

EFL Learners' Perspectives on Syntactic Awareness in Academic Writing

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Abstrak

This study explores EFL learners' perspectives on syntactic awareness in academic writing within an Indonesian higher education context. Although syntax is often taught as rule-based grammar, little attention has been given to how learners conceptualize and utilize syntactic awareness in their writing processes. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 undergraduate students in an English Education program who had completed Academic Writing and English Syntax courses. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that learners perceive syntactic awareness as conscious attention to sentence structure, a strategy for achieving academic complexity, an error-monitoring mechanism, a bridge between grammatical knowledge and writing practice, a cognitive challenge, a product of reflective practice, a source of writing confidence, and a meaning-making resource. The study concludes that syntactic awareness extends beyond grammatical knowledge and functions as a dynamic metalinguistic and metacognitive process supporting academic literacy development. These findings highlight the importance of integrating reflective syntactic engagement into EFL writing pedagogy.

Keywords: syntactic awareness, academic writing, EFL learners

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif mahasiswa EFL terhadap kesadaran sintaksis dalam penulisan akademik di konteks pendidikan tinggi Indonesia. Meskipun sintaksis sering diajarkan sebagai aturan tata bahasa, masih sedikit penelitian yang mengkaji bagaimana mahasiswa memaknai dan menggunakan kesadaran sintaksis dalam proses menulis mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan melibatkan 15 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang telah menempuh mata kuliah Academic Writing dan English Syntax. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memaknai kesadaran sintaksis sebagai perhatian sadar terhadap struktur kalimat, strategi mencapai kompleksitas akademik, mekanisme monitoring kesalahan, jembatan antara teori tata bahasa dan praktik menulis, tantangan kognitif, hasil dari praktik reflektif, sumber kepercayaan diri menulis, serta sebagai sarana pembentukan makna. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesadaran sintaksis melampaui sekadar pengetahuan gramatikal dan berfungsi sebagai proses metalinguistik dan metakognitif yang dinamis dalam pengembangan literasi akademik mahasiswa EFL.

Kata kunci: kesadaran sintaksis, penulisan akademik, pembelajar EFL

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INTRODUCTION

Language awareness has long been recognized as a central dimension of second language development because it enables learners to move beyond intuitive language use toward conscious control over linguistic form. Within this broader construct, syntactic awareness—understood as learners' conscious ability to reflect upon, analyze, and manipulate sentence structures—occupies a particularly important position in shaping written production. Writing, especially in academic contexts, demands more than the ability to generate ideas; it requires the capacity to organize those ideas through structurally coherent and syntactically controlled sentences. Academic discourse values precision, logical clause relationships, and structural complexity, all of which depend on syntactic competence. Despite its theoretical prominence in second language acquisition and writing studies, syntactic awareness remains insufficiently explored from the learners' own perspectives, particularly in English

as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments where exposure to authentic input is often limited and formal instruction plays a dominant role.

In many EFL classrooms, syntax instruction tends to prioritize rule memorization, discrete grammar exercises, and corrective feedback focused primarily on error identification. Students are commonly trained to recognize incorrect subject–verb agreement, tense inconsistencies, or sentence fragments; however, less attention is devoted to how they conceptualize syntactic knowledge as part of their meaning-making process in authentic academic writing tasks. This instructional tendency often produces learners who may understand grammatical rules in isolation but struggle to deploy syntactic resources strategically in extended writing. Such a situation creates a noticeable gap between grammatical competence and actual writing performance. As argued by Hyland (2016), academic writing is not merely a matter of correctness but involves the purposeful and strategic deployment of linguistic resources to construct stance, coherence, and disciplinary meaning. Therefore, examining how learners perceive and internalize syntactic awareness becomes crucial for understanding how grammatical knowledge transforms—or fails to transform—into effective academic writing practice.

From a theoretical standpoint, syntactic awareness is closely associated with metalinguistic awareness, which Ellis (2015) describes as the capacity to treat language as an object of reflection rather than simply as a vehicle of communication. In second language acquisition, explicit awareness of linguistic form has been shown to facilitate self-monitoring, noticing, and revision processes, particularly in writing where learners have more time to reflect and edit their output. Bitchener and Storch (2016) emphasize that conscious attention to linguistic form plays a significant role in written corrective feedback uptake and long-term language development. Cognitively, syntactic awareness enables learners to analyze clause relationships, embed ideas through subordination, manage cohesion, and construct hierarchically organized sentences—abilities that are fundamental to academic discourse. In this sense, syntactic awareness functions not only as grammatical knowledge but also as a metacognitive resource that supports regulation of written production.

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated links between syntactic development and literacy outcomes. Studies such as Mokhtari and Thompson (2006) and Crossley et al. (2019) indicate that syntactic complexity and structural sophistication correlate with higher writing quality in second language contexts. These studies highlight measurable relationships between structural features and performance indicators, reinforcing the importance of syntactic control in academic writing achievement. However, the majority of such research adopts quantitative approaches that focus on statistical correlations or computational measures of complexity. While these approaches offer valuable insights into patterns and outcomes, they often overlook learners' subjective experiences, interpretations, and internal processes. As a result, we know considerably less about how learners themselves understand syntactic awareness and how they experience it during the act of writing.

In EFL contexts specifically, research frequently reports recurring difficulties such as sentence fragmentation, limited syntactic variety, overuse of simple clauses, and inaccurate clause embedding (Nassaji, 2016). These findings point to structural weaknesses in learners' writing, yet they seldom explore how students interpret these challenges. It remains unclear whether learners consciously attend to syntax when composing academic texts or whether syntactic decisions are made intuitively without explicit reflection. Moreover, little is known about whether students perceive syntactic complexity as a marker of academic quality or merely as a grammatical requirement imposed by instructors. Without examining learners' perspectives, pedagogical interventions risk addressing symptoms rather than underlying conceptual understandings.

Additional contextual considerations arise within teacher education programs, where students are expected not only to achieve linguistic proficiency but also to develop analytical awareness that can later inform their pedagogical practice. For English Education students enrolled in translation courses, syntactic awareness may serve a dual function: it supports academic writing development while also enhancing analytical sensitivity to structural differences between languages. Translation activities require careful attention to clause structure, word order, and syntactic equivalence, potentially strengthening learners' awareness of form. Yet, despite this potentially rich context, limited research has examined how students in such programs interpret the role of syntax in their own academic writing development. Understanding their perspectives is therefore essential for capturing the intersection between linguistic knowledge, reflective awareness, and professional preparation.

Taken together, these considerations reveal both contextual and methodological gaps. While previous studies have examined syntactic complexity, grammatical acquisition, and writing

performance, relatively few have qualitatively explored learners' lived experiences and reflective understandings of syntactic awareness, particularly within Indonesian EFL higher education settings. The absence of learner-centered qualitative inquiry leaves an incomplete picture of how syntactic awareness operates as a cognitive and metalinguistic process in authentic academic writing contexts. Addressing this gap is necessary to enrich current theoretical discussions and to provide pedagogically grounded insights.

Exploring learners' perspectives is important for several reasons. Theoretically, it contributes to a more nuanced conceptualization of syntactic awareness as a dynamic construct embedded within metacognitive regulation and writing processes rather than as a static body of grammatical knowledge. By foregrounding learners' voices, the study advances understanding of how syntactic awareness is experienced, negotiated, and developed in real educational settings. Practically, insights into students' perceptions can inform instructional practices that integrate reflective syntactic engagement—such as sentence combining, clause analysis, and guided revision—rather than relying solely on rule-based drills. Methodologically, adopting a qualitative thematic approach allows for in-depth exploration of patterns in learners' reflections, offering a complementary perspective to predominantly quantitative research traditions.

In response to these theoretical and contextual needs, the present study seeks to explore, describe, and analyze how EFL learners conceptualize syntactic awareness, how they perceive its role in the development of their academic writing, and how such awareness is reflected in their writing practices. By situating the investigation within a translation-course context in Indonesian higher education, the study offers a novel lens through which syntactic awareness is examined as both a writing resource and an analytical competence. The integration of learners' perspectives with qualitative thematic analysis represents a distinctive contribution, expanding the discourse on syntactic awareness beyond measurable complexity indices toward a deeper understanding of its experiential and pedagogical dimensions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore EFL learners' perspectives on syntactic awareness in academic writing. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand participants' subjective experiences, interpretations, and reflections rather than to measure statistical relationships. The case study design allowed for an in-depth examination of a specific group of learners within their authentic academic context. This design is particularly suitable for exploring complex cognitive and metalinguistic constructs embedded in educational practices.

The participants consisted of 15 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education program at a public university in Indonesia during the 2025 academic year. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who had completed both Academic Writing and English Syntax courses, ensuring that they possessed sufficient background knowledge and experience related to syntactic structures and academic text production. By selecting students who had formally studied syntax and academic writing, the study ensured that participants were able to reflect meaningfully on their syntactic awareness and writing practices.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over a two-month period. Interview questions explored students' understanding of syntax, their experiences in writing academic texts, their awareness of sentence structure during drafting and revision, and the challenges they encountered when attempting to produce syntactically appropriate academic writing. All interviews were conducted with informed consent, recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedures, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Thematic analysis was chosen because it enables systematic identification of patterns across qualitative data while preserving participants' voices and meanings. Coding was conducted manually to ensure close engagement with the data. Credibility was enhanced through member checking and peer debriefing to ensure trustworthiness and analytical rigor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on in-depth interviews with 15 undergraduate students of the English Education program who had completed Academic Writing and English Syntax courses, the thematic analysis generated eight major themes representing learners' perspectives on syntactic awareness in academic writing. The table below summarizes the overall findings before each theme is elaborated in detail.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings on EFL Learners' Perspectives of Syntactic Awareness

No.	Theme	Core Meaning	Representative Focus
1	Syntactic Awareness as Conscious Attention to Sentence Structure	Active monitoring of sentence completeness and clause relations	Subject–predicate structure, clause arrangement
2	Syntactic Awareness as a Tool for Achieving Academic Complexity	Deliberate use of syntactic variation to enhance academic tone	Subordination, connectors, relative clauses
3	Syntactic Awareness as Error Monitoring Strategy	Use of syntactic knowledge for self-editing and revision	Agreement, fragments, run-ons
4	Bridging Grammar Knowledge and Writing Practice	Connecting theoretical syntax knowledge to real writing	From rules to application
5	Cognitive Challenge in Academic Writing	Managing syntactic construction as a mental effort	Clause ordering, processing load
6	Development through Reflective Practice	Growth of awareness through feedback and revision	Lecturer feedback, rewriting
7	Syntactic Awareness and Writing Confidence	Increased control leading to higher self-efficacy	Confidence in submitting essays
8	Syntactic Awareness as Meaning-Making Resource	Using syntax strategically to express stance and clarity	Emphasis, cohesion, logical flow

Theme 1: Syntactic Awareness as Conscious Attention to Sentence Structure

Most participants defined syntactic awareness as a conscious and deliberate attention to sentence structure during the writing process. Rather than perceiving syntax merely as abstract grammatical rules learned in class, they described it as an active mental process that occurs while composing academic texts. Students reported that when drafting essays, they intentionally checked whether their sentences contained complete subject–predicate structures, whether clauses were logically connected, and whether the overall structure conveyed their intended meaning clearly.

One participant (P4) stated:

“When I write academic essays, I try to check if my sentences are complete and connected. I think syntactic awareness means being careful about how clauses are arranged.”

This statement illustrates that learners conceptualize syntactic awareness as a form of metalinguistic monitoring. It reflects a shift from passive grammatical knowledge to active structural control. Participants described rereading their sentences not only to detect errors but also to ensure structural coherence. This indicates that syntactic awareness operates as an internal regulatory mechanism, especially in academic contexts where clarity, logical sequencing, and structural precision are essential. Their responses suggest that syntactic awareness is embedded in the composing process itself rather than functioning as a separate post-writing activity.

Theme 2: Syntactic Awareness as a Tool for Achieving Academic Complexity

Several participants associated syntactic awareness with the ability to produce more sophisticated and academically appropriate writing. They recognized that academic discourse requires more than simple sentence construction; it demands syntactic variation, clause embedding, and logical connectors that reflect advanced language proficiency.

Participant P7 explained:

“If I only use simple sentences, my writing looks basic. So I try to combine sentences and use connectors to make it more academic.”

This finding indicates that learners are aware of the relationship between syntactic complexity and perceived academic quality. They consciously attempt to use subordinate clauses, relative clauses,

and transitional markers to enhance textual sophistication. Importantly, their motivation for employing complex syntax is not solely linguistic accuracy but also rhetorical effectiveness. They believe that syntactic complexity contributes to an academic tone and demonstrates intellectual maturity. This perception reflects an understanding of syntax as a stylistic resource rather than merely a grammatical requirement.

Theme 3: Syntactic Awareness as Error Monitoring Strategy

The third theme highlights syntactic awareness as a strategy for detecting and correcting grammatical errors. Many participants described rereading their drafts to identify problems related to subject–verb agreement, sentence fragments, or run-on constructions. This indicates that syntactic awareness functions as a self-regulatory mechanism during revision.

Participant P2 noted:

“Sometimes after writing, I reread my paragraph and check subject–verb agreement. That’s when I realize I made mistakes.”

This response demonstrates that learners actively apply syntactic knowledge during the editing phase. Rather than relying solely on external correction, they engage in self-monitoring practices. Such behavior suggests that syntactic awareness supports autonomous learning and internalized control over language production. It also reveals that revision is not merely surface-level proofreading but involves structural evaluation of sentence construction.

Theme 4: Bridging Grammar Knowledge and Writing Practice

Participants emphasized that syntactic awareness helps bridge the gap between theoretical grammar instruction and actual writing practice. While they learned grammatical rules in English Syntax courses, they realized that applying these rules in authentic academic writing required deeper awareness and contextual understanding.

Participant P9 stated:

“In grammar class we learn rules, but in writing we must apply them. I think syntactic awareness helps me connect theory and real writing.”

This theme suggests that syntactic awareness mediates the transition from declarative knowledge (knowing the rules) to procedural knowledge (using the rules effectively). Students acknowledged that grammar knowledge alone is insufficient unless consciously activated during writing. Their reflections reveal that syntactic awareness serves as a cognitive bridge that transforms theoretical understanding into functional writing competence.

Theme 5: Cognitive Challenge in Academic Writing

Several participants admitted that constructing syntactically complex sentences poses significant cognitive demands. They described experiencing confusion when organizing clause order or embedding multiple ideas into one coherent sentence.

Participant P1 expressed:

“When I try to make complex sentences, sometimes I get confused about clause order.”

This statement highlights the mental effort involved in syntactic manipulation. Producing academic writing in a second language requires simultaneous attention to meaning, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence. Managing these components increases cognitive load. Participants’ experiences indicate that syntactic awareness development involves overcoming processing challenges. This theme underscores that syntactic control is not automatic but gradually acquired through sustained practice.

Theme 6: Development through Reflective Practice

Students reported that their syntactic awareness improved through feedback and repeated revision. Lecturer comments on sentence patterns, clause structure, and grammatical accuracy prompted them to reflect more deeply on their writing.

Participant P12 shared:

“After getting feedback from my lecturer, I become more aware of my sentence patterns.”

This finding shows that syntactic awareness evolves through reflective engagement. Feedback functions as a catalyst for metalinguistic reflection, encouraging learners to analyze recurring structural weaknesses. Over time, repeated exposure to corrective input fosters internalization of syntactic patterns. This theme emphasizes the importance of guided reflection in developing higher-order linguistic awareness.

Theme 7: Syntactic Awareness and Writing Confidence

Another significant theme concerns the relationship between syntactic awareness and writing confidence. Participants reported feeling more assured when they understood how to construct complex sentences accurately. Mastery of sentence structure reduced anxiety about grammatical mistakes.

Participant P6 stated:

“When I understand how to build complex sentences, I feel more confident submitting my essay.”

This response indicates that syntactic awareness contributes to self-efficacy. As learners gain greater structural control, they perceive their writing as more competent and academically acceptable. Confidence emerges not from the absence of errors alone but from the ability to intentionally shape sentences according to academic conventions.

Theme 8: Syntactic Awareness as a Meaning-Making Resource

Beyond structural correctness and complexity, several participants described syntactic awareness as a resource for organizing ideas and expressing meaning effectively. They recognized that sentence structure influences emphasis, coherence, and logical flow. Some students intentionally rearranged clause order to highlight key arguments or clarify relationships between ideas.

One participant (P10) explained:

“When I change the position of clauses, sometimes the meaning becomes clearer. For example, I put the important idea in the main clause and the explanation in the subordinate clause so readers can focus on the main point.”

Participants explained that using subordination allowed them to signal cause–effect relationships, while relative clauses helped provide additional clarification without disrupting coherence. This theme demonstrates that learners perceive syntax not only as a formal system but also as a rhetorical tool for constructing meaning. In this sense, syntactic awareness becomes integral to argument development and academic reasoning.

Concluding Remark on Findings

Overall, the findings reveal that EFL learners conceptualize syntactic awareness as a dynamic and multifaceted metalinguistic process. It encompasses conscious monitoring of sentence structure, deliberate pursuit of academic complexity, strategic error detection, integration of grammatical knowledge into writing practice, cognitive negotiation of clause construction, reflective development through feedback, enhancement of writing confidence, and strategic use of syntax for meaning-making. Together, these themes illustrate that syntactic awareness functions not merely as grammatical competence but as a central component of academic writing development in EFL higher education contexts.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that EFL learners conceptualize syntactic awareness as an active and conscious monitoring process embedded within the act of composing academic texts. Participants’ descriptions of checking subject–predicate completeness, clause relations, and structural coherence reflect a metalinguistic orientation toward writing rather than a purely intuitive production of language. This aligns with Ellis (2015), who argues that explicit awareness of linguistic form plays a crucial role in second language development, particularly in contexts requiring careful language control such as academic writing. Similarly, Bitchener and Storch (2016) emphasize that metalinguistic awareness supports learners’ capacity to monitor and regulate their output during drafting and revision. The present findings extend these theoretical claims by showing that learners themselves perceive syntactic awareness as an internal regulatory mechanism. Rather than viewing syntax as detached grammatical knowledge, participants embedded syntactic monitoring within their writing process, demonstrating that awareness operates dynamically during composition rather than exclusively in post-writing correction stages.

The second major insight emerging from the findings concerns learners’ association between syntactic awareness and academic complexity. Participants consciously attempted to use subordination, clause embedding, and connectors to make their writing appear more “academic.” This perception resonates with empirical studies demonstrating a relationship between syntactic complexity and writing quality. For instance, Crossley et al. (2019) found that increased syntactic sophistication is positively associated with higher ratings of L2 academic writing. Similarly, Mokhtari and Thompson (2006) demonstrated that syntactic awareness is significantly related to reading fluency and comprehension, suggesting that structural awareness plays a crucial role in broader literacy development. The present study adds a qualitative dimension to these quantitative findings by revealing that learners are not only

producing complex structures but are intentionally doing so as a strategy to enhance academic tone and rhetorical sophistication. Their reflections suggest that syntactic awareness functions as a stylistic resource, enabling them to construct texts that align with disciplinary expectations. This indicates that learners recognize syntax as a marker of academic identity and intellectual maturity, reinforcing Hyland's (2016) argument that academic writing involves the strategic deployment of linguistic resources to construct stance and authority.

Another important discussion point concerns syntactic awareness as a self-regulatory and error-monitoring strategy. Participants described rereading their drafts to check agreement, fragments, and run-on sentences, demonstrating a conscious engagement with structural accuracy during revision. This supports Nassaji's (2016) discussion on form-focused instruction, which argues that explicit attention to linguistic form enhances learners' ability to notice and address structural problems in their output. It also echoes findings from Bitchener and Storch (2016), who highlight the importance of feedback and metalinguistic reflection in promoting self-editing skills. The current study deepens this understanding by illustrating that learners internalize syntactic knowledge as part of autonomous revision practices. Rather than depending solely on teacher correction, they actively apply syntactic principles to evaluate and refine their work. This suggests that syntactic awareness contributes not only to linguistic accuracy but also to learner autonomy, as students gradually assume responsibility for monitoring their own language production.

The theme of bridging grammar knowledge and writing practice further reinforces the role of syntactic awareness as a mediating construct between declarative and procedural knowledge. Participants acknowledged that grammar courses provided theoretical rules, yet meaningful writing required conscious activation of that knowledge in context. This observation aligns with cognitive perspectives on second language acquisition, which differentiate between knowing about language and being able to use language fluently and appropriately. Ellis (2015) argues that explicit knowledge can facilitate the development of proceduralized competence when learners engage in meaningful practice. The findings also connect with studies on writing pedagogy showing that isolated grammar instruction often fails to transfer automatically to writing performance unless integrated into authentic tasks (Hyland, 2016). By positioning syntactic awareness as the bridge between theory and practice, this study highlights its function as a transformative mechanism that converts structural knowledge into functional academic writing competence.

Finally, the themes of cognitive challenge, reflective development, writing confidence, and meaning-making collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of syntactic awareness in EFL academic writing. Participants reported experiencing cognitive load when constructing complex sentences, supporting research suggesting that L2 writing involves significant processing demands due to simultaneous attention to form and meaning. At the same time, their accounts of growth through feedback confirm the role of reflective practice in developing metalinguistic awareness, as emphasized by Bitchener and Storch (2016). Importantly, increased syntactic control was associated with enhanced writing confidence, suggesting a link between linguistic competence and self-efficacy. This finding aligns with research indicating that improved structural mastery contributes to greater writer identity and reduced anxiety in L2 contexts. Moreover, learners' perception of syntax as a meaning-making resource expands traditional views of syntactic awareness. Rather than limiting syntax to grammatical correctness, participants recognized its rhetorical function in organizing arguments, signaling relationships, and expressing stance. This supports Hyland's (2016) view that academic writing is fundamentally about constructing meaning through linguistic choices. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that syntactic awareness operates simultaneously as cognitive control, stylistic strategy, reflective practice, and identity-building mechanism, underscoring its central role in EFL academic writing development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study set out to explore EFL learners' perspectives on syntactic awareness in academic writing within an Indonesian higher education context. The findings reveal that syntactic awareness is not perceived merely as knowledge of grammatical rules, but rather as a dynamic and multifaceted metalinguistic process embedded in the act of writing itself. Participants conceptualized syntactic awareness as conscious attention to sentence structure, a strategic tool for achieving academic complexity, a mechanism for monitoring and revising errors, and a bridge connecting grammatical theory with actual writing practice. They experienced syntactic construction as cognitively demanding,

requiring deliberate effort and reflection, yet gradually developing through feedback, revision, and repeated engagement with academic texts. Importantly, increased syntactic control was associated with heightened writing confidence and the ability to use syntax strategically as a resource for meaning-making, coherence building, and rhetorical organization.

These findings reinforce theoretical perspectives that position syntactic awareness as both a metalinguistic and metacognitive resource in second language development (Ellis, 2015). Moreover, they extend previous research on syntactic complexity and writing quality (Crossley et al., 2019; Mokhtari & Thompson, 2018) by offering qualitative insight into how learners themselves interpret, internalize, and experience syntactic control. Rather than perceiving syntax as an external requirement imposed by instructors, participants recognized it as integral to academic identity formation, clarity of argumentation, and textual sophistication. Syntactic awareness thus emerges not as isolated grammatical competence, but as an evolving, reflective, and meaning-oriented process that supports broader academic literacy development.

In light of these conclusions, several pedagogical implications can be proposed. Writing instruction in EFL contexts should move beyond isolated rule-based grammar drills and instead integrate reflective syntactic engagement within authentic academic writing tasks. Activities such as sentence-combining, clause-expansion exercises, guided revision focusing on structural variation, and collaborative analysis of model texts may facilitate deeper internalization of syntactic patterns. Embedding syntax instruction directly within writing processes can help transform declarative grammatical knowledge into procedural writing competence.

Furthermore, lecturer feedback practices should extend beyond surface-level error correction to include explicit attention to syntactic organization and structural choices. Providing metalinguistic explanations alongside corrective feedback can encourage learners' reflective engagement and long-term syntactic development. Structured revision cycles that require students to articulate the rationale behind their syntactic choices may also strengthen metacognitive awareness.

At the institutional level, teacher education programs should emphasize syntactic awareness as both a linguistic and pedagogical resource. Future English teachers need not only to master syntactic structures but also to develop strategies for fostering structural awareness among their own students. Integrating reflective, syntax-focused activities into teacher preparation curricula may enhance both academic writing competence and pedagogical effectiveness.

Finally, future research is encouraged to expand the scope of investigation by involving multiple institutions, larger participant groups, or mixed-method designs that combine qualitative inquiry with textual analysis of students' written outputs. Longitudinal studies examining the development of syntactic awareness over time would be particularly valuable in understanding how instructional practices and reflective engagement shape sustained academic writing growth.

Overall, this study highlights the central role of syntactic awareness in EFL academic writing and underscores the importance of positioning syntax not as a static set of rules, but as a strategic, reflective, and meaning-driven resource within academic literacy development.

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