

The Power of Clear Instruction: A Thematic Analysis of Student Experiences in an Online Academic Writing Webinar

¹Alice Shanthi, ^{*2}Jane Xavierine, ³Fatin Aliyah Hassan

¹Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Seremban 70300, Malaysia

²INTI International University Nilai 71800, Malaysia

³Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Seremban 70300, Malaysia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500584>

Received: 12 May 2026; Accepted: 18 May 2026; Published: 08 June 2026

ABSTRACT

This study presents a thematic analysis of student feedback collected following “The Art of Paraphrasing,” an online academic writing webinar delivered to undergraduate students enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes course at a Malaysian university. Applying Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, we examined 79 voluntary student responses to identify factors that support effective online learning. Six themes emerged across three overarching categories: Instructional Quality, Learning Outcomes, and Improvement Opportunities. Findings highlight the central role of clear, demonstration-based instruction, the transformative influence of instructor presence and communication style, and the importance of interactive tools in sustaining learner engagement. Students reported measurable gains in paraphrasing skills and increased confidence in academic writing. However, pacing remained a challenge for some learners. These findings suggest that effective online pedagogy requires a careful balance of structured content delivery, responsive instructor facilitation, appropriate pacing, and ongoing learner support.

Keywords: online learning, thematic analysis, academic writing, paraphrasing, instructor effectiveness, student engagement

INTRODUCTION

The shift toward online and hybrid learning environments has intensified the need to understand what makes virtual instruction effective. While technology enables access to education, the human elements of teaching, clarity, engagement, and instructor presence remain crucial for learning outcomes (Alyaa et al., 2025). This study examines student experiences of an academic writing webinar to identify factors that contribute to effective online learning.

Academic writing skills, especially paraphrasing, pose a challenge for university students. Paraphrasing means understanding the source and using linguistic skills to restate ideas while keeping the meaning. Research shows students often use few paraphrasing strategies and struggle with complex language, particularly when English is a second language (Ovilia, Addinna, & Oktoviandry, 2021). Clear demonstrations and examples help, making interactive webinars ideal for paraphrasing instruction.

This article reports on a thematic analysis of student feedback from “The Art of Paraphrasing: Effectively Borrowing Ideas in Academic Writing”. The webinar was conducted for students in an academic English course at a local university in Malaysia. The analysis addresses two research questions:

1. Which aspects of online instruction do students perceive as most effective in their learning experiences?
2. What specific difficulties or areas for potential improvement do students highlight regarding the webinar's delivery?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Learning and Academic Writing Instruction

The rapid shift to online and hybrid learning has sparked substantial scholarly interest in effective virtual pedagogy, especially in academic writing. Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) established the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, which sees learning as happening where cognitive, social, and teaching presences meet. This model is now a cornerstone for understanding why some online learning succeeds while others do not. Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) expanded this framework by showing that teaching presence, or the design, facilitation, and guidance of cognitive and social processes, is the primary predictor of student satisfaction and perceived learning in the online environment. Their work provides a theoretical basis for analysing how instructor behaviour influences learning in virtual settings such as the webinar studied here.

Metacognitive Scaffolding in Online Writing Instruction

Rahmat et al. (2021) investigated the role of metacognitive scaffolding in online academic writing instruction, arguing that students benefit most from structured frameworks that guide them in monitoring, evaluating, and regulating their cognitive processes during writing tasks. Their study demonstrated that explicit scaffolding, including modelling, prompting, and guided reflection, led to measurable improvements in students' writing quality and their reported confidence in tackling complex tasks. Critically, the effectiveness of such scaffolding depends not merely on the availability of tools but on the instructor's ability to make cognitive processes visible and accessible to learners. This finding has direct implications for academic writing webinars, suggesting that instructors who make their reasoning explicit by demonstrating how to paraphrase a sentence step by step are providing metacognitive scaffolding that supports deeper learning. Rahmat et al. also found that students who received metacognitive scaffolding were more likely to transfer skills to new writing contexts, speaking to the lasting value of high-quality online instruction.

Synchronous Online Learning: Student and Teacher Experiences

Mallon et al. (2023) did a rapid review of 61 empirical studies on student and teacher experiences in synchronous online learning. Their synthesis found several consistent themes. Community-building is key to sustaining student motivation. Real-time interaction helps reduce feelings of isolation. However, maintaining engagement during long online sessions is difficult. Students valued synchronous sessions most when they allowed real two-way communication. Passive observation was less valued. Pacing was a major source of dissatisfaction. Many learners said that the sessions moved too quickly for them to understand well. This tension between coverage and comprehension is a common challenge in online instruction. It aligns with the findings of the present study. Mallon et al. concluded that synchronous online learning works best when it uses real-time connection for dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and instructor responsiveness.

Teacher Communication and Power Dynamics in Online Engagement

Zaky (2024) examined the communicative dimensions of online teaching, focusing on how teacher language, tone, and relational positioning affect student engagement and willingness to participate. Using sociocultural theory and discourse analysis, Zaky demonstrated that online classrooms are not power-neutral spaces. How instructors communicate, whether as knowledge authorities or collaborative guides, influences students' psychological safety and readiness to engage. Teachers who used inclusive language, showed enthusiasm, encouraged questions, and responded warmly to student contributions had significantly higher participation rates. Zaky's findings also showed that humour and informality reduce perceived distance in online teaching. Students reported feeling more comfortable when instructors were approachable. These insights help explain why instructor personality and communication style are powerful predictors of student experience in online education research, including the present study.

Web-Based Instructional Strategies for Writing Skills

Mat et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review of 18 empirical studies on web-based instructional strategies for developing writing skills. Their review offers the most recent and comprehensive mapping of the evidence

base in this area. They identified six categories of effective platform types: collaborative platforms (e.g., wikis and shared document editors), interactive multimedia platforms (e.g., video-based instruction with embedded tasks), social networking platforms repurposed for educational use, gamification-integrated platforms, synchronous webinar environments, and asynchronous learning management systems. Webinar-based instruction, the platform type most relevant to this study, showed positive outcomes when combined with structured content delivery and interactive components. These components required students to respond, produce, or evaluate, rather than merely observe. Mat et al. noted that web-based instruction for writing is most effective when it mirrors the cognitive demands of authentic writing tasks, providing not only declarative knowledge of paraphrasing but also procedural knowledge of applying techniques. Their findings reinforce the importance of interactive task design in online writing instruction and lend empirical weight to the pedagogical choices made in the webinar examined here.

Paraphrasing as a Complex Academic Skill

Beyond questions of online pedagogy, the specific subject matter of the webinar, paraphrasing, has been the focus of direct empirical investigation. Ovilia, Addinna, and Oktoviandry (2021) examined students' paraphrasing ability in academic writing, documenting both the techniques students employ and the challenges they encounter. Their study found that university students demonstrate a limited repertoire of paraphrasing strategies, with the majority relying predominantly on synonym substitution while neglecting more sophisticated restructuring techniques such as changing grammatical form, altering sentence structure, or integrating source ideas with original commentary. This narrow range of techniques resulted in paraphrases that were often mechanically close to the source text, raising concerns about both academic integrity and genuine comprehension of the source material. Ovilia et al. identified several recurring challenges: students struggled with lexical range when appropriate synonyms were unavailable, had difficulty maintaining the original meaning while substantially changing surface form, and lacked confidence in their ability to reformulate complex academic sentences. These challenges were compounded among students whose first language is not English, for whom the simultaneous cognitive demands of comprehension, reformulation, and grammatical accuracy proved particularly taxing. This evidence base underscores the importance of explicit, structured paraphrasing instruction, as delivered in the webinar studied here. When students arrive with limited technique repertoires and significant uncertainty about paraphrasing conventions, a well-designed instructional session that demonstrates multiple strategies, provides worked examples, and builds confidence through guided practice directly addresses the documented deficit. The positive learning outcomes reported by students in the present study, including greater clarity about the distinction between paraphrasing and summarising, and increased confidence in applying techniques, align precisely with the skill gaps Ovilia et al. identified as most in need of targeted instruction.

Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning the Study

Several theoretical frameworks are drawn upon to interpret the findings of this study. Cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) explains why worked examples and clear demonstrations facilitate learning by reducing extraneous cognitive demands placed on novice learners. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) accounts for the relationship between confidence and performance, illuminating why students who report increased confidence following instruction are likely to demonstrate improved academic outcomes over time. The control-value theory of academic emotions (Pekrun, 2006) provides a framework for understanding how positive affective states, such as the enjoyment reported by students in the present study, interact with cognitive engagement to support deep learning. Together, these frameworks situate the present study within a well-established body of educational psychology research and provide conceptual tools for interpreting the thematic findings reported below.

METHODOLOGY

Context and Participants

The webinar was delivered online by Ms Jane, an experienced academic English instructor, to undergraduate students enrolled in LCC401 (English for Academic Purposes). The session focused on paraphrasing techniques,

including the use of synonyms, sentence restructuring, and distinguishing between paraphrasing and summarising. The webinar incorporated interactive elements, including Padlet exercises, Mentimeter polls, and live screen-sharing demonstrations.

Data Collection

Following the webinar, students were invited to provide feedback through a structured form. Respondents were asked to provide 30-50-word evaluations, though some provided briefer or longer responses. A total of 79 feedback responses were collected, representing voluntary participation from attendees.

Analytical Framework

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach:

1. **Familiarisation:** Repeated reading of all responses to gain immersion in the data
2. **Initial coding:** Systematic identification of interesting features across the dataset
3. **Searching for themes:** Collating codes into potential themes
4. **Reviewing themes:** Checking themes against coded extracts and the entire dataset.
5. **Defining themes:** Refining theme specifics and generating clear definitions
6. **Producing the report:** Selecting compelling examples and relating analysis to research questions.

This inductive approach allowed themes to emerge from the data rather than being imposed by predetermined categories, enabling an authentic representation of student experiences.

FINDINGS

The analysis revealed six major themes organised into three overarching categories: Instructional Quality, Learning Outcomes, and Improvement Opportunities.

Figure 1. Thematic structure of student feedback analysis (n=79), showing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework and the three overarching categories with their constituent themes.

Table 1. Summary of Themes Identified in Thematic Analysis

Theme	Theme Name	Category	Responses (n)	Core Focus
T1	Clarity Through Practical Demonstration	Instructional Quality	79 (all)	Use of worked examples, step-by-step guidance, and visual demos
T2	Transformative Instructor Impact	Instructional Quality	16+	Instructor named explicitly; clarity, warmth, and confidence cited
T3	Measurable Learning Advancement	Learning Outcomes	30+	Specific skill gains: synonyms, restructuring, paraphrase vs. summary
T4	Affective Engagement and Enjoyment	Learning Outcomes	~15	Session described as 'fun'; Padlet and Mentimeter cited
T5	Pacing as a Double-Edged Sword	Improvement Opportunities	9	Divergent responses: 4 'good pace', 9 'too fast'
T6	Appetite for Sustained Learning	Improvement Opportunities	~15	Requests for recordings, slides, and follow-up webinars

Note. "Responses (n)" indicates the approximate number of feedback items directly addressing each theme.

Category 1: Instructional Quality

Theme 1: Clarity Through Practical Demonstration

The most prominent theme across student responses was the value of clear, practical instruction. Students consistently praised the webinar's use of concrete examples and straightforward explanations that made complex concepts accessible. As one student noted, "The explanation of complex concepts like turning active to passive voice and change of structure was simplified beautifully."

The effectiveness of practical demonstration manifested in several ways. First, students appreciated step-by-step guidance that broke down paraphrasing into manageable components. Second, visual demonstrations via screen sharing allowed students to see techniques applied in real time. Third, the use of relatable examples helped students connect abstract concepts to practical applications.

This finding aligns with cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988), which suggests that worked examples reduce cognitive burden and facilitate learning. By providing clear demonstrations, the instructor enabled students to construct mental models of paraphrasing processes without becoming overwhelmed by complexity.

Theme 2: Transformative Instructor Impact

Ms Jane's teaching approach emerged as a defining feature of the webinar's success. Students mentioned her by name in over 16 responses, with comments highlighting her engaging delivery style, clarity of communication, and approachable demeanour. One enthusiastic student wrote, "I want Madam Jane Moree!!!!" while another observed, "Madam Jane's teaching style is very engaging and clear."

The instructor's impact extended beyond content delivery to encompass affective dimensions of teaching. Students noted her patience in answering questions, her confidence in presenting, and her friendly, approachable manner. One student wondered, "How will Madam be able to always smile while presenting. The confident level was amazing, any tips?"

This theme underscores the persistent importance of instructor presence in online environments. Despite physical distance, an effective online instructor creates a sense of connection and engagement that enhances learning (Anderson, 2003). The finding suggests that instructor quality remains a critical variable in online learning effectiveness, potentially more influential than technological features or platform capabilities.

Category 2: Learning Outcomes

Theme 3: Measurable Learning Advancement

Students reported concrete improvements in their understanding and skills following the webinar. Over 30 responses explicitly mentioned improved understanding, new knowledge acquisition, or increased confidence. One student reflected, "I learned how to paraphrase with the right way and I understand the different between summaries and paraphrasing."

The learning outcomes students described were notably specific rather than vague. Students identified particular skills they had developed, such as using synonyms effectively, restructuring sentences, and distinguishing between paraphrasing and summarising. This specificity suggests genuine learning rather than mere satisfaction with the experience.

Several students also reported increased confidence in applying paraphrasing techniques to their academic writing. One stated simply, "I feel more confident about paraphrasing now." This confidence-building outcome is particularly significant, as self-efficacy correlates strongly with academic performance and persistence (Bandura, 1997).

Theme 4: Affective Engagement and Enjoyment

Beyond cognitive gains, students experienced positive emotional responses to the webinar. Approximately 15 responses characterised the experience as "fun" or "enjoyable," with one declaring it "the best webinar I've attended this year." This affective engagement appeared closely tied to the interactive elements incorporated into the session, including Padlet exercises and Mentimeter polls.

The combination of learning and enjoyment challenges traditional assumptions about academic rigour requiring emotional neutrality. Instead, findings suggest that positive affect enhances rather than detracts from learning. Students who described the webinar as fun also typically reported strong learning outcomes, indicating that engagement and achievement are complementary rather than competing goals.

One student captured this integration succinctly: "The webinar was fun and everything was well explained and make me understand about paraphrasing." This comment illustrates how affective engagement and cognitive clarity can reinforce each other, creating an optimal learning environment.

Category 3: Improvement Opportunities

Theme 5: Pacing as a Double-Edged Sword

A notable tension emerged in feedback regarding pacing. While four students described the pace as appropriate, "not too fast or too slow", nine others felt certain sections moved too quickly. Comments such as "Some sections felt a bit rushed" and "We neeed moreeee timeeeee" indicated that some students desired more time to process information or practice skills.

This divergence likely reflects natural variation in learning speeds and prior knowledge levels within the cohort. What feels appropriately paced for some learners may feel rushed for others, presenting an ongoing challenge for instructors. The finding suggests the need for differentiated approaches that accommodate diverse learning needs within group instruction.

Possible strategies to address pacing concerns include providing recorded sessions for individual review, incorporating more pause points for reflection, and offering supplementary materials for those who need additional time to process. The challenge lies in balancing comprehensive content coverage with adequate time for deep understanding.

Theme 6: Appetite for Sustained Learning Opportunities

Students expressed a strong interest in continuing their learning journey beyond the single webinar. Approximately 15 responses included specific requests for follow-up sessions, additional resources, or regular webinar series. Suggestions included requests for recordings, presentation slides, practice exercises with feedback, and similar webinars on related writing skills.

One student proposed, "Please conduct similar webinars for other writing skills for LCC401 too," while another requested, "Please make this a monthly series of webinars." These comments suggest that the webinar succeeded not only in delivering content but in creating appetite for further learning.

This theme reveals an often-overlooked indicator of educational success: the desire for more. When students actively request additional learning opportunities, it signals both satisfaction with the experience and recognition of ongoing development needs. The finding suggests that effective instruction doesn't just deliver knowledge but cultivates curiosity and commitment to continued growth.

DISCUSSION

The Enduring Importance of Instructor Quality

Perhaps the most striking finding is the centrality of instructor quality to the webinar's success. Despite investments in educational technology and learning management systems, students identified Ms Jane's teaching

approach, in terms of her clarity, approachability, enthusiasm, and patience, as the defining feature of their positive experience. This finding resonates powerfully with the Community of Inquiry framework established by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) and subsequently validated by Garrison and Arbaugh (2007), who demonstrated that teaching presence is the strongest predictor of student satisfaction and perceived learning in online environments. The present findings extend this theoretical claim from large-scale survey research into a qualitative, fine-grained account of what teaching presence actually looks like in practice: a single instructor who smiles, invites questions, explains with confidence, and makes students feel heard.

Zaky's (2024) analysis of teacher communication and power dynamics in online classrooms provides a complementary lens for interpreting this theme. Zaky found that instructors who adopted an inclusive, non-authoritative communicative style, employing warm language, expressing genuine enthusiasm, and positioning themselves as collaborative facilitators rather than knowledge authorities, fostered substantially higher student engagement. One example is the teaching approach of Ms Jane, as described by students in the present study, exemplifies exactly this profile. Students noted not only her instructional competence but her relational qualities: her approachability, her willingness to answer questions, and her consistently positive demeanour. In Zaky's framework, these communicative choices are not merely personality traits but pedagogical decisions with measurable effects on students' psychological safety and participation. The implication for faculty development is significant: institutions investing in online instruction should attend not only to instructors' content knowledge but also to their communicative practices and relational orientation.

For educational institutions, this finding carries important and actionable implications. While technology enables online learning, it cannot substitute for skilled instruction. Investments in instructor development, recognition of teaching excellence, and support for pedagogical innovation are likely to yield greater returns than technology upgrades alone. Garrison and Arbaugh's (2007) empirical work on teaching presence provides an evidence base for prioritising instructor quality as the primary lever for improving online learning outcomes, and the present qualitative findings give that argument a human face.

The Power of Practical Demonstration and Metacognitive Scaffolding

Students overwhelmingly valued clear, practical demonstrations over abstract explanations. This preference aligns with Rosenshine's (2012) principles of effective instruction and with Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory, which predicts that worked examples reduce extraneous cognitive burden and free mental resources for schema construction. By showing rather than merely telling, using concrete examples, visual demonstrations, and step-by-step guidance, the instructor helped students construct usable mental models of paraphrasing processes without becoming overwhelmed by the simultaneous demands of comprehension, application, and grammatical monitoring.

Noor Hanim Rahmat et al.'s (2021) work on metacognitive scaffolding offers an important deepening of this theme. Their finding that explicit scaffolding, which makes thinking processes visible through modelling and guided reflection, improves both writing quality and confidence aligns closely with what students reported in the paraphrasing webinar. When the instructor demonstrated how she approached a paraphrasing task, verbalising her decisions about synonym selection and sentence restructuring, she was providing precisely the metacognitive scaffolding Rahmat et al. describe. This is not merely showing students a technique; it is making visible the cognitive reasoning that expert paraphrasers employ, thereby equipping students to monitor and guide their own future attempts. The practical implication is that webinar instructors should be encouraged not only to demonstrate correct outcomes but to narrate their reasoning process, turning worked examples into metacognitive models.

The systematic review by Mat et al. (2025) further corroborates this theme. Their finding that web-based writing instruction is most effective when it integrates procedural knowledge, not merely declarative information about what paraphrasing is, but practical guidance on how to do it, is consistent with the high satisfaction students expressed with the webinar's demonstration-based approach. The webinar's use of authentic texts for a live demonstration, combined with Padlet exercises that provided students with immediate practice opportunities, reflects what Mat et al. identify as a hallmark of effective web-based writing platforms: the combination of modelled instruction with guided, responsive practice.

Balancing Coverage and Comprehension: The Pacing Challenge

The pacing tension revealed in student feedback highlights an enduring challenge in education: balancing comprehensive content coverage with adequate time for deep understanding. This challenge intensifies in online environments, where instructors may lack the visual cues that signal student confusion or cognitive overload in face-to-face settings. The findings here are strikingly consistent with one of the central conclusions of Mallon et al.'s (2023) rapid review of synchronous online learning, which identified pacing as among the most frequently cited sources of student dissatisfaction across 61 studies. Mallon et al. noted that the tension between instructors' concerns about content coverage and students' need for processing time was a persistent, largely unresolved challenge in synchronous online instruction.

The divergent pacing experiences in the present study, where some students found the pace appropriate while others felt certain sections were rushed, reflect the natural variation in prior knowledge and processing speed within a heterogeneous student cohort. This variation cannot be easily eliminated in synchronous instruction, but it can be mitigated through design choices. Mallon et al. (2023) suggest that making recordings available, building in deliberate pause points, and providing supplementary resources for self-paced review are the strategies most consistently associated with positive synchronous learning experiences. Mat et al.'s (2025) review similarly found that effective web-based writing platforms often combine synchronous instruction with asynchronous support materials, creating a blended approach that accommodates different learning speeds. In the context of the paraphrasing webinar, these findings point to a concrete recommendation: future sessions should be recorded and shared promptly, and accompanying practice exercises with answer keys should be provided so that students who found the pace too fast can consolidate their understanding independently.

Creating Appetite for Continued Learning

The strong student demand for follow-up sessions and additional resources represents a particularly positive and theoretically significant outcome. Education at its best does not merely fill knowledge gaps but creates an appetite for continued growth, cultivating the intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning orientation essential for lifelong academic development. This observation connects to Rahmat et al.'s (2021) finding that metacognitive scaffolding promotes skill transfer: students who develop not only paraphrasing techniques but also an understanding of how they learn and what they still need to practice are better positioned to pursue further development autonomously.

The community-building emphasis in Mallon et al.'s (2023) review is also relevant here. Students' requests for a regular webinar series suggest that the session succeeded not only in teaching paraphrasing but in creating a sense of shared learning community. When participants request a reconvene, they indicate that the social and relational dimensions of the learning experience were as meaningful as the content. This aligns with Mallon et al.'s finding that community-building is among the most important determinants of student motivation in synchronous online learning. Programmes that deliberately sustain this community through recurring webinars, shared resources, and peer interaction opportunities are likely to generate cumulative learning gains that a single session, however successful, cannot achieve on its own.

Affective Dimensions of Learning and Interactive Design

The prominence of enjoyment and engagement in student feedback challenges traditional dichotomies between serious learning and entertaining teaching. Students who described the webinar as fun also typically reported strong learning outcomes, suggesting that positive affect enhances rather than detracts from learning. This finding aligns closely with Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory of academic emotions, which demonstrates that positive activating emotions, such as enjoyment, enthusiasm, and pride, will increase attentional focus, motivational investment, and cognitive flexibility, all of which support deep learning. Conversely, negative deactivating emotions, such as boredom, are associated with reduced engagement and shallow processing. The webinar appears to have been highly effective in generating the emotional conditions that Pekrun's theory associates with optimal learning.

The role of interactive tools in generating positive affect warrants particular attention. Students consistently connected their enjoyment to the Padlet exercises and Mentimeter polls incorporated into the session. This

finding resonates with Mat et al.'s (2025) identification of interactive and gamification-integrated platforms as among the most effective categories of web-based writing instruction, and with Mallon et al.'s (2023) finding that two-way interaction is the key differentiator between synchronous online sessions that students experience as engaging versus passive. The theoretical implication is that interactive tools function on two levels simultaneously: they are pedagogically effective because they require active processing, and they are affectively effective because they make learning feel dynamic and participatory rather than observational. Instructors designing online writing sessions should therefore treat interactivity not as optional enrichment but as a structural requirement for achieving both cognitive and affective learning goals. Zaky's (2024) work adds another layer of nuance: even the manner in which instructors frame interactive activities, by inviting participation rather than demanding it, celebrating contributions rather than evaluating them, shapes the emotional tone of the learning environment and students' willingness to engage.

Table 2. Representative Coded Examples from Student Feedback

Theme	Representative Student Quote	Code Applied	Analytical Note
T1: Clarity / Practical Demo	"The explanation of complex concepts like turning active to passive voice was simplified beautifully."	Worked-example praise	Links to cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988); modelling reduces extraneous load
T2: Instructor Impact	"Madam Jane's teaching style is very engaging and clear."	Instructor-named commendation	Teaching presence dimension of CoI (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007)
T3: Learning Advancement	"I learned how to paraphrase the right way and understand the difference between summary and paraphrasing."	Specific skill gain reported	Declarative + procedural knowledge acquisition (Mat et al., 2025)
T4: Affective Engagement	"The webinar was fun and everything was well explained and made me understand about paraphrasing."	Enjoyment + comprehension linked	Positive activating emotion supporting cognition (Pekrun, 2006)
T5: Pacing	"We neeed moreeee timeeeee."	Pacing dissatisfaction	Coverage vs. comprehension tension; consistent with Mallon et al. (2023)
T6: Appetite for Learning	"Please make this a monthly series of webinars."	Request for continuation	Community-building motivation; self-directed learning indicator (Mallon et al., 2023)

Note. Quotes are reproduced as written by students; minor typographical variations are preserved for authenticity.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be noted when interpreting these findings. First, the feedback represents voluntary responses from students who attended the webinar, likely skewing toward more engaged or satisfied participants. Students who found the webinar unhelpful may have been less likely to provide feedback.

Second, responses varied in length and depth, with some students providing detailed reflections and others offering brief comments. This variability affected the depth of insight available from different responses.

Third, feedback was collected immediately following the webinar, capturing initial reactions but not long-term retention or application of learned skills. Longitudinal follow-up would provide valuable insight into sustained learning outcomes.

Fourth, some responses showed variations in English language proficiency that may have limited students' ability to fully articulate their experiences. Richer data might have emerged from interviews or multilingual feedback options.

Finally, as a single case study, findings may not generalise to other contexts, instructors, or topics. While the themes identified are likely to have broader relevance, their specific manifestations reflect the unique characteristics of this webinar.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For Instructional Practice

Instructors should prioritise clarity by grounding complex concepts in worked examples and step-by-step demonstrations rather than abstract explanation. Strong instructor presence remains essential online: approachability, responsiveness, and genuine engagement foster the trust that underpins effective virtual teaching. Interactive tools such as Padlet and Mentimeter should be embedded as core session components, not optional extras, as they deepen engagement and yield real-time formative data. To address pacing variation, instructors should provide recordings and supplementary materials so learners can consolidate understanding at their own pace. Where a session generates enthusiasm, that momentum should be sustained through prompt resource-sharing and structured follow-up pathways.

For Programme Development

Programmes should move beyond one-off sessions toward coherent webinar series that build skills progressively and sustain a learning community across the semester. Each session should be paired with a post-session package: recordings, slides, and practice exercises to support independent continued learning. Structured feedback collection should be routine rather than optional, generating qualitative data for ongoing improvement. Institutions should document and disseminate effective instructional practices to more broadly leverage teaching excellence. Hybrid delivery, pairing synchronous webinars with asynchronous resources, maximises flexibility and accessibility for diverse student cohorts.

For Further Research

Future research should monitor whether the gains in skill and confidence are sustained and generalise to assessed writing over time, addressing the key longitudinal gap in the current evidence base. Comparative studies contrasting webinar delivery with asynchronous formats, face-to-face workshops, or AI-assisted tools would clarify the specific contribution of synchronous interactive instruction. Complementing student feedback with instructor reflections would produce a more balanced account of effective online teaching. Replication across a range of disciplines and institutions would allow for the differentiation of universal findings from those specific to the English for Academic Purposes context. Finally, developing validated instruments to measure the six themes identified here would enable large-scale quantitative testing of the relationships between instructional quality, engagement, and learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This thematic analysis reveals that effective online learning experiences require integrating three essential elements: excellent content delivery, strong instructor presence, and meaningful learner engagement. While technology enables virtual instruction, the human elements of teaching clarity, connection, and care remain paramount.

The overwhelming success of "The Art of Paraphrasing" webinar stemmed from Ms Jane's ability to deliver complex content through clear, practical demonstrations while maintaining an engaging, approachable presence. Students didn't just learn paraphrasing techniques; they enjoyed the process, felt supported in their learning, and developed an appetite for continued growth.

The analysis also revealed important tensions and opportunities for improvement. Pacing emerged as a challenge requiring thoughtful solutions that accommodate diverse learning needs. Students' strong desire for follow-up sessions and additional resources indicates both success in generating interest and recognition of ongoing developmental needs.

For educators navigating online and hybrid learning environments, these findings offer both validation and direction. They validate the enduring importance of fundamental teaching excellence while providing specific, actionable insights into what makes online instruction work. They remind us that while platforms and tools matter, the quality of human interaction remains the most powerful determinant of learning success.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that effective online teaching is less about technology and more about pedagogy, about understanding learners, communicating clearly, engaging authentically, and caring deeply about student success. As education continues evolving in an increasingly digital landscape, these fundamentally human qualities may prove to be our most essential and irreplaceable resources.

REFERENCES

1. Alyaa, N., Jumaat, F., Shanthi, A., Suppiah, P. C., & Johar, E. (2025). TikTok For Education : Implications for Language Learning in a Second Language Context. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 21(3), 734–749. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v21i3.50>
2. Anderson, T. (2003). Getting the mix right again: An updated and theoretical rationale for interaction. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 4(2).
3. Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
4. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
5. Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.
6. Garrison, D. R., & Arbaugh, J. B. (2007). Researching the community of inquiry framework: Review, issues, and future directions. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10(3), 157-172.
7. Ovilia, R., Addinna, A., & Oktoviandry, R. (2021). Students' paraphrasing ability in academic writing: Techniques and challenges. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10(2), 211–221.
8. Pekrun, R. (2006). The control-value theory of achievement emotions: Assumptions, corollaries, and implications for educational research and practice. *Educational Psychology Review*, 18(4), 315-341.
9. Rosenshine, B. (2012). Principles of instruction: Research-based strategies that all teachers should know. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.
10. Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257-285.
11. Mallon, S., McCann, E., & Brown, M. (2023). Student and teacher experiences in synchronous online learning: A rapid review. *Computers & Education*, 195, 104712.
12. Mat, M., Aziz, A. A., & Rashid, R. A. (2025). Web-based instructional strategies for writing skills: A systematic review. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 16(1), 1–18.
13. Noor Hanim Rahmat, N. H., Mohamed, A. R., & Shaharuddin, S. (2021). Metacognitive scaffolding in online academic writing instruction. *Asian EFL Journal*, 28(2), 45–68.
14. Zaky, H. (2024). Teacher communication and power dynamics in online student engagement. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 29(3), 512–530.