands of methodological accuracy and the academic standards expected in applied linguistics research.

5.2.5. Teacher Feedback on Drafting and Structuring

Teacher feedback is essential during the drafting and structuring phase of thesis writing to ensure clarity, coherence, and adherence to academic standards. At this stage, students often struggle with organizing their ideas, maintaining an academic tone, and aligning their drafts with institutional guidelines. Feedback helps students achieve logical flow, as noted by Participant 1, who emphasized the need for guidance in presenting arguments clearly. It also supports students in sustaining a formal academic style, as Participant 2 stated the importance of feedback in maintaining an appropriate tone. Furthermore, feedback ensures that the draft meets university requirements, as Participant 3 noted the value of supervisor input in adhering to structure and formatting expectations. Overall, teacher feedback during this phase is pivotal for producing a well-organized, academically rigorous thesis that meets institutional standards.

5.2.6. Impact of Teacher Feedback on Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

The interpretation and discussion of findings stage in thesis writing is critical as it requires students to analyze their research results, connect them with existing literature, and draw meaningful conclusions. However, students often struggle with interpreting their findings and presenting a coherent discussion, requiring guidance from supervisors. Regarding the role of feedback in interpretation and discussion of findings, Participant 1 (P1) stated, *"Feedback on interpreting my findings was important. I wasn't sure if my conclusions were too broad or if I was missing important points. My supervisor's feedback helped me focus on the key findings and relate them to the research questions more effectively."* This demonstrates how feedback ensures students remain focused on significant findings and align their conclusions with the research questions. As Hyland (2003) points out, teacher feedback is instrumental in maintaining a clear connection between findings and research objectives, enhancing the coherence of the analysis.

Relating findings to the existing literature also poses a challenge. Participant 2 (P2) shared, *"The discussion section was the hardest for me. I needed feedback to see if I was connecting my findings with the literature properly. My teacher's suggestions helped me bridge the gap between my results and existing studies."* Feedback ensures that students effectively contextualize their findings within the broader academic discourse. As Swales and Feak (2012) argue, properly linking findings with existing research is key to demonstrating the significance of the study.

Maintaining objectivity is another area where feedback is essential. Participant 3 (P3) expressed, *"Without feedback on the interpretation of my findings, I felt lost. I didn't know if I was being too biased. My supervisor's input helped me see different angles and refine my argument."* This spotlights the role of feedback in guiding students to avoid bias and consider multiple interpretations, fostering a balanced and rigorous analysis. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) emphasize that feedback refines the quality of analysis, ensuring academic rigor and objectivity.

Teacher feedback is indispensable during the interpretation and discussion of findings stage. It helps students focus on key findings, connect their results to existing literature, and maintain objectivity in their analysis. As Hyland (2003), Swales and Feak (2012), and Bitchener and Ferris (2012) emphasize, feedback enhances the clarity, relevance, and academic rigor of the discussion, ultimately leading to a more coherent and meaningful interpretation of research findings.

5.2.7. Teacher Feedback on Final Draft and Revisions

In the final draft and revisions stage, students emphasize the need for detailed feedback to fine-tune their thesis before submission. This phase involves not only polishing the thesis but also correcting errors and ensuring academic rigor.

5.2.7.1. Feedback as a Polishing Tool

Feedback serves as an instrumental polishing tool in the final stages of thesis writing. At this point, it helps students refine their work by addressing errors, improving structure, and ensuring academic coherence. Through detailed feedback, supervisors can assist in enhancing clarity and overall quality before submission, as emphasized by both student experiences and research. One student, Participant 1 (P1), stressed the importance of thorough feedback: *“At the final draft stage, I really need my supervisor to go through my thesis with a fine-tooth comb. It's the last chance to catch any mistakes or inconsistencies before submission.”* This emphasizes the role of feedback in addressing errors, refining structure, and ensuring academic coherence. Research by Ellis (2009) also points out that feedback at the final stage enhances the clarity and cohesion of the text, leading to stronger academic writing. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) further assert that this final-stage feedback is essential for improving clarity, citation accuracy, and overall quality of the work.

5.2.7.2. Identifying Gaps and Weaknesses

Identifying gaps and weaknesses in a thesis is vital for improving the quality of research. Teacher feedback offers an external perspective, helping students address overlooked issues and strengthen their arguments. Participant 2 (P2) remarked, *“I need feedback on the final draft to make sure I am not missing any key points. My supervisor's feedback helps me spot any gaps or weaknesses in my arguments.”* This implies how feedback provides a fresh perspective, revealing overlooked gaps and ensuring the strength of the research. Hyland (2000) notes that teacher feedback is critical for identifying weak areas and improving argumentation in academic writing. Swales and Feak (2012) further emphasize that external critique allows students to refine their arguments and ensure consistency in the thesis, strengthening the overall research design.

5.2.7.3. Providing Confidence for Submission

For many students, feedback at this stage provides emotional reassurance. Participant 3 (P3) explained, *“The feedback on the final draft is decisive because it gives me confidence that my work is ready for submission.”* This response underlines the importance of feedback in boosting students' confidence that their work is ready for submission. According to Zamel (1985), receiving feedback at this stage helps alleviate students' anxieties and confirms that their work meets the required academic standards. Additionally, Hyland (2003) suggests that feedback during the final stage not only improves the quality of the thesis but also prepares students emotionally for the submission process, reducing their doubts about the completeness and accuracy of their work.

Teacher feedback during the final draft and revisions stage plays a decisive role in refining the thesis by ensuring clarity, identifying overlooked gaps, and strengthening arguments. This process not only polishes the work but also boosts students' confidence in their final submission. Insights from scholars like Ellis (2009), Hyland (2000), Zamel (1985), Bitchener and Ferris (2012), and Swales and Feak (2012) stress the corrective and reassuring nature of feedback, ensuring that the thesis is well-structured, coherent, and ready for submission.

5.2.8. Teacher Feedback at the Stage of Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion and recommendations stage is where students tie together all aspects of their research, and feedback plays an indispensable role in ensuring that these elements are coherent and well-aligned. As highlighted in the verbatims and in research by Hyland (2013), Swales and Feak (2012), and Creswell (2014), teacher feedback ensures that conclusions reflect the research journey, that recommendations are practical, and that the interpretation of findings is accurate. Additionally, feedback provides essential validation, ensuring that students feel confident about the completeness and quality of their thesis.

5.2.8.1. Coherence and Practicality

One student, Participant 1 (P1), remarked, *“I definitely need feedback on my conclusion and recommendations because it ties everything together. It's important to know if my conclusions are logically aligned with the findings, and if my recommendations are practical and relevant to my research.”* This response demonstrates the need for feedback to ensure coherence between findings and conclusions. Without guidance, students risk making conclusions that are disjointed from their findings or offering impractical recommendations. Hyland (2013) points out that feedback is a key for ensuring that students' final statements accurately reflect their research process. Similarly, Swales and Feak (2012) stress that conclusions must flow logically from the findings to maintain academic rigor.

5.2.8.2. Correct Interpretation and Problem-Solving

Correct interpretation and problem-solving are essential in thesis writing, as students often rely on feedback to ensure their conclusions and recommendations accurately address the research problem. Feedback helps confirm the accuracy of their interpretations, aligning them with research objectives and enhancing the relevance of their final outcomes. Participant 2 (P2) shared, *“Feedback on my conclusion and recommendations helps me refine the final message of my thesis. I need to know if I'm interpreting my results correctly and if my recommendations address the problem I set out to solve.”* This shows how students rely on feedback to confirm the accuracy of their interpretations. Ferris (2010) notes that feedback serves to ensure students are correctly interpreting their data, which directly impacts the practicality of their recommendations.

5.2.8.3. Validation and Feasibility

Validation and feasibility are influential in the final stages of thesis writing, as feedback helps ensure that conclusions and recommendations are both grounded in research and practical. This guidance reassures students that their work is academically sound and achievable. Participant 3 (P3) stated, *“At this stage, feedback is essential because it's the last chance to make sure everything makes sense. My supervisor's input helps me check if my recommendations are feasible and grounded in the research.”* This illuminates how feedback provides reassurance that conclusions and recommendations are feasible and well-supported by the research. According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012), feedback helps students ground their recommendations in

research evidence and ensures they are realistic. Additionally, Hyland (2006) emphasizes that feedback boosts students' confidence, assuring them that their final work is academically sound.

Teacher feedback during the conclusion and recommendations stage is elementary in ensuring that students' final statements are coherent, aligned with their research findings, and practically applicable. It helps students create conclusions that flow logically from their findings, offers guidance on making realistic and relevant recommendations, and ensures accurate interpretation of results. Additionally, feedback provides validation, assuring students that their work is methodologically sound and ready for submission. Overall, this guidance is essential for producing a well-structured, research-grounded, and academically robust thesis.

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to explore the transformative role of teacher feedback across key stages of thesis writing for master's students in English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. The research investigated how feedback supports students in areas such as topic selection, research design, data collection, analysis, and final drafting, with a focus on how it influences research clarity, coherence, and methodological soundness. The qualitative descriptive study relied on in-depth interviews with recent graduates to gather detailed insights into their experiences with teacher feedback.

The findings of the study punctuated that teacher feedback plays a critical developmental role, helping students refine their research questions, improve methodological rigor, and enhance the structure and clarity of their writing. Students reported that feedback served as a roadmap, guiding them through the complexities of thesis writing and fostering their academic growth and independence. Feedback was shown to be particularly effective in helping students avoid common errors, stay aligned with research objectives, and maintain academic rigor. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of feedback as more than just a corrective tool but as a developmental process that fosters critical thinking, self-assessment, and autonomy. It reinforces the importance of feedback in applied linguistics and ELT, particularly for non-native English speakers. However, the study's limitations include its focus on a single institution, suggesting the need for further research across diverse contexts to generalize the findings.

In terms of practical applications, the study presents the necessity of structured and timely feedback in graduate-level thesis writing. Institutions should prioritize teacher-student interactions to enhance the quality of student research. Additionally, future research should explore the effectiveness of different types of feedback across varied disciplines and cultural contexts, and examine the long-term impact of feedback on students' academic and professional development.

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