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Systematic writing and feedback delivery: upper-intermediate students' perceptions on benefits and affects

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Introduction: Academic writing instruction is a complex endeavor which demands adequate practice to consolidate its development. The objective of this study, set in an undergraduate Translation Program across three cohorts, was to explore students' perceptions regarding the impact of a two-semester intervention aiming to develop academic writing.

Methods: An action research design included weekly tasks and the delivery of written corrective and positive feedback, peer correction and whole-class revision. A total of 137 students answered a questionnaire across three dimensions: (a) linguistic, (b) pedagogical, and (c) affective. Additionally, a focus group examined their perceptions for triangulation.

Results: Quantitative and qualitative analysis indicates that participants value several features, e.g., systematic writing and explicit individual feedback, as these gradually help them consolidate micro (linguistic), macro (organization) and superstructural (theme) skills associated with academic writing. Additionally, a confidence increase and anxiety reduction are reported.

Discussion: These findings are arguably connected with enhanced student self-regulation, self-awareness and self-efficacy triggered by the intervention. This study contributes to the understanding of ecological interventions fostering academic writing development in EFL.

KEYWORDS

English as a foreign language, positive and corrective feedback, action research, academic writing instruction, metacognitive abilities

1 Introduction

Writing is a linguistic macro-skill essential for professional translators in both academic and workplace settings. University instruction must not only ensure learners have the conditions to continuously improve their target language through effective pedagogical practices, but also help them develop strategies for autonomous learning, such as systematicity, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Therefore, writing activities in English Language courses should be purposefully designed to foster both linguistic accuracy and reflective practice.

Writing instruction is often framed within two approaches: (1) as a product, and (2) as a process. The first approach focuses primarily on the final written text with little attention to the process and scarce revision stages. In it, students follow a linear process: they receive instruction on a particular model, a communicative function, and other specific linguistic

aspects; then, they submit it for assessment. Within this first approach, Matsuda and Silva (2010) distinguish between controlled composition, and genre-based instruction. The former emphasizes sentence accuracy and vocabulary range, while the latter focuses on textual structure, text types, communicative purpose and audience (Hitimala et al., 2024). On the other hand, the second approach sees writing as the result of an ongoing process of drafting and refinement, thus encouraging learners to improve their work, not only regarding formal aspects, but also its effectiveness to communicate ideas. In this approach, revision and feedback are core components of the writing process.

For translation trainees, written advancement often poses important challenges, such as the development of structural coherence, maintaining stylistic consistency, while adapting to cultural norms (Dragomir and Niculescu, 2020),—all deriving from the complexities inherent to writing itself (Zhang et al., 2023). Achievement will be determined from the assessment of final products, which will, in turn, often result from the deployment of cyclic processes and subprocesses related to stages of planning, putting ideas down onto paper, and draft revisions (Kloss and Quintanilla, 2024). At an advanced level, writing assignments are particularly complex since they demand adequate articulation of elements at various levels: (1) the expected outcome, e.g., the theme, context-related, and linguistic aspects; (2) the affective domain, for example, the motivation to write, and (3) external factors defined by the pedagogical practices through which writing is taught, e.g., the writing purpose and the targeting of a specific readership (Li et al., 2024). Moreover, the conventions of academic English are quite distinct from those of spoken or the ordinary use of written language in stories, social media messaging, etc. These conventions are expressed at a formal, semantic and pragmatic-discursive level affecting sentence structure, precision in the information provided, and text intentionality. Thus, academic writing, which is understood as the ability to put forward ideas and arguments clearly, concisely and logically, which appears to place increased cognitive demands upon learners (Rosyada and Sundari, 2021).

Text quality is argued to result in part from an array of psychological constructs (Çelik, 2020) which help learners approach, execute, and assess their writing process in an independent way. Firstly, self-regulation is highlighted by Rincón and Hederich-Martínez (2021) as one's knowledge of conditions that favor writing itself, as well as the strategies deployed to address writing effectively, such as some of the decisions that learners need to make when performing a task relate to goal setting, application of a plan (brainstorming, drafting, rewriting and proofreading, etc.), and accessing to reference sources. Secondly, learners' self-awareness, understood as the ability to assess one's own work, is also underscored since it contributes importantly to the quality of the final outcomes in writing (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1994). Thirdly, self-efficacy, understood as the beliefs held about one's ability, will directly affect the amount of effort allocated when performing a task, which in turn would mediate engagement (Hao and Lu, 2024). Learners can progressively build these mental frameworks through carefully planned pedagogical interventions where feedback is paramount for their development.

The above psychological constructs are arguably connected to effective feedback, since this stimulates their application when given in a carefully organized manner. The supportive learning environment that systematic feedback helps create may fuel students' motivation to make progress. In a study conducted among Chilean university

students, aimed at developing self-regulation, researchers found that greater exposure to feedback favored linguistic skills improvement and engagement levels (Contreras-Soto et al., 2023a). Also, self-regulated learners develop other metacognitive processes, such as self-awareness, or the ability to understand and act upon feedback (Wingate, 2010; Yang et al., 2023), which would make them aware of their progress or limitations with higher chances of improvement. Recent research among university students indicates a positive relationship between teacher feedback and self-efficacy, thus indirectly increasing the chance for achievement (Razmi and Ghane, 2024; Sun et al., 2021). In other words, when teachers offer well thought-out-feedback, a sustainable learning cycle will occur—learners develop beliefs about their capacity to address tasks successfully, so their motivation or disposition toward learning increases. These findings underscore the relevance of feedback in writing instruction for translation trainees (Harris et al., 2015).

Studies on the role of feedback in EFL writing instruction have particularly focused on clarifying the effects of corrective feedback (CF) as a remedial strategy for linguistic errors (Ellis, 2009; Sheen, 2011). In this respect, though some controversy persists regarding its effectiveness (Chong, 2019; Mohebbi, 2021), the gains from CF are agreed on when it is directed at the acquisition of grammatical forms, especially if particular error types are targeted and whose reduction can be observed in a rewritten text (Ekiert and di Gennaro, 2021; Lee, 2020). Notwithstanding, findings from experimental and quasi-experimental CF studies have been questioned on the point that they are only tangentially relevant to natural classroom settings, where the aim is to develop writing extensively, across different styles and genres, and where a wide range of text aspects need to be treated for improvement, beyond a given set of forms (Chong, 2019). These issues touch on the nature of CF and the debate around its most effective scope: whether *focused*, that is, aiming at correcting specific predetermined forms at one end of a continuum; or *comprehensive*, targeting as wide a range of errors as possible, at the other end. This line of enquiry on the scope of CF has shown inconclusive findings regarding the effectiveness of focused or comprehensive CF (Lee, 2020).

Following the above, the adoption of more ecological perspectives for authentic contexts is called for when conducting research on writing instruction with feedback treatment, e.g., with a tighter focus on personal and contextual factors (Chong, 2019; Storch, 2018). For instance, in terms of final products, translation trainees would be expected to deliver texts that exhibit well-achieved features at the levels of macrostructure, superstructure and microstructure (van Dijk, 2008), where (1) macrostructure refers to the global meaning (theme) or conceptual structure, (2) superstructure relates to the overall text template and how its parts are arranged to form a unified meaning, e.g., in academic essays the default scheme would contain an introduction, development, and conclusion, and (3) microstructure includes elements of semantics (background, detail, intention, etc.), syntax (form of sentences and coherence), lexicon (word choice), and stylistics (Huda et al., 2020). Therefore, since these levels support each other, feedback should inform learners of errors and areas to be improved in any of the three discursive structures, not just on linguistic deficiencies.

Regarding these viewpoints, Hattie and Timperley (2007) underscore the power that feedback can potentially exert. They conceptualize it as a broad term referring to pedagogical actions that seek to offer diverse information to favor the development of skills, beyond the aspects of correctness. In other words, the information

provided –whether about domain knowledge, meta-cognitive, task-based, or cognitive strategies– should enable learners to confirm understanding through positive feedback, as well as the restructuring of knowledge through the corrective function (Winne and Butler, 1994). In addition to these cognitive considerations, sociocultural theory views feedback as a collaborative process between different participants, e.g., teachers, learners and peers (Ellis, 2007), which changes and adapts to the individual and their social environment. Thus, effectiveness will also depend on the interactive processes generated by the feedback action, facilitating learners' zone of proximal development through a negotiated and dynamic assistance process of scaffolding (Storch, 2018; Wakabayashi, 2013).

Two other factors associated with the usefulness of feedback are timeliness and frequency, both proven to impact writing quality. Learners, in particular, tend to prefer feedback that is both prompt and frequent (Bayerlein, 2014; Irwin, 2017). These findings carry the obvious implication that for feedback to happen in that fashion, writing practice should also be held regularly and at appropriate points during instruction. These aspects are encompassed within the concept of systematicity, understood as any activity performed methodically, and which is posited to have a positive impact on text quality (Soifer et al., 2010). As systematic writing is a prior condition to feedback delivery, it is critical for students to experience numerous opportunities to write and to receive feedback to consolidate skill development (Taie, 2014), so that it becomes routinized and automatic, as expected at an advanced level (Speelman, 2005). In relation with this, research on writing frequency reveals some contradiction among EFL instructors; even though the value of actual practice for writing competence is widely recognized by practitioners, they tend not to ask learners to write often, for various reasons, e.g., time constraints, and effort devoted to other skill development (Dockrell et al., 2016; Silva and Matsuda, 2012).

The present study examines upper-intermediate translation trainees' perceptions of a 2-semester intervention aiming to foster academic writing through systematic tasks treated with both positive and comprehensive corrective feedback. Understanding participants' perceptions helps to identify preferences and to estimate how beneficial and meaningful they find the process, so that increased engagement and more self-awareness can be fostered in future implementations. The methodological approach corresponds to an action research (AR) study with a descriptive scope, and a special concern for ecological validity. Data is collected through a survey with a Likert scale questionnaire and an open-ended questions, plus focus group. Results are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively via content analysis (CA), and later, findings are discussed from a post-pandemic perspective regarding perceptions of specific features and the intervention's impact along three dimensions: linguistic, pedagogical, and affective. This work contributes to expanding our knowledge of effective practices aiming to improve EFL writing competence in authentic university contexts, an area of EFL enquiry where research is limited (Mallahi, 2024), as is the case with undergraduate students preparing to be translators.

2 Action research methodology

This investigation follows an adaptation of the British Council model for Exploratory Action Research (Smith and Rebolledo, 2018), as

reported by Ahmad (2020) and implemented by Contreras-Soto et al. (2023b). This methodology was chosen for its potential capacity to have immediate impact through innovations that respond to learning challenges in real teaching settings. Specifically, this methodology adapted well to the underlying purpose of the study, which was to foster academic writing in translation trainees. During the exploratory phase, where the pedagogical problem was identified, researchers collected evidence of reduced writing performance resulting from limited practice time and lack of systematic instruction, issues that were particularly exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Eventually, the adapted model followed a continuous 5-stage cycle which comprised: (1) *Noticing a problem*: phase where an issue affecting the teaching and learning process is documented; (2) *Planning*: in this stage an intervention attempting to deal with the problem is designed; (3) *Teaching/acting*: this refers to the actual implementation of the planned intervention; (4) *Observing*: while the intervention is applied, through systematic examination, adjustments are made to adapt it to the real teaching conditions; and (5) *Reflecting*: this includes analysis and assessment of the applied intervention regarding efficacy and adequacy to address the teaching issue.

2.1 Noticing the problem

Translation trainees, in line with graduate profiles for translation students who complete their undergraduate studies at the institution, ought to reach a C1 level (Council of Europe, 2020) of L2 competence at the end of their training, with high attainment in the four linguistic skills. Regarding academic writing, while university programs periodically assess this ability through summative evaluation, we observed that actual in-class practice focused on longitudinal development was sparsely implemented across the syllabi. This practice assumes that students will naturally develop academic writing in parallel with linguistic advancement, for instance, through autonomous work. Instruction would appear to lean toward a focus on the product rather than on the process approach, with limited systematicity and skill practice where practicality seems to be a major reason for this approach, as writing activities and feedback delivery take up considerable time, leaving less room for other aspects of training.

During Covid-19 emergency remote teaching (ERT), online analysis of undergraduate students preparing to be translators that we carried out at our local Chilean university revealed evident shortcomings in our students' writing skills development. Our data analysis highlighted two main areas requiring improvement. Firstly, linguistic accuracy needed attention, including subject-verb concordance, grammar range, lexical variety, punctuation and use of referential elements. Secondly, features commonly associated with academic writing were in need of improvement, such as text organization, discursive marker use, and stylistic conventions. Gathered information about written work showed that actual writing by an important number of students was scarce, with some of them submitting only a few of expected formative assignments. In this regard, looking into factors that might account for these issues, we speculated that issues related to affective states, such as low motivation and confidence, or anxiety during lockdown, might have played a part in triggering them.

Subsequently, it became necessary to implement a pedagogical methodology whose features would engage trainees in producing

more written texts, within a supervised fashion, as part of curricular activities in the classroom; so that systematic practice time would be increased, as well as the opportunities to receive scaffolding action through feedback. It was expected that trainees would experience such an intervention as a positive contribution to the development of academic writing, enhancing positive affect toward their own writing capability. Ultimately, AR was employed to meet those needs and identify trainees' perceptions regarding the impact of the intervention.

2.2 Planning

The AR project was carried out in an undergraduate translation program within a Chilean university. This was implemented in three consecutive cohorts between 2022 and 2024, a period initially marked by the full return from Covid-19 remote teaching to in-person classes. From a competence point of view, translation trainees are required to attain a C1 level in English, including attainment in the academic writing skills.

It was expected that the pedagogical strategy implemented would tackle the following gaps in student knowledge and production: firstly, decreased text quality at the discursive levels of microstructure (linguistic range and accuracy), superstructure (academic template convention and text), and macrostructure (responding adequately to topic and task requirements). Secondly, the strategy was expected to operate in a way that would boost learners' amount of written production with the goal of maximizing instructional function through augmented skill practice and delivery of feedback. Thirdly, the innovation was expected to bring about positive affective states of mind in trainees, favoring their motivation to write via an indirect increased sense of self-awareness and self-efficacy, alongside with the integration of self-regulation to their writing practice.

The AR objective is formally enunciated as follows:

To explore translation trainees' perceptions regarding the impact of an intervention aimed at developing academic writing skills.

The research question attempted to be answered is:

What are translation trainees' perceptions resulting from the implementation of a feedback-intensive writing intervention across three dimensions: (a) linguistic, (b) pedagogical, and (c) affective?

2.3 Participants

The sample of the study was made up of third-year Translation trainees from a Chilean university. They were all enrolled in the annual English Language subject and were added to the study through intentional sampling after signing an informed consent. Participants were native speakers of Spanish, with an approximate B2 + proficiency in English at the beginning of the study, and C1 at the end (Council of Europe, 2020), who were also studying German or French as part of their curriculum, which reflected their multilingual academic background. These students belonged to one of three consecutive cohorts between years 2022 and 2024, with a total of 137 students distributed across 2 or 3 sections in each cohort. The breakdown is as follows: 3 sections in 2022 ($n = 44$ students), 2 sections in 2023 ($n = 34$ students) and 3 sections in 2024 ($n = 59$ students) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 Number and percentage of participants per cohort.

Cohort year	Cohort 1 (2022)	Cohort 2 (2023)	Cohort 3 (2024)	Total
Sections	1, 2, 3	1, 2	1, 2, 3	8
Participants (n)	44	34	59	137
%	32.1	24.8	43.1	100

Trainees' ages ranged between 20 and 30 years old. The most common age groups were 20 ($n = 33$), 21 ($n = 44$), and 22 years old ($n = 25$), while ages with the fewest students were 26 and 30 years old (2 students in each age group) (see Table 2).

Regarding gender, 23 students were male, accounting for 16.8% of the sample; 108 students were female (78.8%); 5 students identified as neither male nor female (3.6%) and one student did not provide any gender information (0.8%) (see Table 3).

2.4 Teaching/acting

In the following section, the conditions and features that characterized the pedagogical intervention are described, together with the writing task requirements and feedback treatment.

2.4.1 Intervention

The systematic strategy used to foster the development of academic writing was a 2-semester pedagogical intervention which was applied during both semesters in three consecutive cohorts in the English Language subject. This was conceived as a multi-faceted design responding to the need to view academic writing through three dimensions: linguistic, pedagogical, and affective. The innovation centered around trainees performing once-a-week writing tasks implemented on the institutional platform CANVAS. In this context, the emphasis of the intervention was laid, firstly, on increasing systematic formative practice, and secondly, on analyzing and treating students' productions with feedback, within an eclectic instructional framework of writing as a process-approach and a genre-based perspective. These decisions were taken to maximize systematic practice and reduce trainees' affective concerns about grading, by focusing on the skill itself, its instruction, and feedback content. Conversely, as the tasks did not carry a mark, to maintain engagement along the intervention, students were given an incentive mark bonus at the end of the year period, dependent on the number of completed and submitted tasks during the writing sessions.

Before the intervention, participants were given a rehearsal task. At that moment, they were informed of the objective and nature of the intervention plan. They were also given guidelines about features that characterize academic writing; for example, the requirements for these texts to follow an evidently formal register and to have a relatively fixed structure, with a style and organization that is meant to be clear, concise and logical to the target audience.

Students wrote the weekly texts on the Word editor during 45–60 min in a computer lab, with each cohort elaborating between 18 and 20 tasks in the academic year. In each session, first, students read the instructions and a syllabus-anchored prompt; then they planned, elaborated, typed, and submitted their texts. Additionally,

TABLE 2 Number and percentage of participants according to age.

Participants' age	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	30	Total
(n)	33	44	25	12	11	8	2	2	137
%	24.1	32.1	18.2	8.8	8	5.8	1.5	1.5	100

TABLE 3 Number and percentage of participants according to gender.

Participants' gender	Male	Female	Other	Does not say	Total
(n)	23	108	5	1	137
%	16.8	78.8	3.6	0.8	100

before each writing session, at least one full class was dedicated to cover the thematic area related to the writing task through activities focusing on the linguistic skills of speaking, reading or listening. While writing the texts, learners were allowed to access online webpages and English monolingual dictionaries for reference; nonetheless, they were instructed not to use translation tools or AI applications during the writing tasks, and were monitored accordingly.

2.4.2 Task requirements

Writing tasks were anchored in the subject syllabus, such that, depending on the coverage of the course units, the topics used to create the task prompts were directly connected with the unit themes, e.g., climate change, technology, neuroplasticity, intelligence, etc. The tasks had a communicative purpose requiring students to solve a problem presented in the form of a statement or question to which they had to respond and take their stand, supporting it with arguments. For example, the prompt given to the topic of intelligence was: *“Some people believe that emotional intelligence does not matter in their academic and professional life. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?”* The discursive gender of the texts was expository with a descriptive or argumentative style whose main function was either to explain facts or persuade the reader, and which followed the templates of opinion essays, discussion essays, and argumentative essays (Zemach and Rumisek, 2006), with a basic 3-paragraph structure of introduction, development and conclusion and an expected length of 300–350 words in the first semester, and 5-paragraph essays of 350–500 words in the second.

2.4.3 Text revision and feedback

Feedback was used to provide trainees with confirmation or the need for adjustment of learning through positive and corrective feedback, respectively. The decision to adopt a broad conceptualization of feedback was taken since during ERT, students had shown signs of affective states detrimental to second language acquisition, namely, anxiety, depression, and stress (Xu and Wang, 2023); and also, had expressed the need for academic support from instructors (Fuchs, 2022). In this respect, positive feedback has been shown to raise motivation and generate improved states for skill development across different areas (Verina et al., 2021; Lopes et al., 2024). Additionally, corrective feedback was used to target linguistic errors, as well as task-related aspects at the level of the discursive genre, and general conceptualization of the topics. Finally, it was decided that the

feedback should also incorporate some type of collaborative action through interaction among different agents to facilitate and support the construction of further learning.

Specifically, the texts produced by trainees received:

- (1) asynchronous comprehensive written feedback, which included positive and corrective feedback. Through a rota system, this was performed by the course instructor and assistant students directly on the submitted texts, which were then returned to the platform for students to check. The weekly feedback was personalized, private, and timely, that is, it was delivered before the next writing session. Depending on the error types, corrective feedback typology at the microstructure level included direct (giving the correct form on the page margin), indirect (coloring in red a text chunk, but without supplying the correct form), and indirect metalinguistic feedback (entering on the page margin a comment about the linguistic nature of the error for the trainees to work out the correct form themselves). On the other hand, corrective feedback for errors at the superstructure or macrostructure levels was indicated by highlighting text portions, including comments on the margin that indicated the thematic development or genre-related elements to be adjusted, such as, those of the quality, absence, or inconsistency of the thesis statement, topic sentences, discourse markers, and text structure and organization for the targeted genre templates, etc.
- (2) In-class oral feedback. This feedback consisted of the collaborative revision between instructors and trainees of randomly selected texts that participants themselves had submitted previously. This activity aimed at providing students with oral positive and corrective feedback on their productions through collective revision, with an emphasis on the value of progress along the long-term process of writing development. This whole-class procedure was led by the instructor, who promoted students' participation regarding the identification and analysis of well-achieved or to-be-improved features at the discursive levels of the micro, super or macro structure. The procedure was anonymous, without revealing the writer's name, to facilitate trainees' involvement in the analytical activity by reducing personalization of the text author.

2.5 Data collection

To obtain information about the trainees' perceptions, two instruments were used: a survey and a focus group. Firstly, they answered a Google Forms survey a week after the last writing session. This had two sections: The first section consisted of a 14-question Likert questionnaire where participants indicated, on a 5-level scale, their level of satisfaction with statements aiming to collect information on three dimensions: linguistic, pedagogical, and

affective. The linguistic dimension (questions 1–5) attempted to identify if the writing tasks had favored trainees' progress in specific areas of their linguistic and writing competence. The pedagogical dimension (questions 6–10) intended to determine whether specific intervention features had positively contributed to improving overall text quality. The affective dimension (questions 11–14) aimed to establish whether the intervention had generated positive states in students' affective aspects, such as confidence, motivation, and favorable mood after ERT. Before application, the questionnaire was validated in the aspects of clarity, coherence, and relevance by a group of experts, showing adequate levels of central tendency and dispersion. The second section consisted of an open question enquiring students' opinion on the intervention and suggestions for improvement in its implementation.

Secondly, after analyzing the questionnaire responses, a sample of participants from different sections was randomly selected to take part in a focus group where students were asked to discuss extensively the points measured in the questionnaire and thus delve more deeply into their perspectives. To maximize their communicative expression, the discussion was held in Spanish by a researcher not involved in teaching any of the class sections. The session was recorded and transcribed for later CA.

2.6 Data analysis

Two types of analysis were used to examine the gathered data: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative analysis used frequency of trainees' answers according to the level of satisfaction with the questionnaire statements. Responses "I agree" and "I totally agree" were considered together to calculate measures of central tendency and dispersion. These were standardized to percentages from the ideal score on each variable for easier representation of the tendencies. Descriptive statistics were calculated to analyze distribution of each variable. Additionally, statistical differences between groups (gender) were evaluated using Mann–Whitney's test due to the non-normal distribution of variables. Since the variables tested in independent groups did not meet the assumptions of

normality according to the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($p < 0.5$), the Mann–Whitney U test was used to compare differences between the two independent groups.

Qualitative analysis was performed jointly on the students' answers to the questionnaire's open-ended question as well as on the focus group transcript. This consisted of CA performed by five experts from the research team. Codes were identified and associated deductively within the pre-established affective, linguistic, and pedagogical dimensions explored in the questionnaire. Within the dimensions, codes were classified inductively into categories to distinguish specific meanings and establish relationships with the points enquired in the questionnaire. Initial tagging and color coding were first performed on a Word document and then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet to normalize tags and treat data numerically from the point of view of frequency of occurrences to identify the most outstanding features in participants' perceptions. Finally, the most meaningful quotations illustrating the sense of each category were selected for exemplification. For the study, quotations expressed in Spanish in the focus group were translated into English by a professional translator.

2.7 Observing

2.7.1 Quantitative results

In this section, an account is given of the results obtained from the application of the Likert scale questionnaire. Figure 1 shows the satisfaction regarding positive contributions of the intervention along the studied dimensions across cohorts. The level of satisfaction is relatively high in the three dimensions, in the three cohorts. Additionally, it can be observed that the linguistic and pedagogical dimensions exhibit a relatively higher satisfaction, above 81%, compared with the affective dimension, whose maximum percentage reaches 72.2% in Cohort 1.

Figure 2 displays the percentage of satisfaction in the three dimensions by gender. In both genders analyzed, similarly as with the cohorts, the percentages in the linguistic (men = 82.6%;

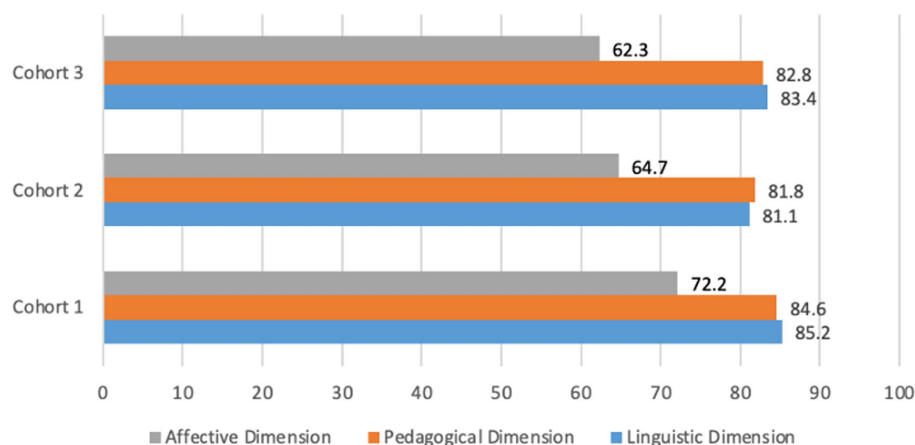


FIGURE 1
Percentage of satisfaction by dimension and cohort (Likert scale questionnaire).

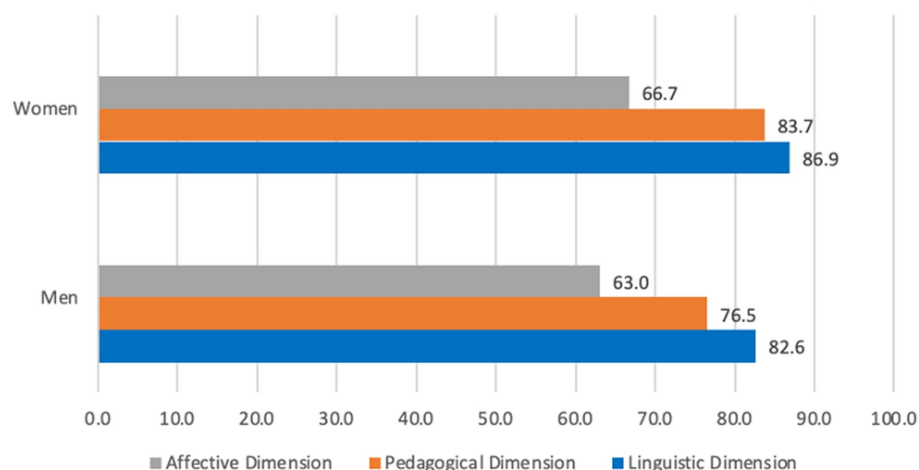


FIGURE 2
Percentage of satisfaction by dimension and across gender (Likert scale questionnaire).

women = 86.9%) and pedagogical (men = 76.5%; women = 83.7%) dimensions are higher than in the affective dimension in both genders (men = 63.04%; women = 66.67%). Additionally, results revealed statistically significant satisfaction differences between men and women across all dimensions.

Given that none of the dimensions showed normal distribution (Table 4), the Mann–Whitney U test was used to find out if differences according to gender were statistically significant.

Tables 5, 6 show the satisfaction descriptives by gender and dimension, respectively. With women showing consistently higher mean scores across all dimensions (Affective: 23.648; Pedagogical: 47.296; Linguistic: 72.944), and lower coefficients of variation. Table 6 presents the Mann–Whitney test results, which revealed statistically significant differences in all dimensions: affective ($p = 0.014$), pedagogical ($p = 0.014$), and linguistic ($p < 0.001$). The effect sizes, measured through rank-biserial correlation, were moderate for the affective and pedagogical dimensions (-0.318) and stronger for the linguistic dimension (0.482).

Figure 3 shows the consolidated cohorts' satisfaction with the statements in the linguistic dimension. All the percentages appear relatively high, concentrating within the range 79–89%, approx. Specifically, two statements are equally rated, both with the highest level in the linguistic dimension (89.1%). These correspond to the perception that the intervention favors, first, the use of transitions to express relationships among parts of the text, and second, the organization of ideas, by assisting paragraph-creation. A third statement with relatively high satisfaction (88.3%) was the recognition that the intervention helped students apply and adjust grammatical elements in their texts. Next, relatively high satisfaction (85.4%) was seen with the statement that the intervention allowed participants to attend to and adjust punctuation to separate ideas and clarify meaning. Finally, 79.6% of satisfaction was found with the idea that the intervention allowed for correction and adjustment of reference mechanisms among textual elements, such as, subject-verb number concordance.

Figure 4 displays the consolidated cohorts' satisfaction level with the statements in the pedagogical dimension. The statement that

TABLE 4 Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for evaluating normal distribution.

Variable	Test	Statistic	p -value
Affective dimension	Kolmogorov–Smirnov	0.229	<0.001
Pedagogical dimension		0.230	<0.001
Linguistic dimension		0.217	<0.001

TABLE 5 Descriptive statistics group 1-men vs. group 2-women.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
Affective dimension	1	23	23.087	2.372	0.495	0.103
	2	108	23.648	1.537	0.148	0.065
Pedagogical dimension	1	23	46.174	4.745	0.989	0.103
	2	108	47.296	3.073	0.296	0.065
Linguistic dimension	1	23	70.261	7.117	1.484	0.101
	2	108	72.944	4.610	0.444	0.063

TABLE 6 Mean differences by gender: U-Mann Whitney Test.

Variable	W	df p	Rank-Biserial Correlation	SE Rank-Biserial Correlation
Affective dimension	847.000	0.014	-0.318	0.132
Pedagogical dimension	847.000	0.014	-0.318	0.132
Linguistic dimension	643.000	<0.001	-0.482	0.132

For the Mann–Whitney test, effect size is given by the rank biserial correlation. Mann–Whitney U test.

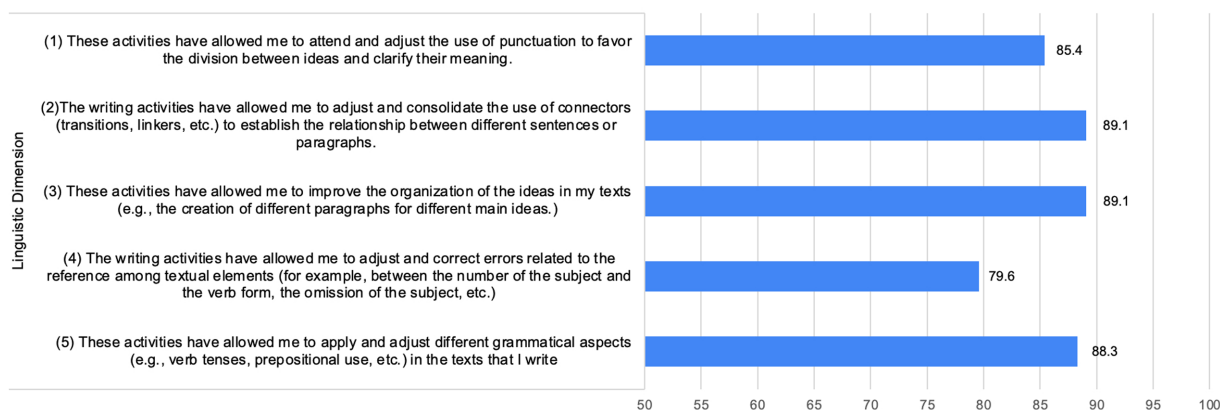


FIGURE 3
Percentage of satisfaction in the linguistic dimension (Likert scale questionnaire).

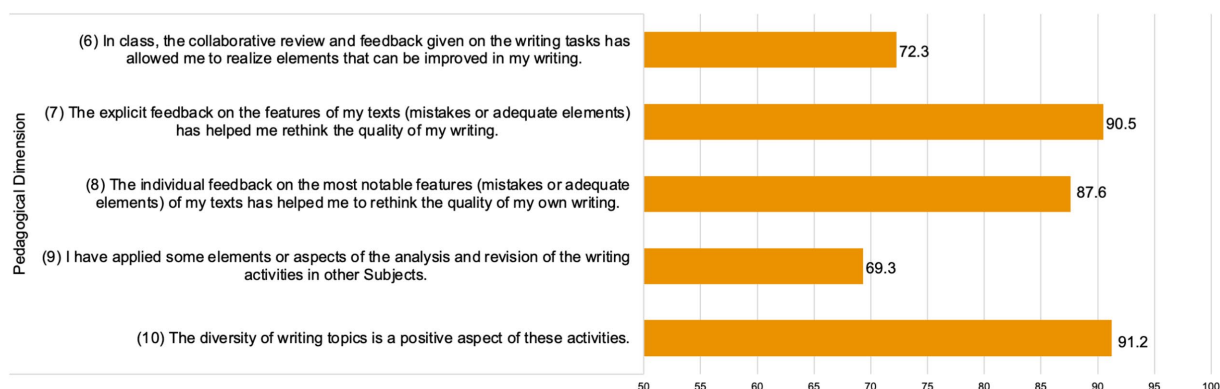


FIGURE 4
Percentage of satisfaction in the pedagogical dimension (Likert scale questionnaire).

exhibits the highest satisfaction (91.2%) is topic diversity associated with the intervention tasks. Then, two feedback-related elements appear close together showing high satisfaction; 90.5% indicate that feedback explicitness, that is, the fact that it specifies errors or positive aspects of the texts, is highly valued by participants. Similarly, 87.6% of trainees indicate high satisfaction with individualized feedback delivery, either positive or corrective in nature, as it allows them to rethink their writing in terms of quality improvement. The second main tendency includes two statements ranking relatively lower in satisfaction: (1) in-class collaborative oral revision and feedback by different agents (72.3%), and (2) actual transfer to writing in other subjects of the program (69.3%).

Figure 5 shows the consolidated cohorts' percentages of satisfaction with the statements in the affective dimension. The highest satisfaction (74.5%) indicates that the intervention triggered confidence in participants. With a lower percentage, 67.9% agreed or totally agreed with the idea that the intervention motivated them to improve their writing; while 65.0% indicated that the absence of grades in the tasks favored their motivation. Finally, the lowest satisfaction (56.9%) was found with the idea that the intervention, as a post-lockdown innovation, had a positive effect on trainees' mood and disposition.

2.7.2 Qualitative results

The corpus was composed of a total of 8,769 tokens, which derived from the open question (4,240 tokens) and focus group (4,529 tokens) scripts. By means of CA, 279 codes emerged associated with the three dimensions of the study. The number of tokens relevant to the study was 5,333. Table 7 shows the number of codes by dimension and emerging categories (27) associated to the three dimensions. The pedagogical dimension concentrated the highest number of codes, with 106; then, linguistic, with 97, and after that, affective with 76 codes.

In the linguistic dimension, codes were classified into eight categories: academic style, discourse and organization, error reduction, grammatical competence, lexical competence, skill extrapolation, topic practice, and writing competence. Table 8 displays the number and percentage of codes per category and cohort. Findings indicate that the category of writing competence exhibits the highest number of codes, clearly standing out over the rest (46.4%). Below it, appears the category of discourse and organization, with 16.5%. After that, the categories of lexical competence (9.3%), skill extrapolation (9.3%) and grammatical competence (8.2%) are found. Finally, error reduction (4.1%), academic style (3.1%), and topic practice (3.1%) appear with smaller percentages.

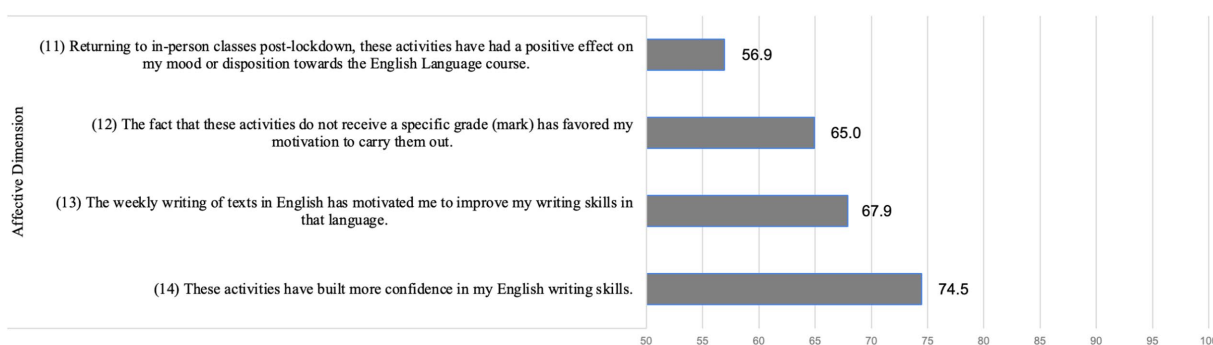


FIGURE 5
Percentage of satisfaction in the affective dimension (Likert scale questionnaire).

TABLE 7 Number of tokens, codes and categories by dimension (open question and focus group).

Dimension	Quotation token	Codes	Categories
Pedagogical	2,951	106	12
Linguistic	1,419	97	8
Affective	963	76	7
Total	5,333	279	27

In the pedagogical dimension, codes were classified into 12 categories: CF (Corrective Feedback) effectiveness, critical thinking, ERT transition, incentive, intervention design, peer-correction, planning, scaffolding, self-assessment, task conditions, topic choice, whole-class feedback. Table 9 displays the number and percentage of codes in this dimension by cohort. The findings indicate that the categories of intervention design and corrective feedback reach the highest percentages, with 21.7 and 19.8%, respectively. Then, descending, a set of three categories is identified: scaffolding (13.2%), task conditions (12.3%), and topic choice (9.4%). With fewer occurrences, the remaining set of categories includes self-assessment (4.7%), critical thinking (3.8%), incentive (3.8%), whole-class feedback (3.8%), ERT transition (2.8%), peer-correction (2.8%), and planning (1.9%).

Thirdly, in the affective dimension, codes were classified into 7 categories: anxiety reduction, enjoyment, grading, positive feedback, satisfaction, skill appreciation, and systematicity. Table 10 shows the number and percentage of codes per category by cohort. Findings indicate that enjoyment (32.9%) and skill appreciation (23.7%) have the highest percentages of codes. With lower percentages appear anxiety reduction and systematicity (10.5% each), and finally, satisfaction (9.2%), and then grading and positive feedback (6.6% each).

3 Discussion (reflecting)

The present study was motivated by the need to face the challenge of finding adequate instructional approximations to teaching academic writing to upper-intermediate translation trainees. This process becomes highly complex as it requires that learners exhibit a

fluent use of written language at C1 level, adhering to the conventions of genre templates. The demanding conditions of ERT had marked a turning point, since class attendance and task submission dropped drastically, reducing trainees' practice time, and as a consequence, the chances of receiving feedback to adjust their learning.

The present AR sought to implement an intervention to assist trainees to enhance their academic writing, whose goal was to explore participants' perceptions regarding the impact of the innovation implemented along three dimensions: linguistic, pedagogical, and affective. These were relevant to identify trainees' views regarding contributions to their written competence, and impact on their affective states. To gather information, two mechanisms were employed: a Likert scale questionnaire, and focus group.

From the questionnaire data, it was observed that, even though participants expressed relatively high satisfaction in the three dimensions, the greatest satisfaction was found in the pedagogical and linguistic dimensions in the three cohorts, in the ranges 81.8–84.6% (pedagogical), and 81.1–85.2% (linguistic) (Figure 1). From this viewpoint, these ratings would suggest that the intervention is perceived as satisfactory regarding its ultimate aim, which is to assist trainees in the development of academic writing via focused and systematic practice.

Additionally, results also reveal satisfaction differences between men and women, with women showing higher levels in the three dimensions. This appears to be somewhat in line with previous research reporting differences according to gender (Ellis, 2001; Erdemir and Kis, 2024). For example, women were reported to be more responsive to external evaluations (Roberts, 1991), which might explain why their perception of the impact of corrective feedback was greater than that expressed by males. Similarly, Butler (2014) suggests that females tend to work harder toward improving their performance in some educational contexts. This may reflect their higher appreciation of this feedback-intensive writing intervention. In addition, the study by Luitel (2024) indicated that women display higher motivation and engagement levels in academic contexts as compared to men.

3.1 Linguistic dimension

In individual statements within the linguistic dimension of the Likert scale, participants expressed relatively high satisfaction ranging

TABLE 8 Number of codes per category in the linguistic dimension (open question and focus group).

Dimension	Category	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Total	%
Linguistic	Academic style	3	–	–	3	3.1
	Discourse and organization	7	4	5	16	16.5
	Error reduction	4	–	–	4	4.1
	Grammatical competence	4	2	2	8	8.2
	Lexical competence	5	–	4	9	9.3
	Skill extrapolation	6	–	3	9	9.3
	Topic practice	1	1	1	3	3.1
	Writing competence	16	15	14	45	46.4
No. of codes		46	22	29	97	100

TABLE 9 Number of codes per category in the pedagogical dimension (open question and focus group).

Dimension	Category	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Total	%
Pedagogical	CF effectiveness	12	6	3	21	19.8
	Critical thinking	2	1	1	4	3.8
	ERT transition	3	–	–	3	2.8
	Incentive	3	–	1	4	3.8
	Intervention design	14	1	8	23	21.7
	Peer-correction	2	1	–	3	2.8
	Planning	2	–	–	2	1.9
	Scaffolding	11	2	1	14	13.2
	Self-assessment	–	1	4	5	4.7
	Task Conditions	8	4	1	13	12.3
	Topic choice	4	1	5	10	9.4
	Whole-class feedback	2	1	1	4	3.8
No. of codes		63	18	25	106	100

TABLE 10 Number of codes per category in the affective dimension (open question and focus group).

Dimension	Category	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Total	%
Affective	Anxiety reduction	1	3	4	8	10.5
	Enjoyment	9	6	10	25	32.9
	Grading	2	3	–	5	6.6
	Positive feedback	5	–	–	5	6.6
	Satisfaction	2	2	3	7	9.2
	Skill Appreciation	4	4	10	18	23.7
	Systematicity	2	–	6	8	10.5
No. of codes		25	18	33	76	100

from 79.6 to 89.1% (Figure 3). These included elements that work together at the microstructure level (punctuation, connectors and transitions, and consistency between subject and verb number), and macrostructure (text template, essay genre). Participants perceived improvement in text organization, statement of main and supporting ideas, and paragraph creation. Actually, responses underscored how the intervention favored their ability to use connectors effectively

when expressing relationships between ideas (89.1% in items 2 and 3 of the Likert scale; Figure 3). Similarly, this was also observed in CA where the category of discourse and organization reached 16.5% of codes (Table 8), which is arguably important for both local and global coherence (Allison et al., 1999). For example, students explained that “these activities have helped me to improve the organization of the ideas in paragraphs” and “I have been able to apply certain connectors

or text organization techniques,” etc. This could derive from the focal action fostered by the corrective feedback on the use of discourse markers for different functions (sequential, contrast, addition, etc.)

In CA, undoubtedly, the most striking evidence of a positive effect on writing development is found in the broad category of writing competence, with 46.4% of the codes. Some of the students’ comments are: “this writing activity develops the students’ abilities to formulate complex texts and sentences in English,” “I do tell the difference between my previous and recent pieces of writing,” etc. This could well be supported by the high satisfaction level (88.3%; [Figure 3](#), item 5) in grammatical aspects, which, in turn, is observed in the grammatical competence category in CA (8.2%) ([Table 8](#)). Students also reported: “Writing helped to improve specially my grammar” and “they have helped me to improve my writings in every aspect, grammar,” etc. It appears that a systematic intervention like this, aimed at aiding students in their written academic development and linguistic competence, seems to serve those purposes, as a result of the process-oriented features of this pedagogical intervention which leads to a positive impact on the quality of the final written outcome.

3.2 Pedagogical dimension

In the pedagogical dimension, the most remarkable findings are associated with the way tasks were handled and conditions in which writing occurred. This is relevant as participants will more likely participate and succeed academically if they feel satisfied with learning experiences ([Gray and DiLoreto, 2016](#)). Trainees perceive relatively high satisfaction with the way the intervention was implemented. For instance, the of category intervention design in CA reaches 21.7% of all codes ([Table 9](#)), the highest in the pedagogical dimension. Some of the features felt as the most outstanding were:

Regularity and frequency of the intervention. Students explained “in my opinion, being ‘forced’ to write every week has made me have a writing routine, do it frequently,” and “going back to the language development part, Lengua Inglesa has been the most consistent regarding writing tasks.” These findings on writing practice regularity and frequency (see “b” below) align well with research on feedback regularity, posited to be essential for learning and consolidation. As a result of methodic and numerous opportunities, students perceive their written skills have become routinized and automatized ([Hattie and Timperley, 2007](#); [Speelman, 2005](#); [Soiferman et al., 2010](#); [Taie, 2014](#)).

The topics and thematic diversity also appear as satisfactory in the Likert scale, with 91.2%, the highest percentage in the pedagogical dimension ([Figure 4](#)). These also seem backed up by CA (9.4%) ([Table 9](#)). Students reported “doing these types of activities not only can help to develop our ideas and opinions due to the different topics,” and “the topics were also interesting.” These high satisfaction levels with themes could be due to the expansion and reinforcement of syllabus-integrated topics which seem quite relevant for trainees, as it is a way to review studied contents.

Task conditions in general (12.3%) ([Table 9](#)) are perceived to be adequate for writing practice, such as, use of the online editor, word count, timing requirements, and clarity of instructions. Students commented “I like that we have a limited amount of time and a minimum amount of words. That pushes me to try doing them faster

and better every time.” and “thanks to the clear instructions on the subject to tackle.” These elements seem all to work well in creating a rational framework for gradual skill development.

Additionally, among the intervention benefits, participants highlighted that the intervention enabled them to extrapolate gains to other subjects (69.3%) ([Figure 4](#)). Students reported “Personally, it helped me when I had to write an essay for literature class” and “I have been able to apply certain connectors or text organization techniques to other courses.” This could well be the result of students developing awareness about aspects of Task Response and Cohesion and Coherence as macro skills which could naturally be transferred to other subjects.

A special mention can be made about feedback delivery as students’ perceptions revealed the second highest percentage of codes (19.8%) ([Table 9](#)) valuing the corrective function to draw attention to errors and support correction. CF was framed within a wide approach to feedback delivery, integrating features of positive and corrective feedback based on cognitive and sociocultural theory ([Chong, 2019](#); [Storch, 2018](#)). Students commented “The feedback has helped me avoid mistakes in future writings” and “learning about the mistakes I had, makes me think about them and do not repeat them”; and reported to get confirmation and adjustment of learning “the feedback helps me understand how to do better” and “I also like that through corrections, I can see my mistakes, and learn from them.” These perceptions seem to support the relationship between feedback and self-regulation ([Hammann, 2005](#)), and between feedback and self-efficacy ([Hao and Lu, 2024](#); [Teng and Wang, 2023](#)). Furthermore, these findings also align with perceived improvements in accuracy and text quality associated with CF, as reported by [Kloss and Quintanilla \(2024\)](#).

Specifically, the features of CF being explicit and individualized are highly valued in the questionnaire responses (90.5%, [Figure 4](#), item 7). Firstly, explicitness (“direct feedback,” [Ellis, 2009](#); [Sheen, 2011](#)) stands out, which is in line with EFL learners’ perceptions by [Chen et al. \(2016\)](#) and by [Zheng and Yu \(2018\)](#), and through experimental design by [Ellis et al. \(2006\)](#). Secondly, among the codes in the category CF effectiveness (19.8%) ([Table 9](#)) feedback being individualized is highly valued. In their words, ideally it should be private, to avoid trainees being exposed to their classmates’ judgment: “It is a good way of having feedback for people that do not usually like to respond in class because they are afraid of making mistakes,” “I appreciate when the corrections are not in front of the whole class,” etc.

3.3 Affective dimension

The highest satisfaction in the affective dimension (Item 4, 74.5%) ([Figure 5](#)) is that the intervention built more confidence in trainees’ writing skills. This could derive from the reduction of factors that may interfere with confidence development and students’ self-efficacy beliefs. This can be observed in the category anxiety reduction in CA (10.5%) ([Table 10](#)) as students reported “They have helped me build up my confidence when writing” and “my writing skills had improved and my confidence as well. I hope it can be included in the other levels.” In the same category, students verbalize a decrease in stress “The writing tasks are very useful in a convenient way, because I do not feel stressed about it” and “Also, being introverted, it allows me to focus without the distraction of social discomfort.” These findings

align with proposals underlining the relevance of adequate emotional states, which is paramount for acquisition (Affective Filter Hypothesis; Krashen, 1981). More specifically, in this study the reported anxiety reduction attributed to the intervention could also trigger a positive inclination to receiving and processing feedback more effectively (Sheen, 2008).

Other categories emerging from CA are also connected to emotional states: enjoyment, skill appreciation, and satisfaction. The highest percentage is enjoyment (32.9%) (Table 10). The students reported “Personally, I have loved the Wednesday’s writing assignments” and “I really liked having a specific class dedicated to writing about different topics.” Secondly, skill appreciation receives 23.7% (Table 10), where students value systematic writing practice. Students commented “I think it is good that we are practicing more our writing skills.” and “It is a good exercise to improve our writing skills.” Also, the category satisfaction with the overall intervention is expressed with 9.2% (Table 10). The students stated “Beyond that, it has been a very good experience. Thank you!” and “I hope we keep doing these activities in the future.” The intervention seemed to trigger affective elements, which arguably contribute to student engagement and improved learning, which is aligned with the student engagement framework (Fredricks et al., 2004), specifically with the emotional engagement dimension.

Finally, though the decision of assigning an incentive mark for all submissions at the end of the intervention, rather than a grade per assignment, raised positive perceptions in CA. The students reported “It is also encouraging the fact that this does not have a mark” and “I also think it is important to remark on the fact that these tasks do not have a grade”; this only got a moderate level of satisfaction in the Likert scale (65.0%) (Figure 5) regarding whether this had increased trainees’ motivation. These mixed findings might relate to idiosyncratic aspects of Chilean culture, who might feel more engaged by activities which have a summative status, with a focus on the written outcome than the formative work leading to it. This aspect appears as an interesting issue to examine in future research.

4 Limitations and recommendations

The instruments used gathered limited information on some aspects of the feedback scheme, such as peer feedback, and whole-class revision. Future research could delve into these issues, as well as the presence versus absence of task grading, and the use of artificial intelligence for feedback delivery.

5 Conclusion

This study offers significant insights into the effectiveness of an intervention aimed at enhancing academic writing in upper intermediate Translation trainees. From the perspective of their perceptions the intervention was assessed with a high level of satisfaction by participants, likely resulting from its multifaceted approach (Beck, 2009). In other words, the intervention considered linguistic and technical aspects of writing within a pedagogical framework that was also expected to foster affective states, adequate for language acquisition. The previous results were shown to be higher in women, an aspect that demands further research.

Regarding the linguistic dimension, participants reported improvements in both micro and macrostructural skills, with high satisfaction in the areas of grammar, vocabulary, organization of ideas and text structuring. They also highlighted the importance of consistent tasks and corrective feedback for the achievement of those results. This underscores the significance of writing practice to enhance linguistic gains complying with the logical flow of academic writing style.

Within the pedagogical dimension, trainees perceived favorably the systematic design, frequency, and thematic diversity of tasks. Also, regular writing, alongside the delivery of corrective and positive feedback, created conditions that students felt led to gradual improvement through routine practice. Additionally, the clarity of instructions and the digital modality were also rated as satisfactory.

In the affective dimension, participants expressed enjoyment, less anxiety, and more confidence in their writing, though with lower satisfaction than the linguistic and pedagogical dimensions, which might suggest more complexity of the affective states. This finding may reflect an instrumental orientation where learners prioritize tangible language gains and pedagogical effectiveness—their primary expectations—over affective experience when evaluating interventions, even when affective responses are positive.

Analysis across the linguistic, pedagogical, and affective dimensions reveals key elements of self-regulated learning that would help explain the positive feedback from students. The systematicity and regularity of the intervention in both writing practice and feedback delivery not only increase awareness of progress and achievement, but also build the foundation for stronger self-efficacy beliefs.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Comité de Ética, Bioética y Bioseguridad FHyA. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

RO-T: Funding acquisition, Resources, Writing – original draft, Software, Formal analysis, Visualization, Data curation, Project administration, Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. YC-S: Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Data curation, Methodology, Visualization, Formal analysis. AV-N: Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis, Methodology, Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Investigation. CS-C: Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. JM-A: Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

The handling editor AB declared a past co-authorship with the author JM.

Generative AI statement

The authors declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2025.1677907/full#supplementary-material>

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