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## EFL Learners' Perceptions of Peer Feedback: Benefits and Challenges in English Writing Classes

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**Abstract:** This study investigates EFL learners' perceptions of peer feedback in English writing classes, combining quantitative data from 325 students and qualitative data from 15 interview participants to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences. The participants, who possessed intermediate to upper-intermediate English proficiency, completed a questionnaire and participated in semi-structured interviews to provide a comprehensive picture of their experiences. In terms of quantitative results, most participants have a positive attitude towards peer feedback since they consider that it helps to improve the quality of their writing, encourages the development of critical thinking skills and facilitates learner autonomy. The qualitative data indicated that peers' feedback enabled students to view their content ideas in a different way and learn of new language expressions and writing rules. Others valued the motivation and classroom environment that came with being connected to other learners. However, challenges were raised on the reliability of peer comments, emotional unease and unwillingness to criticize especially towards less capable classmates. These findings suggest that while peer feedback is generally valued, its effectiveness depends heavily on providing structured training and fostering trust among learners. The findings emphasise the significance of teacher support in developing students' peer-assessment skills for meaningful participation.

**Keywords:** Peer Feedback, EFL Writing, Learner Perceptions, Critical Thinking, Learner Autonomy

### 1. Introduction

Peer feedback, as an effective academic literacy instructing approach has been used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in recent years. Based on the social construction theory, peer feedback is a complementary approach which facilitates collaborative discussion and shared ideas, where critical thinking with writing prompts student autonomy and cognitive development (Rollinson 2005). It also introduces students to conflicting views of language and structure and, thereby, moves them in the direction of being writers. Other evidence similarly indicates that good peer feedback can help to increase learners' reference potentials and communities of practice, especially for weaker writers (Wu & Schunn, 2023). Peer interaction also facilitates the development of attitude in that learners may become more open to feedback from repeated peer feedback exchange (Triassanti *et al.*, 2023) and digital platforms can enhance self-reflection and engagement (Lam & Habil, 2020).

For example, learners often question the validity of feedback from peers, particularly those with lower proficiency (Liu & Carless, 2006), and distrust for peer input is a common theme (Sippel & Jackson, 2015; Jongmsa *et al.*, 2022). A further obstacle is emotional issues including fear of embarrassing each other which inhibit, or lead feedback to be overly polite (Falchikov, 2001). Cultural and social variables also impact on students' trust in peers as raters, which may affect their receptivity to peer comments (Joh & Plakans, 2021) and all of this variable modulating behavior between teachers and learners means that interpreting whether written corrective feedback works is complicated (Dang, 2024). Considering that many students probably still regard teacher assessment as more influential, because it is considered to be more accurate and authoritative (Park, 2018), there is a need to pay attention to how to design successful peer-feedback practices in the context of EFL writing studies.

These challenges highlight the need for structured guidance and training in peer assessment strategies to ensure learners can participate confidently and respectfully. Understanding learners' perceptions of peer feedback



both positive and negative is therefore essential for designing more effective peer feedback practices in EFL writing instruction. This study seeks to explore these perceptions by examining how EFL students experience, interpret, and respond to peer feedback within the classroom context, as well as answer the following research question:

- What are EFL students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of peer feedback in writing instruction?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Peer Feedback in EFL Writing

Peer feedback, a pedagogical practice that students have the opportunity to write and critique each other's work in order to enhance across writing quality as well as a better understanding of writing conventions within an EFL setting (Manh, 2024). In this way, from passive recipients of teacher comments, students become more engaged, autonomous and that involves demonstrating another type of learning dynamic (Khalil *et al.*, 2018; Nguyen & Trang, 2023). Peer feedback, when working well, can help establish a learning community which is often absent in teacher-centered classes and at the same time to promote students' linguistic and social development (Shokrpour *et al.*, 2013; Xu & Peng, 2022).

Feedback is at the heart of writing work it drives revision, illuminates areas that need growth, and provides opportunities for reflection. Its implementation encourages learners in understanding their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the promotion of critical thinking and meta-cognitive awareness (Afrasiabi & Khojasteh, 2015; Gonzalez-Torres & Sarango, 2023). More precisely, peer feedback has been found to enhance writing performance with some unique ideas rather than teacher paper comments (Rahimi, 2013; Tornwall & Ikonen, 2023). Teach your students to provide specific, positive peer feedback on content and organization if you focus on this aspect of writing students will write better quality work (Khalil 2018; Zeevy-Solovey 2024).

In EFL learning environments, peer feedback is particularly relevant as it resonates communicative language teaching principles where interaction and collaboration among learners are encouraged (Nguyen & Trang, 2023). In addition to improved writing ability, the use of peer feedback increases students' evaluative and reflective skills which help them gain a better understanding of the complex process that is writing (Dooley & Bamford, 2018; Tan & Phạm, 2021). Embedded in a socio-constructivist perspective, peer feedback is also used on the basis that language learning requires interaction and sense-making during encounters in real-world settings (Wijaya, 2022; Yu & Lee, 2014). When learners communicate with other learners, then they are co-constructed knowledge and experiencing language uses in context (Gonzalez-Torres; Sarango, 2023).

Additionally, the application of digital technologies as mobile apps and online collaboration platforms enhanced this approach by offering a flexible, on-demand and interactive participation (Kukulka-Hulme & Viberg, 2017). It is different with digital peer feedback approach which enables responses immediately, supports multimedia tools, and has various forms that can make the learners more motivated (Nguyen & Trang, 2023; Razak & Saeed, 2014). Research suggests that nowadays EFL college students often welcome technologically mediated peer feedback, corresponding to a transfer in writing pedagogy toward extra student-centered and tech-integrated practices (Zhao, 2010).

In conclusion, peer feedback is essential in EFL writing instruction as it fosters collaboration, critical interaction and learner autonomy. As the EFL writing instructional context changes with the time to meet demands of today's world, allowing for peer feedback especially through digital means can foster more student-centered, engaging and effective writing classrooms that address learners' needs and sense of reality.

### 2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Peer feedback in EFL writing teaching has a solid theoretical underpinning, including Sociocultural Theory and Social Constructivism. These frameworks emphasize the social nature of learning, and the role that interaction, collaboration and situational engagement play in building knowledge and skills.



### 2.2.1 Sociocultural Theory

In Vygotsky's view, learning is most effective in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a concept that encompasses all areas in which learners can perform tasks with some support from more knowledgeable others or teachers, but which they cannot yet accomplish alone. Hence, peer feedback within this context is viewed as a scaffolding or means of assisting students in interpreting the works of their peers by providing constructive criticism and dialogue (Sumekto & Setyawati, 2019). Peer feedback makes students co-fabricating knowledge, understand better the conventions of writing and their analytical thinking also develops (Fareed, 2021; Stenberg & Carlson, 2015). The collaborative aspect of this interaction is consistent with the basic premises that underlie sociocultural learning, which emphasizes language growth and cognitive development through mediated experiences.

Scaffolding in peer feedback goes beyond simple error correction and involves cognitive modeling, guidance on which strategies to use and how to self-regulate. By providing feedback to peers, the learners are improving not only their peers' texts but also their own metacognition and critical reflection (Dooley & Bamford, 2018) skills. The reciprocal fashion of peer feedback echoes Vygotskian belief that cognitive growth comes from participating in real world social practices, especially those of collective problem solving and communicative negotiation (Lerchenfeldt *et al.*, 2019).

Social Constructivism further supports this, positing that learning is a participatory practice that occurs as people develop knowledge in communion with others and their surroundings (Burgess *et al.*, 2021). In this structure, peer feedback is posed as a real-life learning exercise teaching students to reflect and respectively assess and revise their (and others) written works. Reflective approaches to learning also cultivate self-evaluation, accountability and learner autonomy (Batool, 2022; Xu & Harfitt, 2019). As students encounter a range of different viewpoints and rationales, they come to an understanding of writing as intellectual and social activity.

### 2.2.2 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist approaches also acknowledge that active construction of meaning through participation is more potent for learning than passive reception of information. Peer feedback is an environment for learners to express their thinking, negotiate meaning, and give a linguistic form or function even further (Reinholz & Dounas-Frazer, 2016). It also encourages taking responsibility for learning development through social accountability and shared goals being developed amongst both peers (Er *et al.*, 2020). Studies demonstrate that, through appropriate guiding and training, EFL students can benefit substantially from structured peer feedback in their motivation and writing proficiency (Ma, 2016).

## 2.3 Types of Peer Feedback

Peer feedback takes different forms and plays a different role in students' writing development and learning achievement in EFL contexts. A sophisticated application of these types of feedbacks is, therefore, crucial for teachers with respect to appropriate peer-feedback practices encouraging language proficiency and learner engagement.

One major difference is the written feedback and audio feedback. Students often prefer written feedback because they perceive it to be clear, more direct and easier to access when revising work. But the practice of providing feedback has actually grown, and research relies on several studies that show written feedback can be seen as anonymous or overly harsh. Conversely, although audio feedback could be interpreted as taking longer to create, it is viewed by some students as having a greater sense of personality and emotional friendliness when receiving peer support (McKittrick *et al.*, 2014). This suggests that written feedback might speed up improvements to text, but the audio mode may facilitate peer rapport and encouragement.

As another important difference there is focused feedback and error correction in the content. Most peer feedback discussions involve mere comments on a surface level such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation while giving little attention to a deeper aspects of their writing concerning content, organization or argumentation (Mon & Zein, 2017). This may, for example, be the result of students being less confident about judging higher-order



dimensions of writing (when it's the act of their peers). Educators are encouraged to direct learners toward a balanced view of feedback in which feedback must also deal with the structural legitimacy of the content.

Structured feedback prompts insure much better quality and depth of peer feedback. A series of studies for example has demonstrated that students provided with explicit criteria (or simply asked to reflect on what was done well, and how they might have improved even further in their writing) gave more detailed, balanced and constructive feedback (Gan & Hattie, 2014). But like it makes the feedback more useful and encourages students to think/refer back to their notes instead of making a review, then also they have trouble writing something meaningful.

There's also unquantifiables like how we are with friends and what emotions criticism or encouragement produce in us, and then the subsequent effects that has on us when presented with those pieces of feedback. It would be for students to seek or give feedback in an emotionally safer relation, of which the response could potentially be too soft instead of being demanding enough (Papi *et al.*, 2019). The relational dimensions emphasize the need to create a classroom environment of trust, communication, and dialogue. Teachers might be aware of these aspects when developing collaboration between students and creating tasks for peer feedback that are more likely to generate constructive criticism in a respectful manner.

Crucially, the learning benefits of peer feedback are not limited to just those receiving it. Studies show that students benefit from providing feedback to peers at least as much they profit from receiving it: if not more, given that analyzing the writings of others may improve their own articulation of genre, coherence and audience (Cho & Cho, 2010). This ping-pong peer feedback feature shows how it is a reflective as well as an instructional.

## 2.4 Learners' Perceptions of Peer Feedback

The use of peer feedback in writing instruction, and in EFL classrooms specifically, is likely to raise mixed feelings among learners, which can be divided into two categories: positive and negative aspects. Such perceptions are important for educators wanting to improve the effectiveness of peer feedback systems.

### 2.4.1 Positive Perceptions

Benefits of peer feedback on the writing skills and learning experience are multiple, leading EFL learners to generally view peer feedback favorably. The key advantage is primarily the theory critical thinking: discussion and clarity, not only are students to judge on provided papers/presentations- in order to uphold a quality of confidence but they practice yet more high cognitive levels comparisons constantly over effective writing (Gielen *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, peer feedback enhances learner autonomy by offloading some of the responsibility of learning from the teacher to the students themselves (Rollinson, 2005). It also reinforces collaborative learning, as it encourages to an interactive context for students to share information and dialog with each other as well help to bill a more supportive classroom atmosphere by allowing them to co-construct knowledge (Topping, 1998). Building on these theoretical and pedagogical advantages, research further confirms that active engagement in giving and receiving peer feedback significantly enhances students' writing performance and awareness of writing mechanisms (Salinas, 2020).

A large number of previous studies have also indicated that students' perceptions of peer feedback are in general favorable. Well-structured peer feedback practices can enhance confidence and engagement of students with lower performance and foster a sense of community and joint discovery (Wu & Schunn, 2023). Similarly, Triassanti *et al.* (2023) revealed that peer feedback could help learners benefit from the language-setting classrooms as it does so not only by boosting their speaking performance but also through changing their attitudes about receiving feedback. Positive attitudes are also evident in technology-supported settings, where digital peer feedback has been shown to improve students' self-reflection and engagement (Lam & Habil, 2020). Although students sometimes report doubts about the quality of peer comments, findings by Jongsma *et al.* (2023) acknowledge, however, its worth in providing ultimately enriching content-related comprehension and an opportunity to improve academic skills.

### 2.4.2 Negative Perceptions

Although peer feedback is believed to have pedagogical advantages, in EFL contexts its potential has been vastly questioned by the negative perceptions of EFL learners. Another major concern is students' uncertainty about



their peers' language skills and credibility, with some questioning the overall dependability and the exactness of feedback, especially in linguistically diverse classrooms using variations of proficiency level (Liu & Carless, 2006). The discomfort, albeit subtle, could cause some learners to tune out altogether and this robs them of a learning experience. Furthermore, students may be fearful of insulting others or being seen as overly critical and this could lead to a reluctance to give feedback or if given the feedback is put in softer terms (Li *et al.*, 2019). These emotional and social barriers can function as crucial barriers to the success of peer feedback, highlighting the need for scaffolding and support for students in learning how to engage in this work while maintaining learners' abilities to engage in learning this process with confidence and respect.

These perceptions fit in with the wider literature on student scepticism about peer feedback. Sippel and Jackson (2015) also found that students perceive fellow students' comments as being less helpful than teacher feedback and Jongsma *et al.* (2023) found students to be more critical and less accepting of peer feedback. Perceived competence and social interaction are other key elements. Joh and Plakans (2025) suggested that cultural and social influences have an impact on trust in peers as authority to evaluate, therefore, exposure to peer-evaluation can potentially decrease the level of the external facilitation effect. Moreover, these are muddled up with mixed feedback styles and interpretations as reported by Dang (2024). Moreover, on the one hand, many students still rely on teachers' feedback as trustworthy some (including) and other accurate scale to value peers' input.

Overall, these results suggest that peer feedback, although it has pedagogic value, is significantly challenged by issues of credibility perceptions, emotional threats, and social interaction. To meet these challenges, structured training and scaffolding need to be offered to support the students in getting involved confidently and productively with the peer feedback.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The present study explores EFL learners' perceptions of peer feedback in their English writing classes, specifically their experience with the peer response, their attitudes toward giving and receiving feedback, perceived benefits and challenges of the latter. The study was carried out involving 325 undergraduate EFL learners at a university in the Mekong Delta where such is an educational environment that involves a traditional way of teaching writing, including peer feedback in process writing instruction. Information was gathered through a questionnaire consisted of 20 items and qualitative semi-structured interviews to examine students' perceptions on peer feedback integration.

**Table 1. The demographic information on the research-participating students**

Demographic Variable	Category	No. of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	103	31.7
	Female	222	68.3
Years of study	1 <sup>st</sup> year	80	24.6
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	85	26.2
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	90	27.7
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	70	21.5
Writing Proficiency	Beginner	72	22.2
	Intermediate	173	53.2
	Advanced	80	24.6



### 3.2 Participants

The study involved 325 English-major students from universities in the Mekong Delta region, all enrolled in academic English writing courses that incorporated structured peer-feedback activities. Participants were selected to provide insights into their perceptions of peer feedback and its effects on their development as writers and engagement with the learning process. Having prior experience with peer feedback, all students were able to reflect on its benefits and challenges. Detailed demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

### 3.3 Instrumentation

This study used a questionnaire as the principal instrument of data collection with two significant clusters: Perceived Benefits of Peer Feedback and Perceived Challenges of Peer Feedback. More particularly, it sought to investigate EFL learners' perception on the usefulness, effectiveness, and feasibility of peer feedback in English writing classes as well as any problems or issues they experienced during peer-review process.

The instrument included 20 items (10 statements in each set) See Table 2. In the Benefits cluster, it was ascertained that learners reported writing improvements, more knowledge of written conventions, better thinking skills, exposure to different points of view and the independence to learn. The Challenges were characterised by emotional discomfort, questions about the quality of feedback from peers, issues related to communication and both hesitance to provide critical comments as well as reluctance to accept it.

Participants indicated the extent to which each statement was true for them using a five-point Likert rating scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.84, thus ensuring that the instrument is reliable with high internal consistency. It was also pilot-tested with 5% of the sample for clarity and relevance to make minor modifications prior to final application in the full scale survey.

**Table 2.** Description of the questionnaire

Clusters	No. of items	Sample	Source
Perceived Benefits of Peer Feedback	10	Peer feedback helps me think more critically about writing.	Triassanti <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Perceived Challenges of Peer Feedback	10	Giving feedback makes me nervous or anxious.	Joh and Plakans (2025)

Note. The table does not include all items. Instead, only one item from each cluster is presented as a reference.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using a two-phase approach consisting of a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The first phase surveyed 325 English-major students who had participated in peer feedback activities while writing courses; the survey aimed to collect data about the factors that influenced participants' attitudes towards peer feedback. Students were administered the questionnaire in paper-based form in classroom sessions and made to answer it online providing widespread accessibility and ease of answering. All participants were invited to the study voluntarily, they had been informed of its purpose and guaranteed the confidentiality. It took roughly 15–20 mins for each participant to complete the questionnaire. Responses were collected anonymously and coded for analysis.

The second phase of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 15 students across four forms to ensure heterogeneity in writing proficiency (Table 2) factors and gender among student interview participants who also exhibited variation in attitudes toward peer feedback. These interviews lasted from 20–30 minutes and were designed to explore participants' own experiences, views on the benefits and difficulties related to gaining feedback from one another. Interviews were also transcribed and translated from Vietnamese to English for coding thematic analysis.



### 3.5 Data Analysis

The mixed-methods design was used to explore quantitative and qualitative data. The responses to the questionnaire of 325 students were analysed (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean, percentages and standard deviations) were obtained for responses within each cluster: Perceived Benefits and Perceived Challenges of peer feedback. The questionnaire also showed acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient over 0.80. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using a thematic approach. Inductive coding of the transcripts was done by the author to identify themes about emotional reactions, learning and attitudes.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Quantitative Results

#### 4.1.1 EFL Learners' Perceived Benefits of Peer Feedback in Writing Classes

The findings from the questionnaire indicate that EFL learners have positive attitudes on benefits of peer feedback in writing courses. As Table 3 reveals, the ten items all presented a high mean score even though respondents were required to decide on a Likert scale from one to five (lying between 3.96 and 4.25), which implies that there was strong agreement about these advantages.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics for EFL Learners' Perceived Benefits of Peer Feedback in Writing Classes

Statements	Mean	SD
1. Peer feedback helps me think more critically about writing.	4.21	.68
2. Reviewing peers' work helps me improve my own writing.	4.15	.72
3. Giving feedback to peers strengthens my understanding of writing criteria.	4.08	.75
4. Peer feedback makes me more independent as a writer.	3.96	.81
5. I enjoy learning from different perspectives and writing styles.	4.25	.66
6. Peer feedback sessions help me understand writing conventions better.	4.12	.70
7. Discussing peer feedback builds a supportive learning environment.	4.05	.73
8. Peer interaction during feedback helps me reflect more deeply on my work.	4.10	.69
9. I feel motivated to revise my writing after peer feedback.	3.98	.77
10. Peer feedback allows me to see different ways to approach the same writing task.	4.18	.67

The highest-rated item was "I enjoy learning from different perspectives and writing styles" ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = .66$ ). Because 173 of the 325 survey participants (53.2%) are in the intermediate level, this group may be particularly interested in having multiple models to apply for practice as their skills grow. This may be particularly relevant for intermediate-level students, who constitute the majority of the sample (53.2%) and are likely to benefit from varied input as their writing skills develop.

The second-highest ratings were for "Peer feedback helps me think more critically about writing" ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) and "Peer feedback allows me to see different ways to approach the same writing task" ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .67$ ). These findings imply that peer feedback promotes higher-order and metacognitive thought. However, given that participants were drawn from all four academic years, potential differences in reflective ability across levels cannot be confirmed without inferential statistical analysis.

Additionally, the item "Reviewing peers' work helps me improve my own writing" ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) reflects an important reciprocal benefit of peer feedback the act of reviewing can be as developmentally valuable as receiving feedback. This is supported by "Giving feedback to peers strengthens my understanding of writing criteria" ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .75$ ), showing that the feedback process deepens learners' internalization of assessment standards and genre conventions.



Items focusing on affective and social dimensions, such as "Discussing peer feedback builds a supportive learning environment" ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) and "Peer interaction during feedback helps me reflect more deeply on my work" ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = .69$ ), underscore the role of social interaction in enhancing reflective learning, aligning with sociocultural perspectives that emphasize learning through meaningful interaction.

The lowest mean scores, while still positive, were for "Peer feedback makes me more independent as a writer" ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) and "I feel motivated to revise my writing after peer feedback" ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = .77$ ). These comparatively lower means and higher standard deviations suggest variability in learners' perceptions of autonomy and motivation, possibly reflecting differences in confidence levels and continued reliance on teacher authority, particularly among less experienced or lower-proficiency students.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that learners widely acknowledge the cognitive, social, and reflective benefits of peer feedback. The strong agreement on most items underlines the pedagogical value of integrating structured peer feedback activities in EFL writing classes. However, the slight dip in perceived autonomy and motivation to revise highlights a need for training students not only in giving and receiving feedback but also in applying it meaningfully to their own work. Enhanced peer feedback practices, supported by scaffolding and teacher modeling, may further amplify its benefits for learner independence and writing proficiency.

#### 4.1.2 EFL Learners' Perceived Challenges of Peer Feedback in Writing Classes

The findings presented in Table 4 reveal several key challenges experienced by EFL learners when engaging in peer feedback activities. Overall, the responses indicate a moderately high level of concern, with most items receiving mean scores close to or above 4.00 on the 5-point Likert scale, suggesting a strong presence of emotional, interpersonal, and procedural challenges.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics for EFL Learners' Perceived Challenges of Peer Feedback in Writing Classes

Statements	Mean	SD
11. I am unsure if my peers' feedback is accurate or reliable.	3.87	.74
12. I find it hard to trust feedback from peers with lower language proficiency.	3.94	.71
13. I worry about offending others when giving critical feedback.	4.10	.69
14. I feel uncomfortable being judged by my peers.	4.05	.72
15. I often ignore peer feedback because I doubt its usefulness.	3.76	.80
16. Giving feedback makes me nervous or anxious.	3.82	.77
17. I sometimes avoid giving honest feedback to protect my peers' feelings.	4.08	.68
18. Emotional discomfort during peer feedback affects my participation.	3.89	.74
19. I tend to give only positive comments even if I notice problems.	4.02	.70
20. I need more training on how to give and receive effective peer feedback.	4.18	.66

Learners had the highest mean score for "I need more training in how to give and receive effective peer feedback" ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ), showing that most learners recognized a gap between the quality of instruction and formative experiences required to understand best practices in giving and receiving feedback. Considering the number of beginners ( $n = 73$ , 22.2%), this high demand for training may be in line with possible difficulties faced by less experienced learners with a need for more clear scaffolding.

Another major obstacle and blockage was emotional discomfort. The means for the items "I worry about offending others when giving critical feedback" ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ), "I sometimes avoid giving honest feedback to protect my peers' feelings" ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), and "I feel uncomfortable being judged by my peers" were all very high ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=0.72$ ). These data imply that students get emotionally involved in maintaining social harmony which can damage the authenticity and efficacy of feedback-provision or -receiving.



Trust and perceived competence also contribute to the learners' hesitancy. Several students said it was difficult to trust peer grading, particularly that from students with lower proficiencies ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) or do not consider it reliable at all ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = .74$ ). This is likely to lead them to become wary of amending their work based on peer input, and consequently devalue the feedback process.

That students feel the most anxious from giving feedback came forth in items like "Giving feedback makes me nervous or anxious" ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), and that emotional discomfort during peer feedback affects participation can be concluded from for example "Emotional discomfort during peer feedback effects my participation" ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ).

Finally, the inclination to praise when criticisms are present ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ) is indicative of concern over seeming strategic or confrontational given the social relationship. This likely adds to the developmental value of peer feedback, & points toward a requirement for supportive interventions to foster a more inviolate & constructive feedback environment.

To sum up, learners believe in the importance and need of having feedback from peers but lack in engagement because they feel attacked emotionally or feel like there is no trust within team members as well as are poorly trained. Therefore, improvement of these problems by suitable pedagogical strategies not only ensures the effectiveness of peer feedback in EFL writing contexts but also leverages its advantages.

## 4.2 Qualitative Results

### 4.2.1 Perceived Benefits

Respondents emphasized a number of benefits accrued during their participation in peer feedback, including improved writing development, critical thinking as well as learner autonomy.

This quote shows how peer feedback can clarify/orient writing, the writing is way more accurate and organized in addition that your classmates point out things that you don't even know they exist. The cognitive value of the improvement is thereby concretely reflected in the student's learning process during revision, which is connected to the reflective-learning dimension of peer feedback. One student notes,

*"Peer feedback gave me a fresh view on my writing. Sometimes, I don't realize what's unclear until someone else points it out. Their comments really helped me improve the structure of my essay." (Participant 1)*

Benefits of peer feedback show that it leads to language and metacognitive growth. Different styles of writing also allow students to discover more about themselves and they reflect upon it, which are described as characteristics of enhanced autonomous learning and a clear sign that this group is quickly developing their process of strategies according to the literature. One learner stated,

*"When I read my classmates' writing, I learned new vocabulary and sentence structures. It was like seeing how others think and write, which made me reflect more deeply on my own style." (Participant 3)*

This response also emphasizes showing back as well. The student claims that when they grade another's work, they can solidify their understanding of rubric and writing quality leading to higher level thinking skills such as self-assessment. Another member posted,

*"It felt good to give feedback. I had to focus carefully on writing criteria, which helped me understand what teachers usually look for. That made it easier for me to revise my work." (Participant 5)*

The social-emotional benefits of peer interaction are so well captured in this quote. There is an ingredient that encourages motivated participants, anxiety-relief during shared engagement and to keep the knowledge exchange (discussion) in a safe place emotionally. This presents a dimension beyond the traditional peer-response in the form of cooperation learning. One participant commented,

*"Working with my peers built a friendly and supportive learning environment. We encouraged each other and shared tips on how to write better introductions and conclusions. It made writing less stressful." (Participant 9)*

The overarching, interconnected themes support the notion that peers' contributions to annotated documents also promote gains and benefits beyond mere surface error correction. They present a layered process



as involved learners make meaning, become metacognitively aware and grow not only as writers but evaluators of their own writing and the writings of others. And at the same time, the peer interaction is creating a supportive social atmosphere that reduces anxiety and fosters collaborative approaches to learning. In sum, this set of findings suggests that peer feedback functions as a cognitive, reflective and socio-affective resource for fostering the development of more autonomous–confident and strategically competent writers.

#### 4.2.2 Perceived Challenges

Despite the benefits, many students also expressed concerns about the effectiveness and emotional dynamics of peer feedback, especially in relation to language proficiency and social discomfort.

This is an example of the credibility problem often cited in peer feedback. Learners may be not confident about the quality of feedback from less skillful peers, so this decreases effectiveness of peer feedback and causes to more depend on teacher authority. One participant expressed,

*"Sometimes I don't trust my peers' suggestions, especially if I know their English isn't very strong. I feel safer relying on my teacher's feedback than on a classmate's opinion."* (Participant 4)

This is a demonstration of the emotional labour and politeness strategies used by students during peer feedback. Additionally, the fear of facing a conflict with an individual or preserving relationships may induce very bland or overly sweet feedback that would have relatively little developmental value. The participant showed,

*"I often feel nervous about pointing out mistakes because I'm afraid of hurting someone's feelings. I just try to say nice things or avoid giving real criticism even when I see issues."* (Participant 8)

That is a quote that represents peer pressure and performance anxiety. Under the psychological burden of being assessed by peers, learners may be disinclined to both accept critical feedback and participate fully in examining peer feedback. The participant wrote,

*"Receiving feedback from classmates makes me anxious. I worry about how they judge my writing and whether they'll think I'm not good at English. It's quite uncomfortable sometimes."* (Participant 12)

This highlights a lack of procedural knowledge in peer feedback. Without explicit instruction and practice in giving and receiving feedback, students may struggle to participate effectively. It underscores the importance of teacher-facilitated training for building peer feedback literacy.

*"We haven't been trained properly on how to give good feedback. Sometimes I don't know what to say or how to comment helpfully. I think more guidance would really help."* (Participant 15)

The qualitative findings indicate that students find peer feedback difficult for three sets of interrelated reasons as uncertainty surrounding peers' comments, emotional stress providing or receiving criticism, and absence of training in providing constructive feedback. Low trust in evenly peer language proficiency inhibited the belief in the feedback process, while anxiety and politeness problems generally prevented students from presenting honest and critical feedback. Antipathies toward providing the feedback were amplified by students' uncertainty over how to give serviceable advice, highlighting a need for more direct instruction and guided assistance.

While students overall acknowledged the potential of peer feedback to enhance writing and develop reflective practice and community, concerns about trust and emotional safety, as well as procedural understandings inform the importance of scaffolding. Certainly the efficacy of learner peer feedback hinges extensively on learners' confidence, interactional patterns and capability in supplying and integrating feedback.

## 5. Discussion

The results indicate that EFL learners in general have positive attitudes toward peer feedback, which they believe contributes to the improvement of writing quality, critical thinking and learner autonomy. Quantitative findings also indicated strong agreement with items that highlighted a role for peer feedback in encouraging reflection on the structure of writing, learning from others' views and helping them to better understand what is expected through assessment. These results were reinforced by the qualitative data in which students mentioned that peer



feedback enabled them to clarify vague ideas, find new lexical items and expressions and use writing conventions more accurately.

Rooted in Sociocultural Theory, peer feedback is a sociocognitive process that mediates student learning as learners participate in learning dialogues with their peers, construct understanding through discussion and receive scaffolding from them. All students concurred that they got feedback through peers, which made them think about some structures of the module as well as what could be assessed on and learned from a different point of view, in line with the analysis by [Gielen \*et al.\* \(2010\)](#). They also enjoyed observing different writing styles, which is a possibility through creative and analytical reasoning peer feedback offers. Positive peer review is found to improve learners' referencing skills and participations in community of practices, especially among the weaker writers (Wu & Schunn, 2023). Repetitive turns of peer feedback can also increase openness towards criticism as an aspect naturally extended as a sociocultural notion that learning is both social mediated and technologically scaffolded ([Lam & Habil, 2020](#)) when participating users reflect their choices on these digital environments ([Triassanti \*et al.\*, 2023](#)). Even though some of the students in this study expressed skepticism about assessing peers' work on their own, these concerns point to the significance of providing carefully scaffolded opportunities within each learner's ZPD. Their request for more formal guidance indicates the importance of robust support to scaffold learners from supported upcomings to confident peer-reviewers. Lastly, despite the fact that peer-feedback warning bells were sounded on several occasions and students felt that they could not critically appraise the work of other learners without some guidance, it appeared to be valuable for them to be formally taught these skills.

The qualitative data also confirmed that the general attitude toward peer feedback was positive, and students learned to identify vague ideas, alk expressions and veer away from writing routines. These results are in concordance with important principles from Sociocultural Theory, where participants participated in interaction that was socially mediated which promoted collaborative meaning-making and complementary scaffolding.

These perceptions are consistent with the general literature on students' reluctance towards peer feedback. [Sippel and Jackson \(2015\)](#) noted that students frequently rate peer comments as being less useful than teacher feedback, compared to [Jongsma \*et al.\* \(2023\)](#) narrated learners to be more critical and resistant to suggestions from peers. A cultural and social dimension is also found in the study of [Joh and Plakans \(2025\)](#), which shows how students trust in peers as evaluative referents are influenced by cultural norms and social relationships, impacting on doubts about peer assessments' validity. Mismatch between feedback styles and understandings also confuse students perception of legitimacy ([Dang, 2024](#)). Moreover, students still tend to value teacher feedback more because of its authority and perceived validity while undermining peer feedback ([Park, 2018](#)). Through a Constructivist lens, these issues raise the necessity for scaffolded instruction and supported practice towards learner acquisition of evaluative competence, fostering trust in cooperative work methods and confidence to take part in peer-review activities.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study investigated how EFL learners viewed peer feedback in university English writing classes, and their favorable perceptions for its cognitive, social, and emotional value were largely accounted. Peer feedback encourages critical thinking, fostering learner autonomy and increasing reflection/ exposure to multiple perspectives which are both identified as factors mediating writing improvement from qualitative studies supplemented by quantitative findings. Students also remarked on the social dimensions of writing in terms of how peer feedback could serve to create supportive learning spaces and reduce the anxieties around writing. The study, however, revealed significant hurdles. Not trusting peer judgment, feeling bad on either end of the feedback chain, and thinking they sound too harsh when trying to give good feedback were all common sentiments. The limitations demonstrate the need for structured, teacher-led training which supplies students with capacities to perform peer assessment efficiently.

To overcome these issues, the conclusion suggests that pedagogies of peer-feedback should be introduced in a clear and organised manner. This training should involve specific concrete lessons on writing constructive, balanced comments; opportunities to practice supported by a variety of sample texts; and the opportunity to interrogate instances of model feedback for quality and tone. When institution rubrics or comment structures are



employed as well it provides further scaffolding for learners whilst offering that all important consistency and removing some of the awkwardness with regards to critique. In addition, pre-feedback discussions can help teachers establish trust and review ground rules for respectful supportive feedback. Students exposed to this type of scaffolding understand why they are given peer reviews and are highly motivated to engage confidently, emotionally securely.

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