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Becoming a Published Scholar: Indonesian EFL Teacher Educators Negotiating Feedback, Identity, and Recognition

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Abstract: While existing research often highlights the struggles of early-career academics, less attention is paid to how experienced scholars in peripheral contexts navigate the peer review process. This study explores the challenges Indonesian EFL faculty face when responding to reviewer feedback and the strategies they use to navigate these challenges. Guided by academic literacy theory, the study employed a qualitative case study with three female teacher educators and one male teacher educator from four different Indonesian universities. Semi-structured interviews were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings reveal two key insights: (1) participants faced persistent challenges spanning temporal, epistemic, social, and institutional dimensions including difficulty balancing revision with competing academic, familial, and doctoral responsibilities, impediments in interpreting ambiguous reviewer feedback, limited collegial collaboration, restricted access to quality references, inadequate publication funding, and infrequent professional development opportunities; and (2) they employed a diverse repertoire of adaptive strategies encompassing self-regulation and task prioritization, peer consultation, cultivation of supportive research environments, mobilization of alternative resources, pursuit of available funding and rewards, and engagement with external mentoring and training programs reflecting a determined scholarly agency that largely compensated for the insufficiencies of formal institutional support. These findings challenge individualistic accounts of academic publishing and highlight the importance of recognizing the structural and contextual conditions that shape scholarly participation in the Global South. The study concludes that more equitable academic infrastructures, sustained mentoring, accessible professional development, and institutional support are needed to enable Indonesian EFL teacher educators and other scholars in peripheral contexts to participate more confidently and sustainably in international knowledge production.

Keywords: identity, published scholar, reviewers' feedback, research publication.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic publishing has become an increasingly consequential part of scholarly work, not only disseminating knowledge but also signaling faculty credibility, academic standing, and institutional prestige (Bao & Feng, 2022; Yu & Jiang, 2022). Across higher education systems, scholars are therefore expected to publish in reputable journals as part of their professional and career development. However, these expectations vary across institutions and countries. While some universities foster well-established research cultures, mentoring arrangements, and material resources that support faculty publication (French, 2020; Ruan et al., 2024), scholars in under-resourced and non-Anglophone settings may have to meet publication demands with comparatively limited institutional

support. In Indonesia, national policies on academic publication and promotion further shape these demands (Jayadinata et al., 2022; Wahyuningsih, Basthomi, Suryati, & Hidayati, 2025; Wahyuningsih, Basthomi, Suryati, Hidayati, 2025). Faculty members therefore negotiate publication demands alongside substantial teaching, administrative, and individual responsibilities, making ongoing engagement with international academic publishing particularly demanding.

In this broader publication context, addressing reviewers' feedback is a critical yet underexplored aspect of academic work. Peer review functions as a dual mechanism: it gates academic standards while also giving authors opportunities to develop their research and academic practice (Wang et al., 2024). Reviewer feedback can therefore facilitate academic learning and socialization by making disciplinary conventions, methodological expectations, and standards of academic argumentation more visible (Wahyuningsih et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2024). Detailed and constructive feedback may even prompt authors to transform unsuccessful submissions into stronger academic outputs. For instance, Derrick et al. (2023) argued that researchers whose proposals were initially unsuccessful could use constructive feedback to refine their work and later secure funding. Nonetheless, persistent concerns about reviewer bias, inconsistent reviewer expertise, limited transparency, reviewer workload, and broader systemic inequalities challenge peer review's developmental potential (Adamson, 2012; Atjonen, 2018; Derrick et al., 2023). Thus, reviewer feedback is not merely a technical aspect of publication but a multifaceted site where authors navigate academic expectations, evaluative judgments, and disciplinary norms.

For academics affiliated with multilingual and non-Anglophone environments, these navigations can be particularly demanding. Responding to reviewers necessitates more than correcting language or incorporating suggested changes. Moreover, it may involve reconfiguring theoretical arguments, shaping methodological justification, developing analytical claims, and aligning a manuscript with the epistemological and rhetorical conventions of international journals (Wang et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2023). For multilingual academics, these demands may be heightened by unfamiliarity with Anglophone academic conventions and the implicit expectations governing international academic communication (Lim & Bowman, 2024; Yang et al., 2022). Revision, therefore, extends beyond a predominantly cognitive or technical activity and can involve substantial emotional and behavioral labor, especially when reviewer comments are unclear, contradictory, overly critical, or perceived as culturally misaligned (Yu & Jiang, 2022). The process may necessitate teacher educators to navigate frustration, uncertainty, and self-doubt while concurrently making strategic decisions about which comments to accommodate, navigate, reinterpret, or challenge.

Research has therefore highlighted the importance of personal agency and relational support in helping scholars negotiate publication-related tensions. Individual motivation, confidence, resilience, and perceived agency play a significant role in shaping academics' interpretations of and responses to critical feedback (Ardi et al., 2024; Dugas et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2022). At the same time, academics rarely achieve writing and publication through individual effort alone. In this sense, peer mentoring, collaborative writing, and collegial review can provide intellectual, linguistic, and emotional resources that enable academics to interpret reviewers' feedback and develop more effective responses (Ring, 2015; Thomas et al., 2014; Turmudi et al., 2024). Such support has been particularly consequential where institutional mechanisms for research development are weak.

Studies in under-resourced settings, for instance, have explored how limited infrastructure, constrained institutional support, and the complexities of the peer-review process continue to impede faculty members' publication efforts (Hendy et al., 2024). Mentorship, research training, and supportive professional contexts are crucial for helping scholars navigate the complex and often opaque publication process (Merga et al., 2021; Wahyuningsih et al., 2026).

Crucially, however, academics' reception and response to reviewer feedback cannot be understood solely in terms of personal competence or institutional resources. Feedback is embedded in sociocultural and relational dynamics that shape how academics perceive criticism, authority, and academic expertise. For instance, cultural orientations toward hierarchy may shape academics' willingness to navigate reviewers' judgments, particularly when they understand feedback as face-threatening (Herber et al., 2020). Academics outside dominant academic communities may also face additional difficulties negotiating taken-for-granted norms of international academic communication (Alstete & Flavian, 2024; Mason, 2018). From this perspective, feedback literacy involves more than the technical ability to revise a manuscript. It includes the capacity to interpret evaluative judgments, navigate academic expectations, exercise academic agency, and mobilize interpersonal and institutional resources in context (Esterhazy & Bastiansen, 2021; Spooner et al., 2002). In the same vein, institutional recognition of publication-related activities may reinforce the extent to which academics are able and motivated to invest in these practices, particularly when peer review and related scholarly labor are insufficiently recognized in promotion and evaluation systems (Golper & Feldman, 2008).

Despite these insights, existing scholarship offers incomplete insight into how experienced scholars successfully negotiate reviewer feedback in resource-constrained, non-Anglophone contexts. Much of the existing research has emphasized doctoral students (Bao & Feng, 2023; Yu & Jiang, 2022), novice writers or early-career researchers (Rahman & Kurniawan, 2022; Karacan-Ozdemir, 2025) whose experiences and available resources may differ substantially from those of established faculty. Moreover, studies have examined individual, institutional, or sociocultural aspects of publication separately, rather than exploring how these domains intersect to shape academics' responses to reviewer feedback. This constraint is particularly meaningful in the Indonesian higher education context, where faculty members are expected to engage in internationally oriented academic publishing while working within institutional environments characterized by diverse levels of research capacity and support. Therefore, it remains necessary to understand the challenges Indonesian EFL faculty face when responding to reviewer feedback and the strategies they use to navigate these challenges. The following research questions guide the study: (1) What challenges do successful Indonesian EFL faculty members encounter when responding to reviewers' feedback during the publication process? (2) What strategies do successful Indonesian EFL faculty members employ to navigate and address these challenges?

METHOD

Research Design and Context

This study adopted a qualitative case study design situated within the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm to explore how Indonesian EFL faculty members engage with journal reviewers' feedback in the publication process. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of socially and temporally situated personal experiences, revealing how individual agency, identity, and meaning-making are shaped through academic writing and revision (Creswell, 2013).

Combined with a bounded case study approach, this provided both contextualized insight into personal trajectories and a holistic view of institutional influences. Guided by a constructivist logic, the study viewed knowledge as co-constructed through dialogue, interpretation, and reflexivity, making it well suited to unpacking the nuanced, lived realities of faculty members negotiating power-laden publishing norms (Creswell, 2009). Data collection took place at four universities in Indonesia: a public university in Central Java Province, a public Islamic university in Central Java Province, and two private universities in East Java Province. The study purposively selected these institutions to examine how different organizational cultures, research mandates, and support infrastructures shape faculty experiences with academic publishing. In Indonesia, where regulations emphasize Scopus-indexed publications for promotion and institutional ranking (Gaus et al., 2020; Jayadinata et al., 2022), faculty members must navigate a complex interplay between individual commitment and institutional pressures. Thus, the chosen design not only portrays the emotional and strategic dimensions of revision but also illuminates how broader sociocultural and systemic factors shape faculty engagement with reviewer feedback and their academic development.

Participants

This study utilized purposeful criterion sampling to recruit participants with demonstrated expertise in academic publishing and experience in addressing journal reviewers' feedback. Three female EFL teacher educators, designated as TE1, TE2, and TE3, and one male teacher educator designated as TE4 were selected from four different institutional settings: a public university in Central Java, a public Islamic university in Central Java, a private university in East Java, and a private Islamic university in East Java, Indonesia. As shown in Table 1, these participants were recruited based on two key criteria: (1) having a track record of publishing in Scopus-indexed journals within the past five years, and (2) being actively engaged in academic writing development, including participation in mentoring programs, research communities, and professional academic programs. To ensure ethical integrity and protect participants' anonymity, pseudonyms were used, and informed consent was obtained in accordance with institutional ethical review protocols.

Exploring this topic matters because Indonesian higher education demands that faculty publish in internationally recognized journals as a condition for promotion, institutional ranking, and eligibility for national funding (Gaus et al., 2020; Jayadinata et al., 2022). The Directorate General of Higher Education mandates academic publication as part of its academic governance framework. However, many faculty members, especially in non-elite institutions, face significant constraints, including heavy teaching loads, limited research infrastructure, and limited access to high-impact journals (Yuan et al., 2022). For female academics, these challenges are often compounded by gendered expectations and disproportionate administrative responsibilities (Banerjee-Batist et al., 2019). TE1, TE2, TE3, and TE4 embody these broader systemic conditions but have also demonstrated agency in overcoming them, making them ideal participants for this study's objective: to uncover how individual resilience, institutional support, and sociocultural context interact to shape faculty members' capacity to respond to reviewers' feedback. Their narratives promote meaningful understanding of the systemic inequities and hidden labor involved in maintaining research productivity in resource-constrained environments.

Table 1. Participant demographic and scholarly profiles

Participants	Gender	Age (years)	Qualification	Affiliation	Total Scopus-Indexed Publications	Engagement in Research Development Programs
TE1	Female	34	Doctoral Degree	Public University in Central Java	8	Joined local/national research training; self-funded mentoring programs
TE2	Female	37	Master's degree	Public Islamic University in Central Java	16	Participated in peer-led workshops; involved in Photovoice mentoring community
TE3	Female	32	Master's degree	Private Islamic University in East Java	6	Participated in peer-led workshops, joined local/national research training.
TE4	Male	42	Doctoral Degree	Private University in East Java	25	Participated in peer-led workshops, joined local/national research training.

Data Collection

Data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews, recognized as powerful instruments in qualitative research for exploring participants' lived experiences and interpretations. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to maintain a flexible yet focused inquiry process, posing core questions while giving participants space to elaborate on their stories and reflections on their engagement with journal reviewers' feedback. Each participant took part in a face-to-face interview lasting 50–60 minutes from 26 to 28 May 2025. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure completeness and accuracy, then transcribed verbatim to preserve the data's narrative structure and linguistic nuances. To improve the clarity of the collected data, researchers conducted follow-up communications via asynchronous text-based messaging to clarify ambiguous statements and confirm the intended meaning of key responses.

To strengthen the credibility and dependability of the data collection process, multiple methodological procedures were used. First, the interview protocol was theory-informed and pilot-tested, drawing on prior research in academic writing and feedback engagement (Yu & Jiang, 2022). The protocol focused on three key thematic domains, personal trajectories, institutional context, and response strategies, to ensure consistency across interviews while remaining responsive to emerging insights. Second, the interviewers kept reflexive journals to document impressions, positionalities, and potential biases that could influence data interpretation. Third, prolonged involvement with participants was maintained through ongoing rapport-building and informal sharing to promote trust and open dialogue. Finally, triangulation through member checking was conducted, in which participants reviewed preliminary transcripts and analytic summaries for accuracy and resonance. These methodological choices were grounded in established qualitative standards to uphold rigorous data collection (Creswell, 2013). Table 2 summarizes the data collection procedures.

Table 2. Summary of data collection procedures and validity measures

Component	Description	Strategy for Rigor
Interview Type	Semi-structured interviews	Aligned with rich, contextual data
Interview Duration	50–60 minutes per participant	Allowed in-depth exploration of themes
Medium	Audio-recorded voice interviews and follow-up written clarification via text messaging	Ensured clarity and completeness
Interview framework	Feedback response strategies	Promoted consistency and comprehensiveness
Transcription	Verbatim transcription of all recordings	Maintained linguistic fidelity and narrative integrity
Instrument Validation	Pilot-tested protocol based on existing studies and theoretical models	Enhanced validity and alignment with research objectives
Researcher Reflexivity	Reflexive journaling to monitor interviewer bias and assumptions	Supported transparency and self-awareness
Prolonged Engagement	Sustained communication and rapport before, during, and after interviews	Strengthened authenticity and participant trust
Member Checking	Participant validation of transcripts and thematic summaries	Improved credibility and confirmability

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed reflexive thematic analysis, a robust, theoretically flexible method advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and well-suited to research grounded in the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. Reflexive thematic analysis encourages researchers to explore how participants make meaning of their lived experiences while acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role. This approach is particularly appropriate for narrative interviews, where the goal is not merely to categorize responses but to understand how themes are embedded in social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Unlike coding reliability approaches that emphasize replicability and consensus, RTA focuses on reflexivity, researcher subjectivity, and theoretical transparency, making it particularly relevant for investigating how Indonesian EFL faculty members respond to journal reviewers' feedback, an emotionally and cognitively complex academic task. Furthermore, the method's flexibility allows researchers to engage with both semantic (explicit) and latent (underlying) meanings, enabling a thorough, multi-layered interpretation of the participants' data. The analysis was further guided by Academic Literacy Theory (Lea & Street, 1998), which provided the critical theoretical lens through which participants' experiences were interpreted, viewing feedback response not as a purely technical competency but as an ideologically situated practice shaped by power relations, disciplinary conventions, and unequal access to epistemic resources.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges in Addressing Reviewers' Feedback

The findings were drawn from participant interviews. These interviews highlight the challenges they encountered when interpreting and responding to reviewers' feedback during the academic writing and publishing process.

Difficulty balancing revisions with academic workload, family duties, and doctoral studies

The data show that participants struggle to balance the intellectual and emotional labor of responding to reviewers' feedback with their

academic and personal demands. As reported by participants in the following excerpts:

> "*When I was still a doctoral student, I had two weeks to revise an article for a Scopus Q2 journal while I was in a 10-day mandatory accreditation quarantine. Despite this, I prioritized my doctoral studies and revised the article immediately*" (TE1).

Similarly, TE asserted the consistency in addressing reviewers' feedback:

> "*I felt overwhelmed revising the article while completing my dissertation, but I managed to handle it through consistency and focus*" (TE3).

The data show that TE1 and TE3 faced the dual burden of fulfilling their responsibilities as doctoral students and faculty members engaged in institutional accreditation processes while also meeting strict revision deadlines from journal editors.

Similarly, TE2 faced an overwhelming workload, juggling a 20-credit teaching assignment, research obligations, administrative duties, and family responsibilities. These pressures significantly compromised her ability to maintain consistent focus on her revisions:

> "*Repeated revisions caused fatigue and stress, requiring me to balance personal and professional tasks effectively*" (TE2).

Similarly, TE4 added that the cumulative pressure of these competing demands significantly constrained his ability to sustain consistent attention to the revision process. As he explained:

> "*The accumulation of concurrent tasks, including campus administration, tri dharma obligations, and others, requires one to genuinely carve out dedicated time to revise the article in accordance with reviewer suggestions*" (TE4).

Taken together, these reflections highlight the emotional exhaustion and time-management difficulties faculty face when navigating multiple competing roles, factors that directly influenced their revision performance.

Struggling to understand and act on detailed, technical, or ambiguous feedback

The participants also reported challenges in addressing or responding to the often dense, technical, and multifaceted nature of reviewer feedback. TE1 and TE2 shared how the need for deep revisions across several areas of the manuscript, including language use, novelty articulation, and methodological clarity, added intricacy to the revision process:

> "*Some feedback required deep revisions, including technical language, research novelty, methodology, and conclusions. Reviewers also demanded at least 50 recent, reputable sources.*" (TE1)

TE2 echoed similar struggles, citing the high level of intellectual engagement required to process the feedback effectively:

> "*Reviewers' feedback required technical (cohesion, coherence, grammar, references) and substantial (data analysis, findings, implications, novelty) revisions*." (TE2)

These experiences highlight the significant cognitive and linguistic demands placed on non-native English-speaking scholars, who must engage with feedback that often assumes familiarity with rhetorical conventions and discursive expectations embedded in global academic discourse.

Limited access to collegial collaboration or institutional peer dialogue

Another salient theme that emerged from the narratives is the lack of a conducive research and publication culture within the participants' universities. Participants described institutional communities that failed to promote collaboration, dialogue, or peer feedback. As participants explained, limited access to scholarly communities

restricted their ability to critically process and respond to reviewer comments:

> "*At the start of my publication journey, I struggled with a lack of research support and limited networking, making it difficult to discuss ideas and address reviewers' feedback*." (TE1)

TE2 similarly described her experience of academic isolation, where the absence of collegial networks and institutional encouragement diminished her confidence in the revision process:

> "*Limited support on campus, lack of collaborative networks, and an unsupportive academic culture hindered my understanding of reviewer feedback*." (TE2)

TE4 similarly reflected on the difficulties of responding to reviewers when adequate academic support was unavailable:

> "*I often struggled to interpret the reviewers' comments because I did not have enough opportunities to discuss them with colleagues. The limited support from my institution and the lack of a collaborative academic environment made the revision process even more challenging*." (TE4)

These accounts illustrate the sociocultural constraints faculty members and teacher educators face in institutions with weak or underdeveloped research infrastructure, emphasizing the importance of academic community and dialogic engagement in fostering academic resilience and competence.

Inability to access recent, high-quality references required by reviewers

A prominent institutional challenge participants articulated is limited access to current, high-quality academic journals, resources that are essential for incorporating new literature, developing arguments, and meeting reviewers' expectations for theoretical and empirical engagement. Participants reflected on how the lack of access impeded their ability to strengthen their manuscripts during the revision process:

> "*Limited access to reputable journals hindered manuscript revisions, making it difficult to address feedback, critique findings, strengthen arguments, and highlight novelty*." (TE3)

TE4 also experienced these constraints and relied heavily on support from peers at more resource-rich universities:

> "*Lacking university access, I relied on colleagues from top Indonesian universities for support*." (TE4)

Their elaboration exposes structured imbalances in academic resource allocation across institutions and how these disparities shape the revision outcomes of faculty trying to meet international publishing standards.

Constraints in publication funding or rewards

Financial challenges also emerged as a major barrier to successful engagement with the review process. Although participants had access to research funding and publication rewards, the support was inconsistent, not competitive, and often insufficient to cover the costs of high-quality publication. TE1 and TE3 articulated their reliance on individual funding despite the presence of institutional incentives:

> "*Limited institutional funding for research and publication was a challenge, often requiring personal funds. However, the campus rewards successful publications in reputable journals*." (TE1)
>
> "*Despite the challenge of inadequate institutional research funding, which frequently compelled participants to draw on personal finances, the institution nonetheless recognized and rewarded publications in reputable journals*." (TE3)

In contrast, TE2 and TE4 asserted how rigid institutional policies actively demotivated her from investing further energy in the revision process:

> "*Faculty could only request rewards for one published article, despite multiple publications. This limited support reduced my motivation, especially during the revision process*." (TE2)
>
> "*Capped at a single rewarded publication regardless of my overall research productivity, the institutional policy left me feeling undervalued and less driven to persist, particularly through the demands of revision*" (TE4)

These disparities in financial and motivational support shape faculty perceptions of institutional commitment to research and influence their persistence and enthusiasm for navigating multiple rounds of peer review.

Infrequent or inaccessible professional development programs

Finally, participants reported limited access to capacity-building programs such as academic writing training and systemic mentoring programs, resources they deemed essential to developing the skills needed to respond effectively to reviewer comments. TE3 articulated her need to rely on self-funded opportunities to compensate for institutional gaps:

> "*My university offered research and writing training, but I often funded my mentorship… Limited training affected my research and writing skills, hindering manuscript publication and revision*." (TE3)

TE2's experience is further challenged by administrative hierarchies that limit access to professional development based on faculty rank:

> "*I could not join my university's training, as it was limited to faculty in structural positions… This lack of support hindered my academic writing skills*." (TE2)

TE4 also encountered institutional challenges that limited his access to opportunities to develop his academic writing and publishing capabilities. He claimed that professional development activities are not equally accessible to all faculty members, particularly those without formal administrative positions:

> "*Most of the training opportunities were intended for lecturers who held certain administrative roles. Since I was not in one of those positions, I had limited opportunities to participate, which made it difficult for me to further develop my academic writing skills*." (TE4)

These narratives reflect a broader structural issue in higher education systems, where the uneven distribution of academic development opportunities disproportionately affects those who may benefit most: early- to mid-career scholars striving to publish in global academic forums.

Coping Strategies in Responding to Reviewers' Feedback

Besides exploring the challenges they faced, the participants also reported a range of strategies they used to negotiate and address reviewers' feedback. These strategies reflect their efforts to manage emotional responses, seek support, develop their writing, and improve their manuscripts during revision.

Self -regulation and prioritization

A primary strategy utilized by participants is the use of self-regulation and prioritization to navigate competing demands. TE1 and TE3, in particular, asserted the need to navigate their multiple identities as doctoral students, academic professionals, and mothers while sustaining their commitment to academic publication. Their narrative reflects the importance of deliberate planning and emotional resilience:

> "*Balancing my roles as a wife, mother, and educator helped me address*

reviewers' feedback effectively." (TE1)

Similarly, TE2 reported how deliberate prioritization of revision work allowed her to maintain momentum despite an overloaded schedule:

"*Effective self-management was key to publication success. I prioritized revisions, balanced personal and professional tasks, and strengthened motivation and resilience*."

TE4 added how disciplined self-regulation enabled him to maintain engagement with the revision process despite competing professional and individual roles. Rather than letting an overloaded schedule disrupt his progress, he intentionally set aside time for revisions and adjusted his other responsibilities accordingly. This approach helped him remain persistent and motivated throughout the publication process:

"*I had to manage my time carefully and make the revision process a consistent priority. Even when my other responsibilities became demanding, I tried to keep working on the manuscript so that I could maintain my progress and motivation*." (TE4)

These data affirm the critical role of metacognitive regulation, including planning, monitoring, and adapting one's behavior in successfully engaging with the iterative nature of academic feedback.

Collegial dialogue and peer consultation

Participants actively seek intellectual and emotional support from colleagues and mentors to navigate the complexity of feedback interpretation. Rather than approaching revisions in isolation, they engaged in collaborative meaning-making through scholarly dialogue. TE3 explained how experienced colleagues serve as informal mentors who offer both technical guidance and emotional encouragement:

"*I discussed it with experienced colleagues having more publications in reputable journals… They guided me in the process of revision*." (TE3)

TE2 also emphasized how peer consultations helped her unpack and respond to reviewers' expectations:

"*I had discussions with my friends and mentors regarding the feedback. This helped me comprehend the reviewers' comments*." (TE2)

These data show how dialogic engagement with trusted colleagues can demystify academic conventions, build confidence, and turn solitary revision into a social learning process.

Establishing a positive research environment

Recognizing the lack of institutional support structures, the participants took intentional steps to establish their own micro-environments that shape accountability, motivation, and shared learning. Their initiatives include establishing informal research groups, participating in national academic communities, and expanding academic networks that promote constructive dialogue and encouragement. TE1 reflected on the motivational power of a collegial and collaborative space:

"*A conducive research and publication-related environment is meaningful for motivating me in the process of publication, especially when dealing with addressing reviewers' feedback*." (TE1)

TE2 similarly emphasized the psychological safety and intellectual stimulation offered by her academic circle:

"*I tried to find an academic community and a conducive and publication-related environment. This helped me a lot in fostering motivation and a positive effect on successful publication*." (TE2)

These accounts reveal the importance of socially constructed academic spaces in sustaining

momentum, especially when formal institutional environments are absent or discouraging.

Accessing alternative resources

A pragmatic coping mechanism utilized by participants involved sourcing updated and reputable academic references through informal means. Facing institutional limitations in accessing journals and databases, they mobilized personal networks to obtain the academic literature reviewers required. TE1 elaborated how peer-based resource sharing became a workaround for institutional shortcomings:

> "*Without journal access, I relied on colleagues for resources. The university should provide access to reputable journals*." (TE1)

TE2 similarly drew on inter-institutional academic alliances:

> "*Relevant and current resources are vital for publication, as required by reviewers. Lacking university access, I relied on colleagues from top Indonesian universities for support*." (TE2)

In addition, TE4 explained that collaborating beyond his home institution helps compensate for limited access to academic resources. When institutional databases and research facilities cannot meet the demands of international publication, he relies on professional connections with colleagues at other Indonesian universities for support. These external academic networks promote access to current literature and other resources needed to respond to reviewers' expectations:

"*When the resources available at my university were limited, I reached out to colleagues at other universities. They helped me access recent references and materials I needed to strengthen my manuscript and address the reviewers' requirements*. (TE4)

These strategies reveal the resilience and creativity of faculty working in under-resourced settings and underscore the necessity of equitable access to academic infrastructure for faculty across all institutional tiers.

Securing funding and rewards

Financial considerations are a crucial concern in participants' publication journeys, especially when navigating expenses related to manuscript submission, revision, and open-access fees. TE1 is proactive in securing competitive institutional funding, which she found partially effective:

> "*I secured competitive university funding for research and publication, which motivated me through rewards for reputable journal publications*." (TE1)

TE2, however, encountered structural challenges that constrain her ability to benefit from institutional reward systems:

> "*High competition and limited rewards make funding difficult, with only one reward despite multiple publications*."

These contrasting experiences highlight institutional inconsistencies in encouraging academic publishing and signal the urgent need for more transparent, equitable research incentive policies to ensure budget limitations do not penalize academic productivity.

Participating in external training and mentoring

Recognizing the lack of sustained institutional investment in faculty development, participants took the initiative to access external training and mentorship. Participants reported that participation in academic writing forums and mentoring programs not only improved their technical skills but also deepened their understanding of the publication process:

> "*I joined academic forums, writing training, and mentoring… These provided networking, collaboration, and*

guidance in addressing reviewers' feedback." (TE3)

TE2 similarly found professional support through a structured mentoring initiative:

"*I joined professional development programs like Photovoice-based mentoring by Indonesian Community Researchers to foster research collaboration.*" (TE2)

These accounts indicate the transformative potential of structured, peer-based support systems, particularly in equipping faculty to respond effectively to the complex, high-stakes task of manuscript revision for international publication.

Building on these accounts, Table 3 compares the four cases across the sub-themes. The data show that competing workload, funding and reward constraints, and self-regulation appeared in every case, whereas the remaining sub-themes were evidenced in one to three cases. This pattern indicates broadly convergent institutional burdens alongside more divergent coping repertoires.

Table 3. Cross-Case matrix of institutional burden, emotional responses, and coping strategies

Theme / sub-theme	TE1	TE2	TE3	TE4	Cross-case pattern
Institutional burden (challenges)					
Competing workload, family, and doctoral duties	Two-week revision deadline during accreditation quarantine while a doctoral student	20-credit teaching load, research, administration, and family duties	Revising while completing the dissertation	Campus administration and tridharma tasks compete for revision time	*All four cases*
Ambiguous, technical reviewer feedback	Deep revisions (language, novelty, methodology); demand for at least 50 recent sources	Technical and substantive revisions (cohesion, analysis, novelty)	—	—	*Two cases*
Limited collegial collaboration	Little research support and networking	Isolation; unsupportive academic culture	—	Few chances to discuss comments with colleagues	*Three cases*
Inaccessible recent, high-quality references	Lack of journal access (surfaces in coping account)	Lack of university access (surfaces in coping account)	Limited access to reputable journals	Lack of university access	*All four cases*
Constrained publication funding and rewards	Limited funding; personal funds used, although rewards exist	Reward capped at one article	Inadequate funding; personal finances used, although rewards exist	Single-reward cap; felt undervalued	*All four cases*
Infrequent professional development	—	Training restricted to structural positions	Limited training; self-funded mentorship	Training reserved for administrative roles	*Three cases*
Emotional responses					
Fatigue, stress, and feeling overwhelmed	—	Fatigue and stress from repeated revisions	Felt overwhelmed during revision	Cumulative pressure constrained sustained attention	*Three cases*

Diminished confidence amid academic isolation	—	Confidence diminished by absent collegial networks	—	—	*One case*
Demotivation and feeling undervalued	—	Reduced motivation during revision	—	Felt undervalued and less driven	*Two cases*
Coping strategies					
Self-regulation and prioritization	Balanced roles as wife, mother, and educator	Prioritized revisions; balanced personal and professional tasks	Consistency and focus while handling competing duties	Treated revision as a consistent priority; managed time	*All four cases*
Collegial dialogue and peer consultation	—	Discussed feedback with friends and mentors	Consulted experienced colleagues	—	*Two cases*
Establishing a positive research environment	Valued a conducive publication environment for motivation	Sought an academic community	—	—	*Two cases*
Accessing alternative resources	Relied on colleagues for journal access	Relied on colleagues at top Indonesian universities	—	Colleagues at other universities supplied references	*Three cases*
Securing funding and rewards	Secured competitive university funding	Competition and one-reward cap made funding difficult	—	—	*Two cases*
External training and mentoring	—	Photovoice-based mentoring community	Academic forums, writing training, and mentoring	—	*Two cases*

Extending this comparison, Figure 1 illustrates how institutional burden, emotional responses, coping strategies, and academic agency formation are connected, and it frames the discussion that follows. The data reveal that institutional burden, spanning temporal, epistemic, social, and financial constraints, was accompanied by emotional responses of fatigue, diminished confidence, and demotivation. In addition, the data show that participants reported these burdens through six coping strategies that partly compensated for absent institutional support, and that these strategies in turn fed the formation of academic agency, understood as critical negotiation of dominant epistemic norms and identity work sustained through collective meaning-making.

This study explores the multifaceted challenges, strategies, and enabling conditions Indonesian EFL faculty members face when addressing reviewers' feedback, highlighting a prominent gap in the literature on academic publishing in non-Anglophone, under-resourced settings (Ruan et al., 2024; Yu & Jiang, 2022). While peer review is often perceived as a standardized and common pathway for quality assurance, this study, grounded in Academic Literacy Theory (Lea & Street, 1998), highlights

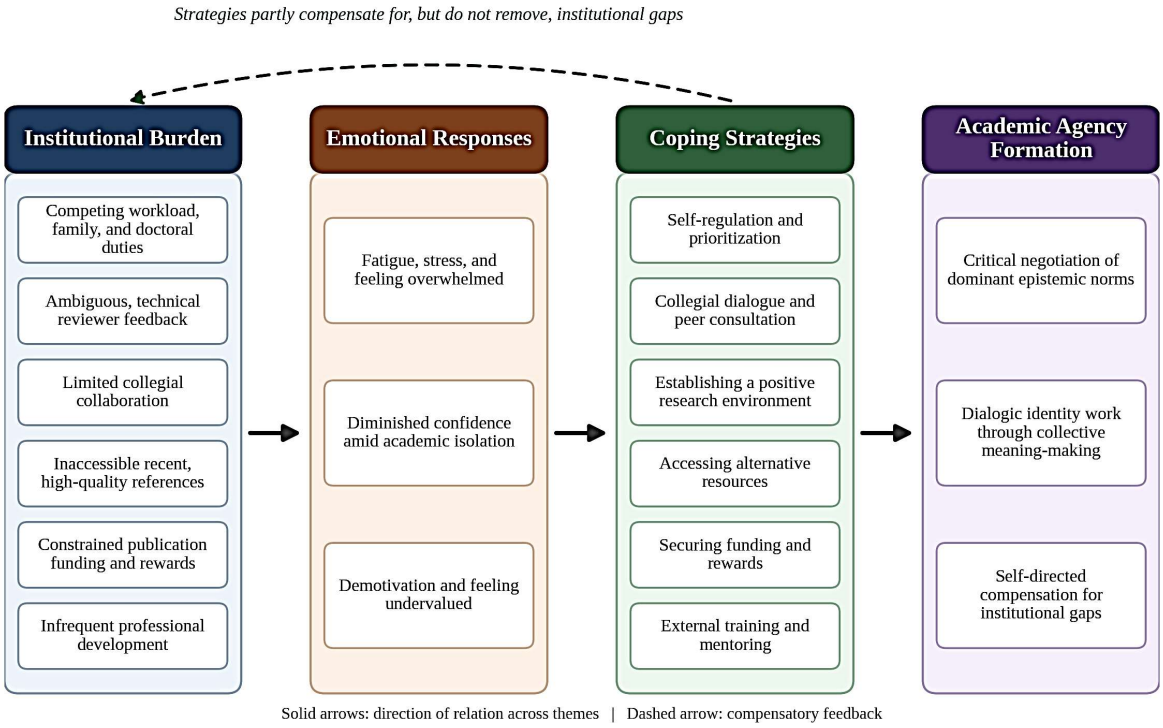


Figure 1. Thematic network of institutional burden, emotional responses, coping strategies, and academic agency formation

that the process of addressing feedback is ideological, influenced by institutional hierarchies, disciplinary conventions, and the uneven distribution of epistemic resources and academic capital across academic contexts (Canagarajah, 2022; Lillis & Curry, 2006). Unlike revision frameworks that emphasize mechanical improvement, this study views responding to feedback as a contextually navigated act involving identity work, emotional labor, and negotiation of power-laden discursive norms, factors that are particularly prominent in Scopus- and Web of Science–indexed publication settings (Hyland & Jiang, 2016).

Furthermore, the findings highlight that participants faced challenges that extended well beyond technical issues to include affective, cognitive, and structural aspects. While temporal and financial demands recur, manifesting in the difficulty of balancing revision workloads with teaching, administrative, and family obligations, reducing these challenges to logistical limitations risks obscuring their deeper ideological underpinnings. Through the lens of Academic Literacy Theory, these demands are inseparable from systemic imbalances that place academics from non-Anglophone, under-resourced contexts in epistemically subordinate roles within global academic publishing (Canagarajah, 2022; Wahyuningsih, Widiati, et al., 2025). In this light, time scarcity and inadequate financial support are not simply practical obstacles but symptoms of a wider imbalance in the distribution of epistemic resources and institutional support across the global scholarly community.

Central to this analysis is the understanding that peer review serves not merely as a neutral evaluation mechanism but as a discursive means by which epistemic hierarchies are actively built, reproduced, and reinforced. The power relations embedded in the peer review process are neither unintended nor harmless. They function

systematically to establish and maintain the subordinate positioning of academics from peripheral academic contexts. Reviewers' expectations, especially those requiring methodological sophistication, conceptual novelty, and adherence to Anglophone academic conventions, serve as ideological instruments through which certain epistemologies are privileged while others are subtly marginalized (Floris et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih et al., 2026; Wahyuningsih, Basthomi, Suryati, & Hidayati, 2025). When reviewers apply standards grounded in Western scholarly contexts without acknowledging the situatedness of knowledge production, they reproduce epistemic injustice that compels peripheral scholars to continuously translate their contributions into frameworks that may not fully accommodate their pedagogical and sociocultural settings (Lillis & Curry, 2006). The participants' recurring challenges in interpreting ambiguous reviewer feedback thus reflect not personal interpretive failure but the systematically unequal terms on which academic dialogue is done across global scholarly hierarchies (Ishak et al., 2021).

This disparity in epistemic power is further demonstrated in the affective aspects of the revision experience. The emotional labor participants expended to accommodate and navigate reviewer expectations reveals the psychological toll of occupying a subordinate position within a system that privileges particular scholarly identities and modes of academic expression. Feedback that implicitly contests the validity of one's methodological choices or rhetorical conventions can engender profound self-doubt and a sense of scholarly inadequacy, experiences that are not merely personal but structurally produced (Hendy et al., 2024; Wargo & De Costa, 2017). In this sense, the affective burden of addressing reviewers' feedback should be understood as part of the wider power dynamics through which global academic discourse communities interpellated peripheral academics while simultaneously rendering them marginal.

However, epistemic subordination is neither static nor totalizing. Participants' engagement with reviewer feedback became a generative site of identity negotiation, in which they navigated the discursive norms of dominant academic discourse. Rather than passive acquiescence, their responses reflected acts of critical negotiation (Lea & Street, 1998), selectively adapting and resisting dominant epistemic norms to assert academic agency while sustaining fidelity to locally situated ways of knowing (Wargo & De Costa, 2017). This dialogic identity work, further maintained through peer dialogue, mentoring communities, and self-directed professional development, emphasizes how academic identity is simultaneously renegotiated through collective meaning-making and critical evaluations.

However, the participants' reliance on informal networks and individual resources exposes a critical systemic lacuna: institutional support for academic development remains largely absent, leaving faculty to navigate the demands of global publication primarily through individual initiative and extramural engagement (French, 2020; Nygaard, 2017). This reinforces the argument that academic writing largely involves negotiating participation in ideologically situated discourses, a negotiation made considerably more arduous by inadequate institutional infrastructure. Finally, individual resilience, sociocultural collaboration, and institutional ambivalence shaped participants' capacity to engage meaningfully with reviewer feedback. Academic Literacy Theory, however, calls for a more critical reading. These trajectories constitute the wider politics of academic inclusion and exclusion. Without structural reforms, equitable resource distribution, transparent reward systems, and institutionalized mentoring, the burden of adaptation continues to fall

disproportionately on academics from linguistically and economically peripheral settings (Ruan et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih, Basthomi, Suryati, Hidayati, et al., 2025). This study marks a decisive shift from deficit-oriented faculty development to critically engaged institutional support, framing peer review negotiation as an exercise in epistemic alignment and identity navigation that enables more equitable engagement in global knowledge production.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the challenges Indonesian EFL faculty members face when responding to reviewer feedback and the strategies they use to navigate them. The findings reveal that the challenges participants encountered spanned temporal, epistemic, social, and institutional dimensions, including the difficulty of balancing revision with competing academic, familial, and doctoral responsibilities, impediments in interpreting ambiguous reviewer feedback, limited collegial collaboration, restricted access to quality references, inadequate publication funding, and infrequent professional development opportunities. In response, participants drew on a diverse repertoire of adaptive strategies, including self-regulation and task prioritization, peer consultation, cultivation of supportive research environments, mobilization of alternative resources, pursuit of available funding and rewards, and engagement with external mentoring and training programs, reflecting a determined agency that largely compensated for the insufficiencies of formal institutional support. Despite its valuable contributions, the study's scope is limited by its focus on four participants from similar disciplinary backgrounds and geographical contexts, which may constrain generalizability to broader faculty populations. Nevertheless, the in-depth qualitative design provides rich, situated understandings that are transferable to other under-resourced, non-Anglophone academic settings. To support faculty members' success in publishing, institutions must adopt more inclusive, sustainable research-support policies, such as providing equitable access to up-to-date databases, reducing bureaucratic barriers to training opportunities, fostering communities of practice, and implementing fair, transparent publication reward systems. National policymakers should also consider differentiated publication expectations that account for institutional capacity and disciplinary variation, ensuring that academic publishing serves as a meaningful vehicle for knowledge production rather than a compliance burden.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the drafting of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized Claude for the purpose of enhancing overall readability. Following the use of this tool, the author(s) thoroughly reviewed and revised the content as necessary and accept full responsibility for the final content of the article.

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