

Exploring Students' Engagement with Peer-and Teacher Written Feedback in an EFL Writing Course: A Multiple Case Study of Iranian Graduate Learners¹

Mohammad Amini Farsani² & Nahid Aghamohammadi³. Department of Foreign Languages, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of learners' engagement with written corrective feedback (WCF). However, comparative studies exploring graduate students' engagement (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral) with peers and teachers' feedback in an L2 writing course is scarce. Hence, this multiple case study, using various sources such as a semi-structured interview, a narrative inquiry sheet, a peer feedback sheet, and students' writing tasks, explored Iranian EFL graduate students' engagement with peer- and teacher feedback. The findings revealed that all of the learners were engaged with the WCF they received from both their peers and instructor. However, the intensity of each dimension of engagement with peer and teacher WCF was different. Specifically, as for peer-feedback engagement, we found that *behavioral engagement* was the most frequent engagement type. The second most frequent was *cognitive engagement* and the least common was *affective engagement*. As for teachers' feedback engagement, the findings revealed that *cognitive engagement* was the most frequent engagement type. The second most frequent was *affective engagement*, and the least common engagement type was *behavioral engagement*. Implications and recommendations with regards to learners' engagement with peer and teacher written feedback are discussed in the light of the findings.

Resumen

Estudios recientes han resaltado la importancia del compromiso de los alumnos con la retroalimentación correctiva escrita (RCE). Sin embargo, son escasos los estudios comparativos que exploran el compromiso cognitivo, afectivo y conductual de los estudiantes de posgrado con los comentarios de sus compañeros y profesores en un curso de escritura de L2. Por lo tanto, este estudio de caso múltiple utilizó varias fuentes como una entrevista semiestructurada, una hoja de consulta narrativa, una hoja de comentarios de pares y las tareas de redacción de los estudiantes, para explorar el compromiso de los estudiantes de posgrado de inglés como lengua extranjera iraníes con los comentarios de pares y profesores. Los hallazgos revelaron que todos los estudiantes estaban comprometidos con el RCE que recibieron tanto de sus compañeros como del instructor. Sin embargo, la intensidad de cada dimensión del compromiso con los compañeros y el maestro RCE fue diferente. Específicamente, en lo que respecta al compromiso con la retroalimentación de los compañeros, descubrimos que el compromiso conductual era el tipo de compromiso más frecuente. El segundo más frecuente fue el compromiso cognitivo y el menos común fue el compromiso afectivo. En cuanto al compromiso con la retroalimentación de los profesores, los hallazgos revelaron que el compromiso cognitivo era el tipo de compromiso más frecuente. El segundo más frecuente fue el compromiso afectivo y el tipo de compromiso menos común fue el compromiso conductual. Las implicaciones y recomendaciones con respecto al compromiso de los alumnos con la retroalimentación escrita de sus compañeros y profesores se discuten a la luz de los hallazgos.

Introduction

In English for Academic Purposes (EAP) contexts, achieving an appropriate level of competence and fluency in academic writing is significant for learners majoring in English-medium programs because the texts they produce in English determine their academic achievements (Altınmakas & Bayyurt, 2019). Academic writing is an emotional process, particularly for second language writers, who need to respond to massive issues in language use (Belcher & Hirvela, 2005; Duff, 2010; Langum & Sullivan, 2017). To foster L2 students' confidence and proficiency, writing educators create a developmental written corrective feedback (WCF) agenda, which is characterized as a significant pedagogical procedure enabling L2 writers to display their abilities, thoughts, and feelings by writing different drafts (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

In the past three decades, written corrective feedback (WCF) has been widely investigated from different perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) and second language writing (Ekanayaka & Ellis, 2020; Ene & Kosobucki, 2016). As such, there is a long-standing debate in the literature concerning the effectiveness of written feedback. Truscott (1996), in his seminal article, made a controversial claim that, in some cases, written corrective feedback can be *ineffective* for learners because they may feel stressed when they receive feedback; hence, it is advisable to stop giving feedback. In rebuttal, Kang and Han (2015), in a meta-analytic study, argued that written corrective feedback plays a *crucial positive* role in the

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² mohammad_farsani@iust.ac.ir, 0000-0002-0249-1996 [Corresponding author]

³ amohammadi.nahid@gmail.com

accuracy of the students' L2 written works. It seems that providing written corrective feedback is of prime importance for students' writing performance; thus, teachers should be equipped with appropriate training for giving timely written feedback to reduce students' negative emotions toward receiving feedback. To avoid demoralizing students, teachers and instructors need intensive training in providing feedback and appropriate insights that can develop their decision-making regarding the extent to which written errors should be considered in student writing (Ferris, 2007; Mao & Lee, 2020).

In addition to the critical role of teachers in providing written corrective feedback, learners' reactions and responses, i.e., learners' engagement with written corrective feedback, have played a significant role in their motivation and learning (Kim & Kim, 2017; Mahfoodh, 2017; Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2007; Zheng & Yu, 2018;). In Ellis' (2010) view, learners' engagement with the WCF has been operationalized in three related dimensions: *affective*, *behavioral*, and *cognitive*. This conceptualization of learners' engagement reveals that presenting WCF on learners' writing and knowing how and to what extent learners react to the feedback, is a widespread pedagogical practice for L2 writing educators to pursue (Zheng & Yu, 2018). A typical concern of instructors is the emotional reactions learners show when receiving feedback (Han & Hyland, 2019).

Following the argument made in the literature on (un)effectiveness of providing feedback (Kang & Han, 2015; Truscott, 1996), studies on written corrective feedback have motivated different studies. For example, there exists a group of studies focused on the effectiveness of written corrective feedback given by teachers (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ene & Kosobucki, 2016; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Likewise, peer feedback has also played a key role in students' performance. It is argued that peer-feedback effectively improves students' writing accuracy and has been widely practiced in ESL composing classrooms (Cao et al., 2019; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). As such, some other researchers have addressed peer feedback effectiveness concerning students' engagement (e.g., Li et al., 2012; Ozogul et al., 2008; Topping 1998; Yuan & Kim, 2018).

On the other hand, only a few studies have recently addressed students' engagement with written corrective feedback provided by teachers (Ellis, 2010; Han, 2017; Zhang, 2017) and peers (Yuan & Kim, 2018).

Learners' affective engagement equals their emotional tendency towards WCF (Han, 2017; Zhang, 2017), and has been considered an emotional response to the WCF (Ellis, 2010; Han and Hyland, 2015). The changes may occur to these emotions in the revision operation. For example, Zhang and Yu (2018) found that L2 writers' positive tendency to affective engagement with feedback plays a contributory role in L2 grammatical accuracy. However, Han and Hyland (2015) argue that affective or emotional engagement has received exceptionally little attention within the existing feedback literature.

The behavioral dimension involves how learners make some changes to their writing responses to the teacher or peer-written corrective feedback. Also, it refers to what learners do with the WCF and how they handle it when they receive it from their teachers or peers (Ellis, 2010). Furthermore, Zheng and Yu (2018) argue that teachers could trace how students functioned in writing revision on correcting errors and modifying their written works.

Finally, the cognitive engagement is recognized as the cognitive investment in the process of WCF (Ellis, 2010). Basically, learners' perception of the WCF shows learners' mental effort to process WCF, which is located at the level of understanding the WCF (Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007). The significant indicators of cognitive operations are learners' cognitive engagement. They need to think about the questions such as to what extent their writings should be revised to react to WCF (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010).

Related Studies

The previous studies on written corrective feedback (WCF) have highlighted the significant role of students' engagement with WCF. However, there are a few researchers who have considered learners' engagement with WCF from three dimensions of engagement—*affective*, *behavioral*, and *cognitive*—simultaneously. For example, Zheng and Yu (2018) examined how L2 Chinese lower-proficiency (LP) students engaged with teacher WCF in an EFL writing context. They found that while the learners' affective engagement was positive, their cognitive and behavioral engagement was not broad. Thus, their behavioral engagement did not bring about greater language accuracy, and there was little attention to actually understand the WCF, particularly indirect WCF.

Also, Han and Hyland (2015) examined how Chinese EFL writers cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally engage with teachers' written corrective feedback. As such, they adhered to a triangulation approach to collect the required data from multiple sources such as think-aloud, written texts, semi-structured interviews, and teacher-student writing conferences. The findings highlighted the dynamic arena of writers' cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement with feedback which supports Ellis' (2010) viewpoint that students' engagement should be perceived through triple lenses.

Han (2019) examined Chinese learners' engagement with written corrective feedback. The findings indicated that learner engagement with WCF could be conceptualized as a method for perceiving and acting upon embedded learning chances provided by WCF and displayed the significance of creating a direction between quality and learner agency to reinforce individual learners' engagement with WCF.

Likewise, Mahfoodh (2017) explored the relationship between eight EFL university learners' affective responses towards instructor written feedback and learners' success of revisions. To determine students' affective reactions towards teacher WCF, he employed a grounded theory approach to analyze think-aloud protocols and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that EFL university learners' affective responses contained an acknowledgment of feedback, ignoring feedback, happiness, surprise, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and satisfaction. The study also suggests that affective reactions can affect learners' perception and use of instructor's WCF.

In contrast, Yu et al., (2018), in their case study on students' engagement with peer feedback in second language writing, explored how three MA students engaged with peer feedback on their thesis drafts. The findings indicate that L2 writers notably engaged in peer feedback in an academic setting, and the three dimensions of learner engagement were related to each other in a complex and dynamic way. Moreover, this study showed how peer feedback can improve students' academic writing and taught them to build up academic learning communities in advanced education levels.

Zhang (2017) examined learners' engagement with automatic evaluation feedback in an EFL setting. He operationalized the construct of learner's engagement through the behavioral, affective, and cognitive dimensions, which were presented in Ellis' (2010) framework. The results revealed that the three writers were engaged with the WCF; however, they showed different profiles of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. This triple engagement with feedback, as Zhang (2017) notes, was affected by learners' beliefs, teaching contexts, writers' proficiency and motivation. Computer-generated evaluation might improve learners' writing, but the occurrence relies on the student's triple engagement with WCF.

Zhang and Hyland (2018) examined two Chinese writers' engagement with the instructor and automated writing evaluation (AWE) feedback. The data sources were learners' interviews, their texts, and teacher's feedback. They found that engagement is an essential factor in accomplishing formative evaluation in classrooms where multiple drafting is employed. Their findings displayed that various formative feedback sources have great power in assisting the progress of learner engagement in writing tasks and displayed some of these pedagogical implications for helping learner's engagement with instructor and AWE feedback.

Furthermore, Yu et al. (2019) examined 1,190 Chinese writers' motivation and engagement with teachers' written feedback in an EFL context. They utilized a questionnaire survey to examine Chinese writers' level of engagement and motivation. They found that learners were generally engaged in the second language writing class and motivated to write. Individual distinctions such as gender, profession, and region were also identified in the study.

Also, in the Chinese EFL context, Yu et al. (2020) investigated how different L2 writing assessments or types of feedback strategies such as process-oriented feedback, written corrective feedback, expressive feedback, scoring feedback, and peer and self-feedback influence learner writing engagement and motivation. The results indicated that the most prevalent mode of L2 writing feedback was expressive feedback; the least frequent one was related to written corrective feedback. They also found that process-based feedback and WCF didn't stimulate learners' engagement and motivation in writing classes. On the other hand, feedback grading, self- and peer-feedback might boost their level of motivation and engagement.

Finally, Tian and Zhou (2020) addressed how five Chinese students engaged with various feedback sources in an online EFL writing context in 17 weeks. Questionnaire and stimulated recall interviews demonstrated that the learners' engagement with different sources of feedback is reciprocal and dynamic engagement.

All in all, it seems that learners' engagement with corrective feedback affects learners' perceptions (Han, 2019), teachers' revision behaviors (Yu et al., 2019; Han, 2019), processing and uptake (Han, 2019), and

using methods and self-observing for addressing evaluation (Ferris et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2020). Although recent studies have explored different aspects of engagement with written corrective feedback in EFL/ESL contexts with diverse learners, notably Chinese, no comparative research has addressed postgraduate students' engagement with feedback providers (i.e., teachers and peers) in one study synchronously. Accordingly, it is warranted to explore EFL graduated learners' engagement with written corrective feedback when they receive it from their instructor and peers. Furthermore, almost all the feedback addressed linguistic issues, leaving argumentative contents unaccounted for.

The Present Study

This comparative study sheds light on written corrective feedback and learners' engagement with that feedback in an academic EFL setting in different ways. First, it can extend the previous findings by considering the three dimensions of learners' engagement with WCF and can provide new research avenues in L2 writing. Further, when the instructors know their learners' engagement behavior, they can provide timely and efficient feedback to them, which can facilitate L2 writing performance. It means that, by enhancing a complete understanding of student engagement, teachers can find out which pedagogical practices in providing WCF can be effective (Zheng & Yu, 2018). Moreover, as student engagement is a significant issue that links the WCF provision with learning outcomes, studies on this concept can theorize about the WCF structure (Han & Hyland, 2015). In this respect, this study makes an effort to investigate the students' engagement with a teacher and peers-written feedback that may help the EFL teachers to gain awareness about the pedagogical procedures in providing WCF and the students' response to the feedback. Consequently, this awareness can help teachers and peers find out the appropriate way to provide written corrective feedback for enhancing L2 writing performance.

The argument further made here is that the argumentative genre has been considered as the most challenging genres in L2 writing (Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017). Therefore, enhancing students' awareness of their writing quality (e.g., grammatical accuracy) and the quality of argumentative components (i.e., claims, rebuttals) could be considered of prime importance. Thus, one way to enhance the quality and soundness of EFL argumentative is to provide feedback on linguistic and content issues. Therefore, it is warranted to explore EFL graduate learners' engagement with written corrective feedback when they receive it from their instructor and peers in argumentative tasks. No comparative research targeting EFL graduate learners' engagement with peer and teacher feedback has been conducted in the academic setting. Accordingly, to provide insight into this research line, this study's primary purpose is to explore EFL graduate learners' affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement when they comparatively receive written corrective feedback from their teacher and peers. The current study aims to provide empirical evidence for the following research questions:

1. *How do Iranian EFL graduate students (affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively) engage with their instructor written corrective feedback?*
2. *How do Iranian EFL graduate students (affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively) engage with peers' written corrective feedback?*
3. *In what ways and how do Iranian EFL graduate students' engagement with written corrective feedback differ when they receive feedback from peers and the instructor?*

Method

Design

In this study, to provide empirical evidence for the research questions, we followed a collective case study (see Stake, 1995), also called a multiple case study design (Duff, 2012). Johnson and Christensen (2019) argue that case study research supplies detailed investigation and interpretation of one or more "cases" or unique entities. Accordingly, a comparative type of investigation can be done in which several cases are compared with each other to recognize the similarities and differences (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

Participants

We adhered to a criterion sampling strategy (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). More specifically, we recruited the samples based on a *homogeneous sample selection*, where a homogeneous case or set of cases was chosen for an in-depth examination. Following this sampling strategy, the researchers purposefully selected 26 graduate Iranian EFL learners studying advanced English academic writing as a foreign language in a leading university. They were in the first semester at the University of Science and Technology in Iran, one

of the region's leading universities. It is believed that this specific group of students has similar linguistic knowledge and cognitive skills required to meet the expectation of the MA courses. Another reason for selecting this group of students, who was committed to writing academic articles and thesis during their MA study, was to explore MA learners' written corrective feedback behavior. Each academic writing session was 80 minutes every week, and sessions were held for three weeks. One-third of the learners were male (N=8, 31%), and two-thirds were female (N=18, 69%). The writing instructor was a faculty member in applied linguistics with a specific concentration on L2 writing.

According to informal conversations with the instructor and based on the course syllabus, students became familiar with academic writing principles. They would be equipped with the principles of academic writing along with the argumentative genre. In this study, the instructor provided feedback on both content (i.e., the quality of argumentation) and linguistic issues (i.e., lexical issues, grammatical issues). The researcher asked all of the students who participated in the advanced writing course to participate in the study. The reason for concentrating on the argumentation genre, as the instructor asserted, is to familiarize the learners with arguing in different parts of articles or theses (i.e., introduction and discussion sections). As for sample size, we gave the respondents a consent letter at the beginning of the class and invited all the participants to cooperate. All the students (n=26) agreed to cooperate. This sample size was adequate to reach data saturation (i.e., no additional information is reported because adequate data are collected; see also Creswell, 2002; Creswell & Miller, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

Instruments

The instruments used in this case study were an interview protocol, a narrative inquiry, a peer feedback sheet, and students' writing tasks. In-depth semi-instructed interviews were conducted with all the participants based on two sources: (a) the modified interview questions developed by Yuan and Kim's (2018) study by which learners' engagement with peers was examined, and (b) a newly-developed interview protocol to examine learners' engagement with teacher feedback (see Appendix). To triangulate the data, a narrative inquiry approach (or NI) was further used to get learners' lived experiences when they received peer and the instructor feedback (see Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) assert that "lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities" (p. 35). We further utilized a peer feedback sheet developed by Miao et al. (2006). It was used to train participants in providing feedback to each other (see Appendix). For argumentative components, we followed the argumentative quality and components as appeared in the literature (Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017; Qin & Karabacak, 2010).

Procedure

In the first stage, we gave the learners a consent letter and all the students (n=26) and the instructor agreed to cooperate in the study. The academic writing class instructor taught MA students how to write argumentative writing, which is the most challenging genre for graduate students (see Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017; Amini Farsani et al., 2019). Students need scaffolding when they learn how to argue in the Anglophone academic style, and how they can enhance their authorial voice in their writing to engage and invite their readers. Another reason for learning argumentation writing is the shortage of argumentative teaching (Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017). We concentrated on this course because the instructor has taken four sessions in a semester to teach the argumentative genre. As for argumentation, the students in the class had already learned the argumentative components posed by Qin and Karabacak (2010). In this argumentative classification the elements of claim, data, rebuttal claim and rebuttal data were practiced. Furthermore, a peer feedback sheet (see Appendix) was developed to train and explain how students can give peer feedback to their friends' writing in the form of pair work. The instructor created groups of two for the class based on learners' characteristics and writing performance in the previous sessions.

At the beginning of each three weeks, the instructor asked the students to write about an argumentative topic. Argumentative topics were chosen according to the previous study (see Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017), which was roughly compatible with students' interests. Accordingly, five topics (e.g., *Privatizing education would be beneficial or harmful. Can single-sex universities improve education? Do career women make bad wives or not? Does the Internet connect people or isolate them? Does technology improve education or hamper it?*) were selected. The students then chose three of them. The topics covered different scientific disciplines containing technology, policy, psychology, education, and sociology, all accompanied by the same procedure and the same structure. After they had written the argumentative piece, the instructor asked peers/classmates to provide feedback on their partners' writing and sent their feedback via email to the

instructor and their friends. At this time, students needed to revise their writing task based on the comments given by their peers (see Figure 1).

In the next round, learners submitted their first writing task to the instructor. The instructor then provided his feedback on learners' task. This procedure, which took one month, was followed for the second and third writing tasks (see Figure 1). At the end of the sessions, the semi-structured interview was carried out with each learner for around 20-25 minutes, and all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. After conducting interviews, students were asked to write a narrative text about their affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with peer and teacher WCF. As for the prompt, we asked participants to write their reactions towards feedback in a narrative mode to deeply explore their engagement profiles when receiving written feedback from their teacher and peers. In all of the processes, data confidentiality and ethical issues were observed. Following is a schematic representation to display how the process of writing feedback was driven.

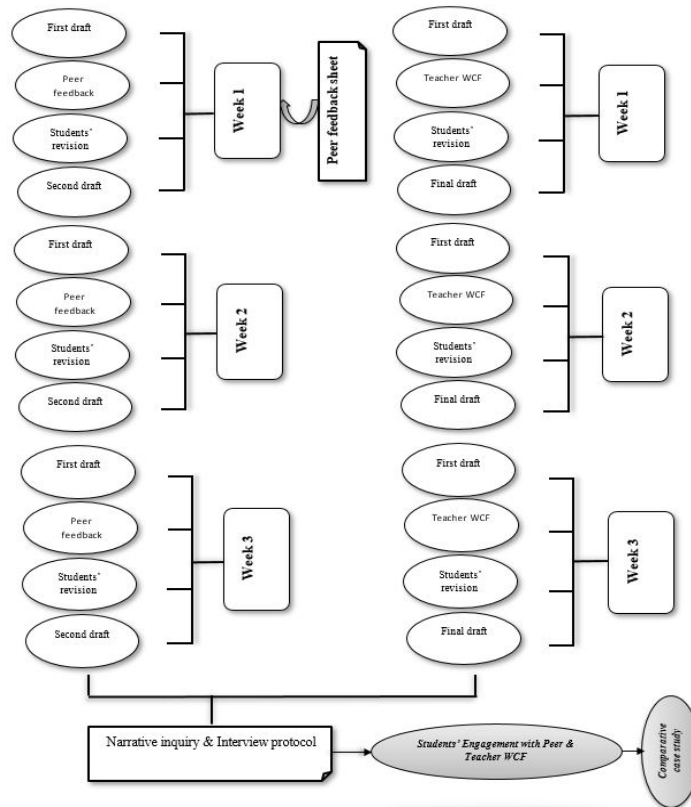


Figure 1: The schematic representation of the research process

Data Analysis

As the purpose was to compare students' engagement in feedback through the peer and the instructor modes, the appropriate way to drive a comparative theory based on data was the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). We further applied the constant comparative strategy, which embraces continuous interplay among the analysts, the information, the categories, and the created theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, the interviewers' audio records were carefully transcribed, and both narratives and interview transcriptions were checked line by line/segment by segment to extract meanings. Next, during the axial coding, the researchers expanded the meanings or concepts into categories. The researchers used selective coding to write the story and put finishing touches on grounded theory. The grounded scholar ends data analysis when theoretical saturation happens, that is, when there is no newly emerged concept or information from the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

Trustworthiness of data is also a significant phase in qualitative research to build the findings' validity or credibility. Several validation methods were used by the researchers to warrant the soundness and quality of results. The quality strategies including *verbatim*, *triangulation* (i.e., the multiple data sources such as interview protocols and narratives), *peer review* (i.e., cross-checking the themes, subthemes, and categories extracted from data with an external rate), *multiple methods* (i.e., using a narrative inquiry sheet along with an interview protocol), and *member checking* (i.e., discussing the findings obtained from the

data with the participants) were followed (see Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller; Johnson & Christenson, 2019).

Results

In the following steps, we present the qualitative analysis in this order:

1. Qualitative data analysis drawn from Teacher WCF
2. Qualitative data analysis drawn from Peer Feedback
3. The comparison between peer and teacher Written Corrective Feedback

Teacher WCF

Students' engagement with WCF was operationalized via three dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. Initially, the analysis explored how EFL graduate students engaged with the teacher's written corrective feedback cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. However, the intensity of each dimension of engagement was disproportionately different. This finding reveals that almost all of the respondents were simultaneously engaged with WCF in their written academic course, specifying the fact that feedback is acted upon by the students. Furthermore, this shows a feedback loop in which instructors provide feedback when students make mistakes, and learners actively respond to erroneous phrases. This concurrent engagement with feedback is represented in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 1

I liked teacher feedback and it was interesting for me (affective). That's very useful if the teacher who is aware of all of the structures and argumentative malpractice notice their students of those mistakes occurred in their academic writings (cognitive). So, students can use that feedback in their future assignments (behavioral). (Student A)

In addition to emphasizing the simultaneous engagement with WCF, one of the students (see EXCERPT 2) noted a specific point regarding the feedback loop wherein teachers' responsibility in providing feedback was notably missing.

Excerpt 2

My instructor, by providing feedback on grammatical and argumentative elements, showed that he cared about us because I rarely received feedback from my previous instructors in writing courses. This brings about a sense of happiness (affective) every time I received feedback. Honestly, the feedback was very valuable to me (affective). This shows that receiving feedback is very useful and helps me a lot in creating sound argumentation (cognitive). Although a sense of anxiety arose when we normally receive feedback, it was [sic] not affected me nor bring a negative feeling and I did like it (affective). My instructor's comments helped me to understand (cognitive) my mistakes and signaled which parts need training. Likewise, we took time to learn about how we can write an academic paper, and in this way to betterment (cognitive) feedback received motivated me (affective) to make planned efforts to learn the weak points (cognitive). (Student B)

Besides the concurrent engagement with WCF, the findings revealed that cognitive engagement was the most frequent engagement types in the corpus. All the students (n=26, 100%) were cognitively engaged with WCF. The second most pervasive was affective engagement (n=19, 73%). On the other hand, the least common engagement type was related to behavioral engagement (n=15, 57%). All the students engaged in feedback in this order: cognitive>affective>behavior. To gain a better understanding of each dimension, the researchers discussed each aspect in the following paragraphs.

Cognitive engagement

According to interviews and narratives, the qualitative findings revealed that all the students were cognitively oriented toward receiving feedback, noting the usefulness and helpfulness of feedback in the argumentative writing course in an academic setting. The researcher extracted two main subcategories based on the data: 1. *Written corrective feedback leads to betterment*; 2. *WCF is helpful*. These two subthemes were represented in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 3

Exactly receiving teacher feedback helped me to understand where my weak are and strong points in taking positions and it was useful to improve my argumentative writing skill. (Student C)

Excerpt 4

With teacher feedback, I understood where were my mistakes and it was helpful. If someone does just one writing task and receives feedback and learns something is better than doing several tasks without receiving feedback. Because it cannot be effective when you don't know where are your errors. (Student D)

Over half of the respondents (n=17, 65%) asserted that feedback is effective in both linguistic and argumentative elements because the source of feedback provider, the instructor, is reliable and has been considered as a trustful resource for students. This means that when learners receive feedback from a reliable and trusted individual, they perceive that this kind of feedback is useful. This assertion has been identified in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 5

I really liked feedback because I know that when an expert one (teacher) gives his point of view it can be really helpful and it improves my argumentative writing. So, I found it effective and useful. It helps me in enhancing argumentative skills. (Student E)

Excerpt 6

I'm one hundred percent sure that every comment from the instructor is correct. Thus, it is acceptable as when you know that someone, who is absolutely proficient, is giving you some comments on your work is very effective. (Student F)

In sum, the findings revealed that the Iranian graduate students were cognitively engaged with WCF. One of the reasons, according to data, might be related to the source of feedback, which is instructors who can play a critical role in enhancing writing performance. When writers are cognitively engaged with WCF, it is natural to have an affective orientation towards WCF (see Zhang & Hyland, 2018). The researchers found that the second most frequent engagement type was related to an affective orientation explained in the following paragraphs.

Affective engagement

Immediately after cognitive engagement, the researchers found that MA students were affectively engaged with WCF as the second most frequent engagement type. The general findings produced two subcategories: (a) teacher WCF brings about positive emotions; (b) teacher WCF brings about negative emotions. Nonetheless, most of the students were positively engaged with WCF. For example, the positive feelings of the respondents are shown in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 7

When I received feedback, it was very interesting and appealing for me because the instructor mentioned some parts in my argumentative writing that I haven't noticed them before. For example, I have been challenging with rebuttal components in argumentative tasks. The feedback I received with detailed examples helped me a lot. So, I am so eager to receive feedback and figure out the inadequacies in my writing. (Student G)

Excerpt 8

I felt good and grateful when I received feedback on my writing as it could help me to improve my argumentative writing and specifically my academic writing. I want to write good articles so I need it. In this way, receiving feedback is appealing and I like it. (Student H)

Some other interviewees (n=6) were surprised when receiving feedback from the instructor because, as they note, they had received feedback for the first time. For example, the following instances make the point clear.

Excerpt 9

When I received teacher feedback, I was very happy because I didn't think that teacher took time for assessing my paper accurately and it was the first time that I have received very complete and accurate feedback which makes me so happy. (Student I)

Excerpt 10

My feeling was like someone who hasn't received feedback before and now the teacher cared about me and took time to provide feedback on my argumentative writing task and it was very valuable for me. I was happy because I believe that if I do a writing task without checking or feedback; it is a kind of wasting time. (Student J)

On the other hand, a few respondents had negative feelings, not because of their performance, but due to instructor's impression of their characteristics. The researchers found that these participants have a negative

feeling about the teacher's WCF because they believed that receiving feedback was their new experience that might bring about stress, anxiety, and a sense of embarrassment. Furthermore, as the instructor is an expert in academic writing, and they considered themselves as novice writers, this might lead to a negative attitude and impression of the learner's characters that had some errors or mistakes in their writing. This face-threatening impression has been identified in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 11

The thing that I didn't like was that it's hard to write an argumentative task to somebody like my instructor who is an expert in argumentation in the university. So, I didn't like that because the instructor's judgment made me feel embarrassed. (Student K)

Excerpt 12

When I was receiving teacher feedback, I felt stressed. Because I thought that what would be my instructor's impression toward me is with this fragile writing. If the instructor writes comments about my errors, I absolutely feel stressed and so worried about my character. (Student L)

Excerpt 13

Receiving teacher feedback was stressful because an expert one has checked my paper and it caused embarrassment. I sometimes feel very nervous when I'm waiting for the feedback and I always have problems after receiving the feedback when I see my major mistakes and I don't know why I think some instructor's comments aren't nice, I feel really embarrassed. (Student M)

Behavioral engagement

The behavioral engagement regards how and whether students revise their argumentative tasks in reaction to feedback and observable techniques to enhance the text (Han and Hyland 2015; Zheng and Yu 2018). Behavioral engagement with teacher WCF refers to what students do with the WCF received from the teacher (Zheng & Yu, 2018). As noted earlier, this is the least frequent engagement with WCF based on the data. Most of the writers were not engaged behaviorally in WCF, although a few participants were engaged behaviorally and acted upon the feedback they received (see the following excerpts):

Excerpt 14

I tried to look carefully at my argumentative work and make them correct both substantively and linguistically. I revised all of the argumentative writings that I received feedback. (Student N)

Excerpt 15

I've got a document file on my laptop which is filled by all my mistakes whenever I find one of my mistakes I directly without any hesitation I write it into that word file. (Student O)

Engagement with peer feedback

Like learners' engagement with written corrective feedback given by teachers, we found that MA students engaged with written corrective feedback provided by peers or their classmates cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. This simultaneous engagement with WCF indicates that all the students dynamically received feedback through different strategies. However, the intensity of each dimension of engagement was disproportionately spread.

Excerpt 16

Peer feedback helped me a lot to learn (cognitive) something from my friend and it forced me to take more time to check my essay (behavioral) because I didn't want to feel ashamed (affective) in front of my peer and it helped me to focus on my errors, bring good claims and data, and learn how to write soundly (cognitive). (Student A)

Excerpt 17

I had a positive feeling of peer feedback (affective) because when I was checking my peer's work, I learned a lot from her writing (cognitive). Evaluating and checking peer's writing (behavioral) brought about to learn some weak points on my own writing and use them in my future assignment (cognitive). (Student B)

In addition to the simultaneous engagement with WCF, the findings showed that *behavioral engagement* (n= 26, 100%) was the most frequent engagement types in the corpus. The second most prevalent was *cognitive engagement* (n=21, 80%). On the other hand, the least common engagement type was related to *affective engagement* (n=16, 61%). All the students engaged in WCF in the following order: behavioral>cognitive>affective. To gain a better understanding of each dimension, the researcher discusses each aspect in the following paragraphs.

Behavioral engagement

Learners' behavioral engagement with peers can be displayed as a peer-triggered revisers using some strategies to deal with peer assessment, the written work, and the following assignments (Yu et al., 2018). Findings showed a high level of behavioral engagement with peer-written feedback. Almost all of the students viewed the peer feedback sheet for assessing the peer's written work. The general findings produced two subcategories: 1. Peer feedback brings about checking the essay; 2. Peer feedback highlights strong and weak points. The researchers found a high level of behavioural engagement in the corpus. Some instances are presented below.

Excerpt 18

When I received the feedback, I was looking for the mistakes and argumentative failure then I discussed them with my peer. (Student C)

Excerpt 19

Assessing my peer's writing took about 1 hour, then we discussed both our weak and strong points. (Student D)

Excerpt 20

First, I read my peer's writing and checked the errors and it took 2 hours then we discussed the errors. (Student E)

Some other respondents noted specific behavior when they give feedback to their peers. This specific behavior was present in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 21

Mostly I talked to my peer friendly and used some little parts not just wide apart to destroy her self- esteem in writing to make her notice to what are the problems in the writings. (Student F)

Excerpt 22

First I read the essay, the text carefully and then I tried to make some corrections to the mistakes. Some times I used techniques like recasting the correct form. It means that to rephrase the same sentence with a correct utterance or form. (Student G)

In the above excerpts, feedback providers attempt to tone down their criticisms during the feedback process using mild language and providing a specific type of feedback (i.e., recasting). One of the respondents asserted that not only she attended to her friend's writing, but this respondent considered her writing to see the weak and strong points of her writing performance:

Excerpt 23

Peer feedback caused me to check my writing and my peer writing two or three times. I started my assessment by reading the peer feedback sheet and it took 2 hours to check all of the weak and strong points. It took more time when we worked for argumentative componnets. It can help me to learn more. (Student H)

Cognitive engagement

Learners' cognitive engagement with peer feedback includes their mental efforts or cognitive operations adopted to peer assessment and produce revisions (Yu et al., 2018). Learners' cognitive engagement was demonstrated from monitoring their learning process and betterment. It was the second most frequent engagement type with peer feedback. The general findings produced two subcategories: 1. Peer feedback brings about improvement in writing; 2. Peer feedback is helpful. Consider the following excerpts.

Excerpt 24

Peer feedback has so many positive effects on my writing. When I was assessing my peer's writing, I could see the new and nice ideas and structures that I haven't use them before so it was helpful. (Student I)

Excerpt 25

Peer feedback was understandable to me. There were some structures and some argumentative components that I was not sure about them so peer feedback brought about checking them and then learning happened. Further, peer assessment helped me to understand what are my mistakes in my writing. (Student J)

Interviews and narratives revealed that although peer feedback brings about improvement and learning, some students cannot trust the feedback received from their peers. Learners argued that the peer is a non-expert individual and can not assess an assignmnet. Almost half of the respondents asserted that feedback

is less effective because the source of feedback provider, the peers, might not be reliable and has not been considered as a trusted source for students. This assertion has been identified in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 26

When I was assessing his writing task, I was not sure if it is wrong or not. Similarly, when I received feedback from my peer, I was not sure that my peer assessment is correct or not. (Student K)

Excerpt 27

I doubted that the feedback was correct. It means that I cannot be sure about the mistakes that were written by my peer. The peer feedback was very effective but peer is someone in the same proficiency so we cannot trust it completely. (Student L)

Affective engagement

Affective or emotional engagement is recognized by learners' interest and enthusiasm for peer feedback (Kahu, 2013). Interview and narrative findings suggested that EFL graduate learners engaged affectively with peer feedback, though to a lesser degree than behavioral and cognitive engagement. Some participants reported that the peer feedback activity was enjoyable for them, principally since they received helpful feedback.

Excerpt 28

It was very good that someone else can assess your work. Peer feedback activity was my first experience and it was very interesting for me. (Student M)

Excerpt 29

I felt comfortable with the peer feedback and it was stress-free. And, I was motivated by my peer's feedback. So, I had a satisfactory feeling whenever I received peer feedback. (Student N)

Learners' engagement with peer's and teacher's WCF

The analysis revealed that MA students engaged with peer and teacher written corrective feedback affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally. Although students were engaged with triple dimensions of WCF in peer and teacher WCF, the findings showed that each dimension's strength and toughness vary in peer feedback and teacher WCF (see Figure 2). As for the teacher's feedback, the qualitative analysis revealed that *cognitive engagement* was the most prevalently reported engagement type in the corpus. All the students (n=26, 100%) were cognitively engaged with WCF. The second one was *affective engagement* (n=19, 73%). On the other hand, the least common engagement type was related to *behavioral engagement* (n=15, 57%). All the students engaged in feedback from their teacher with the following order: cognitive>affective>behavior. In contrast, the findings further showed that behavioral engagement (n= 26, 100%) was the most frequent engagement in the corpus regarding peer feedback. The second one was related to *cognitive engagement* (n=21, 80%). Nonetheless, the least common engagement type was related to *affective engagement* (n=16, 61%). All the students engaged in WCF in the following order: behavioral>cognitive>affective.

Students' Engagement	Source of feedback	
	Teacher WCF N, %	Peer-Written Feedback N, %
Affective Engagement	N=19, 73%	N=16, 61%
Cognitive Engagement	N=26, 100%	N=21, 80%
Behavioral Engagement	N=15, 57%	N=26, 100%

Table 1. A Gestalt view on learners' perspective towards peer's and teacher's WCF

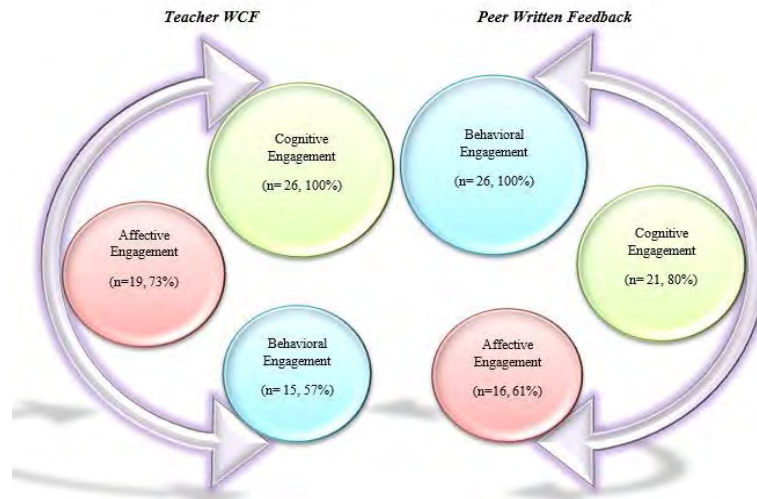


Figure 2. A gestalt view on learners' perspective towards peer's and teacher's WCF

Discussion

Considering the learners' engagement with WCF, the findings revealed that Iranian EFL graduate students were actively engaged in receiving and providing feedback. This finding is in line with the previous studies (Cao et al, 2019; Han & Hyland, 2015; Yu et al, 2018; Zhang, 2020; Zhang & Hyland, 2018), asserting that engagement is not a static process; instead, it is a dynamically-oriented process with cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. However, the above studies were done in different contexts with various sampling procedures. Further, they have not examined EFL graduate learners' engagement in peer and teacher WCF simultaneously. They investigated the learners' engagement either through teacher or peer mode.

Accordingly, it can be inferred that EFL graduate learners in our study were actively engaged in WCF, whether it be a peer or teacher feedback. The reason might be related to the fact that these students were MA postgraduates and needed active feedback to meet the expectation of MA requirements, notably writing proposals and theses. As such, it might not be possible to achieve desired goals without active engagement with WCF. Furthermore, the findings showed that the feedback cycle is present in the EFL writing classes in which instructors provide feedback and learners actively respond to the instructor's comments. Some studies showed that teachers provide feedback in writing classes and students have not been active in responding (Carless & Boud, 2018). In line with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) findings, the instructor in our study provided feedback that causes feed-forward. It means that teachers offered useful information to students that led to an adaptation of learning for using different strategies to work on tasks and deeper understanding. However, in this study, students actively reacted to the feedback provided by their professor. Although the Iranian EFL graduate students were engaged in WCF, their engagement intensity in teacher and peer feedback was not similar. As for the teacher' feedback engagement, the qualitative analysis revealed that *cognitive engagement* was the most frequent engagement type in the corpus.

The findings suggest that all the students cognitively engaged with teacher-written corrective feedback because the feedback source is very significant. This finding is in the line previous studies (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2017; Miao et al., 2006; Saeli & Cheng, 2019; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). These studies assert that feedback is effective because the source of feedback provider, the instructor, is reliable and has been considered as a trustful resource for students. This means that when learners receive feedback from reliable and non-suspect individuals such as teachers, they claim that this kind of feedback is useful and more cognitively oriented. As noted, some of the respondents expressed that they were sure that every instructor's comment was correct. Thus, it is acceptable and effective when proficient providers give comments on learners' written products.

Interestingly, most EFL graduate learners unanimously reported that this writing class was the first to provide feedback both in linguistic and argumentative components. In their previous writing courses, they did not receive feedback. Accordingly, most students claimed that when they received the instructor's feedback, it made them very happy because they did not think that the instructor took time to assess their papers appropriately, and it was the first time that they had received complete feedback, which surprised them.

When students were cognitively engaged with WCF, this might have brought about emotional responses that indicate their interest and eagerness for feedback (i.e., affective engagement). The findings revealed that the affective dimension was the second most frequent engagement type with regards to WCF. The researchers found that most students felt good when they received feedback (see Kim & Kim, 2017; Mahfoodh, 2017; Zheng & Yu 2018). Surprisingly, a few respondents felt negative emotions about feedback. However, this unwelcoming attitude was not because of their performance but due to the impression instructors might have of their characters and personalities (see Truscott, 1996; Yu et al., 2020).

The researchers found that these participants have a negative feeling about the teacher's WCF because they believed that receiving feedback was a new experience that might bring about stress, anxiety, and a sense of embarrassment. Furthermore, they thought their weak performance might tarnish their personality as the instructor is an expert in academic writing and considered themselves novice writers. Therefore, this might lead to a negative attitude and impression of learners' characters because of some errors or mistakes in their writing.

Nonetheless, most students felt positive emotions when receiving feedback. This shows that they might belong to the category of the *feedback approach* NOT *feedback avoidance* (Leighton et al., 2015). Feedback approach is followed when students have positive behavior to the feedback they receive and the mistakes noted by the teacher. On the other hand, feedback avoidance is adopted if students' reactions to the feedback are negative and they ignore the feedback given by the teacher (Leighton et al., 2015). The least engagement type was related to behavioral reaction based on the data. As noted earlier, most of the students were not engaged behaviorally in WCF. Although a few participants were engaged behaviorally and acted upon the feedback they received, the respondents were more cognitively and affectively engaged than with a behavioral reaction. This finding is in line with Zheng and Yu's (2018) results, which assert that behavioral engagement is not as extensive as affective engagement. In sum, the cycle of WCF given by the instructor represents a cognitive-affective-behavioral engagement reaction.

Cognitive Engagement ➡ *Affective Engagement* ➡ *Behavioral Engagement*

As for peer feedback, the qualitative findings showed that *behavioral engagement* (n= 26, 100%) was the most frequent engagement types in the corpus. The second most frequent was *cognitive engagement* (n=21, 80%). On the other hand, the least common engagement type was related to *affective engagement* (n=16, 61%). All the students engaged in WCF in the following order: behavioral>cognitive>affective. The findings revealed that all the students were behaviorally engaged with the feedback given by their classmates. It means that almost all of the students viewed the peer feedback sheet to assess the peer's work and discuss their mistakes. This finding is in line with the previous studies showing a high behavioral engagement (Miao, Badger & Zhen 2006; Yuan & Kim 2017) with peer-written feedback.

As noted in the investigations of Miao et al. (2006) and Zhang and Hyland's (2018), the feedback provider is of prime importance. As the peer feedback is less reliable than the teacher WCF, they might be inclined more towards behavioral engagement. The findings further revealed that the cognitive dimension was the second most frequent engagement type concerning peer feedback. Data analysis showed that most learners read their peer's work several times to be sure about their comments, which is in line with the findings of Yuan and Kim (2018) and Yu et al. (2020). Furthermore, teamwork and competition among students brought about a high level of cognitive engagement. Interviews revealed although peer feedback led to improvement and learning, as noted in the studies of Miao et al. (2006) and Saeli and Cheng (2019) some of the students could not trust the feedback received from their peers. Learners argued that the peer is a non-expert individual and cannot assess their work. Almost half of the respondents asserted that feedback is *less effective* because the source of feedback, the peer, might not be reliable and has not been considered as a trusted source for students.

Interview and narrative inquiry findings suggested that EFL graduate learners engaged affectively with peer feedback, though to a lesser degree than behavioral and cognitive engagement. The reason might be attributed to their classmate's level of proficiency. Their classmates are at their same level of proficiency so they believe that peer feedback might not be reliable enough. Thus, they did not like the peer feedback, yet peer feedback caused learners to make an effort and examine (behavioral) the peer comments to recognize (cognitive) which comments are correct and which ones are incorrect. Furthermore, their face was less threatened by a peer than by a teacher.

As mentioned in Yuan and Kim's (2018) study, some participants reported that the peer feedback activity was enjoyable for them, principally because they received helpful feedback. The EFL graduate students acknowledged the value of evaluating peers' work and receiving peer assessment, which indicates affective engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

In sum, the cycle of WCF given by peers represents a behavioral-cognitive-affective engagement pattern.

Behavioral Engagement ➡ *Cognitive Engagement* ➡ *Affective Engagement*

Conclusion

This case study examined 26 Iranian EFL graduate learners' engagement with peer and teacher WCF in an EFL argumentative writing course over three weeks to show how these students react affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally to WCF provided by peers and teachers on their English writing performance. Comparing feedback given by peers and the instructor, the findings reveal that students actively engaged with peer and teacher written corrective feedback affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally in L2 argumentation. Although students engaged with triple dimensions of WCF in peer and teacher WCF, each dimension's strength and frequency vary in peer feedback and teacher WCF. It is claimed that instructors could use dynamic WCF as a pedagogical procedure to improve writing accuracy (Evans et al., 2010), but this study indicates that students could dynamically engage with feedback from both sources of feedback and use a range of strategies to improve their writing skill.

In this study, students reported a similar level of affective engagement with peer and teacher WCF. However, there are some differences in the cognitive and behavioral dimensions. EFL graduate students have positive feelings towards peer and teacher WCF because it is exciting and inspirational for them to see their classmates and teacher provide feedback. Although both peer and teacher WCF were participants' first experience in their whole educational period, they reacted positively to the feedback. Furthermore, consistent with what Miao et al. (2006), and Zhang and Hyland (2018) argue, the findings revealed that all the students cognitively engaged with teacher WCF because they reported that receiving feedback from the teacher, who is more proficient than they are, is very trustworthy, and can teach them where the errors are in their task and how to improve their writing skill in future assignments. However, students' cognitive engagement with peer feedback is lower than teacher WCF because students announced that although they can learn some structures from their peers, they cannot wholly trust in the peer feedback comments. The findings of students' engagement reveal that behavioral engagement with peer feedback exceeds that of teacher WCF. Similar to the findings of Yuan and Kim (2017) and Miao et al. (2006) with peer-written feedback, students considered the assessment as team-work, which brought about competition and hard work.

Contextual factors such as academic environment, instructors, and learners' motivation to learn how to write at a more advanced level have likely played a key role in students' reactions. As noted in the class data, the instructor provided complete and exact feedback each session. This dynamic responsibility of the instructor might activate students' reactions cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally.

The first implication from findings is that since a product-oriented process is adopted more commonly than a process-oriented process in the Iranian EFL writing courses (see Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017), the instructor's dynamic responsibility had a direct influence on activating students' engagement. Thus, it is recommended that instructors provide appropriate writing tasks and also give timely feedback to their learners to create a feedback cycle. It is further recommended that, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007), the instructor should provide the appropriate type of feedback, which causes feed-forward. Additionally, our findings, lending support to Kim and Kim's (2017) assertions, suggest that the feed-forward mode in feedback provided by the instructor possibly allows participants to improve their subsequent writing tasks.

The findings revealed that although most of the students had a positive feeling when they received feedback, a few respondents had negative emotions not because of their performance but due to the impression instructors might have about their character. Brockner et al. (1987), claim that low self-esteem individuals are much more likely than high self-esteem individuals to become demotivated when they receive negative feedback on their errors. Furthermore, Carless's (2017) study about assessment for learning showed that the students' perception of assessment is very significant. Thus, the second pedagogical implication is that instructors should raise learners' awareness about feedback and explicitly explain what feedback is and why it is provided. The findings showed that affective engagement was the least frequent in peer feedback

because students thought peer feedback is not accurate, so the third implication is that instructors should teach students the effectiveness of peer feedback, teamwork, and collaborative writing. According to Storch (2019), collaborative writing is a writing task in which two or more students cooperate or interact with each other in the writing process to produce an academic document. Through peer feedback, teamwork, and collaborative writing, students can discuss or share their points of view with their classmates to improve their academic writing skills.

Notwithstanding, this study's source of data was the EFL graduate learners of Iran University of Science & Technology (IUST), which cannot represent all EFL learners. Also, it is advisable to examine the nature of written corrective feedback from different perspectives, which needs both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this study, feedback types were not considered. Thus, further studies should follow this line of research by focusing on feedback types in light of students' engagement.

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Appendix

Peer Feedback Sheet

Your purpose in answering these questions is to provide an honest and helpful response to your partner's or group member's draft. You should also suggest ways to make his/her writing better. Before beginning your review, be sure to read the composition carefully. After that respond to the following questions. BE SPECIFIC. BE CONSTRUCTIVE...

Content

1. What do you like the best or the worst about the ideas in this essay? Be specific.

You can choose a tick for the best one and a cross for the worst or give your own comments (vocabulary, cohesive/linked, clear/easy to follow, introduction, strong conclusion, intriguing style, well-supported topic sentences, understandable transitions, etc.)

2. Of the proofs, reasons or arguments given to support the writer's opinion, which one/ones is/are irrelevant or illogical to the topic?

Point it/them out and explain your reasons and, if you can, suggest improvement.

3. What part(s) should be developed more? Mark these with the letter D. Explain why you think this should be developed more and make some suggestions.

4. What part(s) are confusing? Mark these with a letter C in the draft. Explain why you think they are confusing and make some suggestions for improvement.

Organization

5. Does the first paragraph include introduction expressing the writer's position statement of opinion? Yes/No

If yes, underline the sentence(s). If no, should the writer explicitly express his/her topic in the revision? Yes/No

6. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? YES/NO

Point out the paragraphs without topic sentences. Paragraph ____, ____, ____, ____.

Should topic sentences be added to these paragraphs? YES/NO

7. Is there a conclusion in the final conclusion? YES/NO

Is it effective? YES/NO

Grammar, vocabulary & Mechanics

8. Use the following correction codes to point out the errors. Mark the codes in the draft.

V Error in verb tense/verb form (active/ passive voice, present/ past participle)

S Spelling error

ART Article/ other determiner missing or unnecessary or incorrectly used

Prep Preposition incorrectly used

Pron Pronoun

Conj Conjunction incorrectly used

NE. Noun ending (plural or passive) missing or unnecessary

WW Wrong word/ wrong word form

WO Wrong word order

SV Subject and verb do not agree

^ Missing word

SS Sentence structure: incorrect structures, sentence fragments

P Punctuation wrong

CL Capital letter

Unnecessary word

Paragraph indentation

// Run-on