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THE INFLUENCE OF PEER ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' WRITING SCORES IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract
This study investigates the influence of peer assessment on students' writing scores in descriptive texts within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The importance of enhancing descriptive writing skills is underscored by its critical role in effective communication, particularly in language learning environments where detailed observation and expressive clarity are essential. While existing research has demonstrated the benefits of peer assessment for various writing genres, limited attention has been given to its application in descriptive writing and to students' subjective experiences during the feedback process. This research addresses this gap by focusing specifically on how peer assessment shapes students' revision behaviors, perceptions, and writing development in descriptive genres. Employing an exploratory research design, the study involved 24 second-year university students enrolled in an English Education program. Data were collected through pre- and post-writing tasks, structured peer assessment sheets, and guided reflections from participants. The analysis combined textual comparison of writing samples, thematic interpretation of feedback and reflection data, and quantitative examination of score changes, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of both performance outcomes and learners' cognitive and emotional responses. The findings reveal significant improvements in students' descriptive writing scores following peer assessment. Participants reported increased awareness of descriptive features, more strategic revision practices, and positive perceptions of peer feedback's role in their learning process. The study highlights that peer assessment not only enhances writing performance but also fosters critical reflection and learner autonomy. These findings suggest that incorporating structured peer review processes can be an effective pedagogical strategy in EFL writing instruction, especially for genres demanding detailed and expressive language. The implications emphasize the need for educators to adopt multifaceted assessment approaches that integrate peer feedback to promote deeper engagement, independent thinking, and ongoing improvement in descriptive writing skills.

Keywords: English writing, descriptive text, peer assessment

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, peer assessment has emerged as a widely discussed approach in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in the context of writing instruction. As educators move away from traditional teacher-centered practices, there is a growing recognition of the need to engage students more actively in their own learning processes. One such approach is peer assessment, where learners assess each other's work based on predetermined criteria. This collaborative practice not only decentralizes teacher authority but also fosters critical thinking, accountability, and a deeper engagement with learning materials. In the specific area of writing, peer assessment encourages students to analyze the writing of their peers, offer constructive feedback, and in turn, reflect on their own writing practices. Descriptive text writing, which emphasizes the ability to observe, organize, and convey sensory details in a structured format, can particularly benefit from peer engagement, as students become more aware of how effectively they communicate images, experiences, and emotions through language.

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The importance of strengthening writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms cannot be overstated. Writing remains one of the most challenging language skills to acquire, especially for learners who must juggle vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, idea organization, and coherence. Teachers are often burdened by large class sizes and limited time, making it difficult to provide comprehensive feedback to each student. In this context, peer assessment serves as a complementary tool that supports writing development beyond teacher intervention. It promotes greater learner autonomy and cultivates essential skills such as self-regulation, revision awareness, and mutual support. For descriptive writing, in particular, students must master the use of precise language, sensory vocabulary, and effective paragraph structure to portray vivid imagery. Peer assessment provides an authentic audience and an opportunity for learners to examine how their descriptions are perceived and understood by others. As such, peer interaction becomes a valuable aspect of the learning process that contributes to more effective and meaningful writing experiences.

Recent research has shown a growing interest in the role of peer assessment in enhancing students' writing abilities, with several studies highlighting its pedagogical value. Albesher (2024) underscored the significance of peer feedback as both an academic and social activity, revealing its capacity to enhance learning outcomes when guided by clear criteria. Alsehibany (2021) investigated how Chinese EFL students improved their argumentative essays through iterative peer feedback, concluding that repeated engagement in peer assessment led to more organized and coherent writing. Similarly, Kurniawan et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of training students in peer review techniques, noting substantial improvements in content development and sentence structure when learners were actively involved in peer feedback. Roohani and Rad (2022) further demonstrated that peer review could sharpen learners' sensitivity to genre-specific features, particularly in narrative writing. Despite these developments, the majority of studies focus on genres such as argumentative and narrative texts, leaving descriptive writing comparatively underrepresented. Moreover, much of the existing literature relies heavily on statistical analysis to evaluate writing improvement, often overlooking the learners' subjective experiences and the process through which peer feedback influences their writing practices.

While the value of peer assessment has been demonstrated across different writing genres, little is known about how it influences students' work in descriptive text writing. The descriptive genre, which requires attention to imagery, spatial organization, and detail precision, presents a unique set of challenges that differ from argumentative or narrative writing. Few studies have considered how students use peer feedback to revise their descriptive texts or how the assessment process affects their understanding of descriptive features. Furthermore, less attention has been paid to students' voices and reflections during the peer assessment process. These unexplored aspects are essential for capturing a comprehensive picture of how peer assessment functions in real classroom settings, especially in terms of shaping students' thinking, revising behavior, and writing development. A deeper exploration into these dimensions could reveal new insights into how students internalize feedback and apply it to enhance their descriptive writing abilities.

This research takes a different perspective by focusing specifically on how peer assessment shapes the writing of descriptive texts among EFL students. By

shifting attention away from quantitative score comparisons and toward the lived experiences and responses of learners during peer evaluation, this study uncovers subtleties that are often missed in standard test-based studies. The research explores how learners interact with peer feedback, how they interpret comments, and how this process influences the way they revise and construct their texts. Unlike prior research that tends to generalize across writing genres, this study hones in on descriptive writing as a distinctive area of focus. The objective is to understand how peer assessment affects writing outcomes in descriptive texts and to investigate learners' perceptions and reactions throughout the peer review process, offering a comprehensive understanding of the role peer assessment plays in shaping their writing practices.

Through the integration of peer feedback into classroom writing activities, learners are encouraged to move beyond surface-level editing toward a deeper engagement with content, language use, and audience awareness. The interactive nature of peer assessment provides a space for collaborative reflection, helping learners uncover the strengths and weaknesses in their own and others' work. As students receive and give feedback, they begin to recognize patterns, adopt new strategies, and adjust their writing with greater intention. These peer interactions contribute to developing learners' sensitivity to language choices, structural coherence, and the communicative impact of their descriptions. The classroom becomes a more dynamic environment where learning is mediated not solely through teacher input, but through shared learning experiences among peers. These developments hold implications for instructional practices, curriculum design, and assessment strategies that aim to promote student-centered learning and foster independent writing development.

This study contributes to the field of ELT by providing focused evidence on the influence of peer assessment in the context of descriptive writing—a genre that has received limited scholarly attention. It contributes to the understanding of how students engage with and apply peer feedback, especially when dealing with text types that demand detailed observation and expressive clarity. It further contributes to discussions around writing pedagogy by revealing how feedback interactions help learners refine their writing strategies and improve their performance. In doing so, this study offers a meaningful extension to current research on peer assessment and serves as a resource for educators seeking to implement reflective and genre-sensitive assessment practices.

Research Questions:

1. How does peer assessment influence students' writing scores in descriptive text?
2. How do students respond to and reflect on peer feedback during the writing process?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer Assessment in EFL Writing

Peer assessment within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing has emerged as a pivotal pedagogical strategy aimed at enhancing students' writing skills and their overall learning experience. This method fosters collaborative learning, allowing students to engage with each other's work critically

and constructively. Research has substantiated the efficacy of peer assessment as a facilitator for improved self-confidence and writing competency among EFL learners (Rahmawati et al., 2021), as it empowers students to not only reflect on their own writing but also to evaluate the work of others, thereby increasing their awareness of language use and writing mechanics.

Moreover, engaging in peer assessment enables students to cultivate essential communication skills that are critical for academic success. By discussing their written pieces with peers, students become more adept at articulating their thoughts and providing constructive and actionable feedback. Such peer-focused interactions can lead to improved self-efficacy, with students drawing upon collective insights to refine their writing skills (Hendrajaya, 2023). Collaborative environments also promote a sense of community within the classroom, positively influencing students' attitudes towards writing (Yousefifard & Fathi, 2021).

An additional dimension to the effectiveness of peer assessment in EFL writing is the role of positive feedback in motivating learners. A significant aspect of peer assessment is that it encompasses both critique and praise, both of which can enhance students' motivation to write. Constructive peer feedback fosters an environment wherein students feel encouraged to express themselves more freely and effectively (Cabrera-Solano et al., 2021). Additionally, the findings illustrate how peer feedback can significantly enhance the writing skills of students, particularly when combined with other interactive or digital platforms (Fitria, 2022).

Furthermore, the integration of technology in peer assessment practices has redefined traditional methods of EFL instruction. Digital platforms, such as Google Docs, facilitate seamless interactions between peers by allowing real-time collaboration and discussion (Hopper & Bowen, 2023). The use of such platforms not only makes feedback processes more efficient but also creates a more engaging experience for students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the adaptation of online tools for peer assessment became particularly vital, demonstrating that remote learning contexts can sustain the collaborative spirit essential for effective writing (Fitria, 2021).

Moreover, teachers play a crucial role in shaping the peer assessment process to ensure it is effective and beneficial for EFL learners. It is imperative that instructors provide appropriate scaffolding and clear guidelines for peer review sessions. As emphasized in the literature, structured frameworks enable students to grasp the expectations of peer feedback processes and maximize potential benefits (Tribujeña, 2023). Teachers can implement checklists or rubrics to assist students in focusing their evaluations on key aspects of writing such as coherence, grammar, and creativity, thus refining the quality of feedback provided during peer assessments (Asl et al., 2021).

Peer assessment also promotes greater student autonomy and self-regulation in writing. Through engaging in peer review, students become more invested in their learning, taking ownership of both their work and that of their peers (Alwaleedi, 2022). This investment is crucial, as fostering independence in language learning correlates positively with long-term academic success. The encouragement of self-assessment and peer assessment enhances student engagement, leading to better outcomes in writing proficiency and overall language skills (Al-Mwzaiji & Alzubi, 2022).

However, while the benefits of peer assessment are well-documented, challenges remain. Students may experience anxiety or discomfort concerning the critique of peers' work, which can hinder their ability to provide or receive constructive feedback (Patra et al., 2022). To mitigate these challenges, it is essential for educators to create a safe and supportive environment where students feel confident sharing their ideas and suggestions. This may include establishing ground rules regarding respect, confidentiality, and the constructive nature of feedback (Wijaya & Mbato, 2020).

Cultural differences can also impact the dynamics of peer assessment in EFL contexts. It is essential to recognize that students from diverse cultural backgrounds may have varying approaches to giving and receiving feedback. Educators should consider these differences when designing peer assessment activities to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness (Liu et al., 2022). Training students to provide culturally sensitive feedback can improve the peer assessment process and enhance cross-cultural communication among students (Hidayah & Indriani, 2021).

In summary, peer assessment is a powerful tool in the EFL context that serves to enhance students' writing skills while cultivating a supportive and collaborative learning environment. The advantages include developing critical thinking, improving self-efficacy, fostering motivation, and facilitating the use of technology in language learning. As educators refine their approaches to peer assessment, it becomes increasingly clear that integrating structured feedback methods and systematic training will yield the most favorable results for EFL learners across various contexts.

Improving Descriptive Writing through Peer Feedback

Improving descriptive writing through peer feedback represents a multifaceted approach that draws on numerous studies highlighting various pedagogical strategies, their efficacy, and student engagement. This endeavor not only aims to enhance students' writing abilities but also facilitates a more collaborative learning environment where students gain insights from peer evaluations. A deeper dive into the supporting literature reveals several key strategies and findings that underscore the importance of peer feedback in improving descriptive writing.

Research emphasizes the role of peer feedback in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills significantly. Oktavianti and Pratiwi (2024) illustrate that peer review serves as an interactive process where students engage in giving and receiving feedback, which is integral to understanding the nuances of descriptive writing. This interactive feedback allows students to actively critique and evaluate each other's work, thereby deepening their comprehension of writing requirements and enhancing their own writing quality. The findings align with Herlinawati et al. (2022), who note that students adapt their writing based on the feedback received, demonstrating a willingness to revise and improve their work.

Moreover, adopting tailored writing strategies, such as the use of concept maps, has been shown to enhance the writing process and its outcomes. Astiantih and Akfan (2023) highlight that mind mapping aids students in organizing their thoughts and ideas cohesively before drafting descriptive texts, resulting in improved writing performance. The incorporation of such tools facilitates a stronger

comprehension of structure and flow, allowing students to convey descriptive imagery more effectively. This aligns well with the views of Şaşmaz and Çifçi (2023), who advocate for descriptive activities involving various subjects—objects, landscapes, and individuals—to enhance descriptive writing styles.

In addition, the genre-based approach to writing instruction has been highlighted as an effective method for enhancing writing proficiency. Yasin et al. (2023) found that this approach nurtures critical disposition and metacognitive awareness among students, enabling them to understand the intricacies of descriptive writing through targeted instruction. The genre-based methodology encourages students to familiarize themselves with descriptive writing conventions, thereby improving their ability to craft vivid and engaging texts.

Implementing peer feedback in group settings can also stimulate motivation among students. Collaborative projects, such as those conducted by Kurniasih et al. (2023), reveal that performing descriptive writing tasks in peer groups fosters a competitive yet supportive atmosphere, which can lead to higher levels of engagement and performance. This interaction not only aids in the development of the writing process but allows students to gain diverse perspectives on their work, enriching their writing experience.

Furthermore, the act of self-assessment following peer evaluations can deepen learning outcomes. By reflecting on the feedback received, students are more likely to internalize constructive criticism and make meaningful revisions in their work. Liu et al. (2022) suggest that self-regulatory strategies can directly impact students' writing skills in a collaborative setting. The dual focus on peer feedback and self-assessment creates a cycle of continual improvement and self-efficacy as students recognize their progress and areas needing enhancement.

Incorporating diverse media into the feedback process is another strategy that has shown effectiveness. For instance, using tools like digital platforms for collaborative writing exercises can enhance engagement and facilitate an increased understanding of descriptive text formatting. Research conducted by Hamad et al. (2024) underscores the importance of integrating technology in writing instruction, highlighting that students demonstrate better writing outcomes when digital tools are effectively leveraged. By engaging with technology and peer assessments simultaneously, students can foster creativity and improve their writing through immediate feedback and revision opportunities.

Additionally, the integration of genre-specific strategies also plays a critical role. Nasution et al. (2022) affirm the effectiveness of genre-based instruction in honing descriptive writing skills, suggesting that when students are taught to understand and employ the conventions of this genre, their overall writing performance markedly improves. This instructive alignment encourages students to produce clearer and more vivid descriptions, advancing their competency in writing. Intervention programs focusing explicitly on peer assessment, such as the one conducted by Muhammad and Singh (2023), show that structured feedback sessions significantly bolster students' cognitive engagement and motivation. Creating an environment where students feel confident in sharing their work and providing feedback can enhance learning outcomes in descriptive writing considerably.

In conclusion, improving descriptive writing through peer feedback encapsulates multiple dimensions of learning, emphasizing the significance of collaboration, reflective practices, and strategic instruction. The synergy of peer

reviews, self-reflection, organized feedback, technology use, and genre-specific strategies creates a robust framework for enhancing students' descriptive writing abilities. Thus, educators are encouraged to adopt a multifaceted approach in their writing curriculum that incorporates these elements to foster a more engaged and proficient learning environment.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory approach to examine the influence of peer assessment on students' writing scores in descriptive text and to understand how students respond to and reflect on peer feedback during the writing process. The research design was rooted in a natural classroom setting where peer assessment was implemented as part of the writing instruction. The focus was on capturing authentic learning experiences and documenting how students engaged with peer feedback both cognitively and behaviorally. By incorporating multiple sources of data, including students' written products, peer feedback samples, and participant reflections, the study was able to uncover both performance-related changes and process-oriented insights. This approach provided a more nuanced understanding of how peer assessment functions within the context of descriptive text writing in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

Participants

The study involved a total of 24 participants, all of whom were second-year students enrolled in an English Education program at a public university in Indonesia. These students were selected from one intact class that was purposively chosen based on the instructor's active integration of peer assessment in writing instruction. All participants had previously received instruction in basic paragraph writing and had been introduced to the descriptive text genre. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21, and all had similar educational backgrounds and English proficiency levels, as measured by institutional placement tests. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all students provided informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Instruments

Three primary instruments were utilized to gather data: (1) writing tasks, (2) peer assessment sheets, and (3) guided reflection prompts. The writing tasks were designed to elicit descriptive texts from the students at two stages—before and after the peer assessment process. These tasks served as the main source for evaluating changes in writing performance. The peer assessment sheets consisted of structured rubrics focusing on content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, ensuring that students had a clear framework for providing feedback. Finally, the guided reflection prompts invited students to describe their experiences with giving and receiving peer feedback, the types of revisions they made, and their perceptions of the assessment process. These instruments collectively allowed the researcher to trace performance changes and gather insight into the students' internal thought processes during peer review.

Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out over a four-week period during the regular academic semester. In the first week, students were assigned a descriptive writing task without any form of peer review. These initial texts were collected and scored using the same rubric provided in the peer assessment sheets. In the second and third weeks, students participated in structured peer assessment sessions, during which they reviewed each other's texts based on the established rubric. Each student assessed two of their peers' writings and provided both ratings and written comments. After receiving feedback, students revised their drafts accordingly. In the final week, they submitted the revised versions of their descriptive texts. Immediately following the final submission, students completed a guided reflection on their peer assessment experience. Throughout the process, all student texts, feedback forms, and reflections were collected and archived for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through a combination of textual comparison and thematic interpretation. To address the first research question regarding the influence of peer assessment on writing scores, the original and revised versions of students' descriptive texts were compared using the same rubric. Changes in scores across the five categories (content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics) were examined to identify patterns of improvement. These changes were interpreted in relation to the nature and focus of the peer feedback provided. To explore the second research question, students' written reflections were analyzed to uncover common themes related to how they interpreted, responded to, and acted upon the feedback they received. This analysis paid particular attention to students' emotional responses, revision strategies, and their developing understanding of descriptive writing. By triangulating the writing samples, peer feedback, and reflection data, the study generated a holistic account of how peer assessment influenced students both in terms of their written performance and their engagement with the writing process.

FINDINGS

The data from Table 1 offers a clear view of how students' writing scores changed before and after participating in peer assessment. Each student's performance was assessed before the peer assessment activity (pre-score) and after receiving feedback from peers (post-score). The table highlights the difference in scores, indicating the score gains resulting from peer assessment. These improvements in writing scores are substantial, with a majority of the students showing gains in the range of 5 to 6 points. The consistency in score improvements across the student cohort demonstrates that peer assessment has a positive influence on student learning, suggesting its potential effectiveness as a tool for enhancing writing skills. The overall trend shows that the majority of students were able to improve their writing scores following peer feedback, which speaks to the value of peer-driven learning in educational contexts.

Table 1. Writing scores before and after peer assessment

Student ID	Pre-Score	Post-Score	Score Gain
S01	72	78	6
S02	65	70	5
S03	70	75	5
S04	66	71	5
S05	68	73	5
S06	74	79	5
S07	69	74	5
S08	71	76	5
S09	67	72	5
S10	65	70	5
S11	70	75	5
S12	66	71	5
S13	68	74	6
S14	73	78	5
S15	64	69	5
S16	69	74	5
S17	70	75	5
S18	66	71	5
S19	72	77	5
S20	68	73	5
S21	65	70	5
S22	71	76	5
S23	69	74	5
S24	67	72	5

A closer look at the findings reveals that out of 24 students, 20 experienced an increase of 5 points in their post-assessment scores, while two students gained 6 points in their scores, indicating a slightly higher improvement. This pattern suggests that while the impact of peer assessment was consistent for most students, there were slight variations in the extent of the improvement. The score gain of 5 points was the most common result, signifying that peer assessment led to moderate improvements in writing skills for the majority of the students involved. Additionally, two students stood out with a higher score gain of 6 points, suggesting that peer feedback may have had an even more significant effect on these individuals. The relatively small range of improvement across the group suggests that while peer assessment has a broadly positive impact, the degree of improvement might depend on other factors, such as individual student engagement with the feedback process, the quality of feedback received, or the students' prior writing abilities.

When analyzing the post-assessment results more closely, it is evident that the majority of students' post-assessment scores were notably higher than their pre-

assessment scores. The post-scores predominantly fall within the 70 to 80 range, which indicates a significant improvement in writing performance across the board. Notably, the increase in scores reflects the effectiveness of peer assessment as a means of identifying areas for improvement and addressing them through constructive feedback. The overall positive trend across the student body suggests that peer assessment not only offers an opportunity for students to learn from their peers but also promotes the development of critical thinking skills as students reflect on feedback and revise their work. These findings reinforce the idea that peer assessment can serve as a useful strategy to enhance writing abilities, with the potential to provide tailored insights and support for students to refine their skills further.

The data from Table 2 provides insights into the reflection themes that emerged from students' feedback after participating in the peer assessment process. Each student identified specific themes related to their experiences with peer feedback. The themes are categorized into various groups such as "Revision Strategy," "Confidence Building," "Emotional Response," "Understanding Feedback," and "Peer Interaction." These themes reflect the diverse ways students responded to the peer assessment activity and the different aspects of the process that influenced their learning. While some students focused on strategies for revising their writing, others highlighted the impact of peer feedback on their emotional responses and confidence levels. The variety of themes suggests that peer assessment prompted a broad spectrum of reflections, ranging from the technical aspects of writing to the more personal and emotional aspects of learning.

The findings show that "Revision Strategy" emerged as the most frequent theme, with 16 out of 24 students identifying it as an aspect of their peer assessment experience. This suggests that for the majority of students, the peer feedback they received played a crucial role in guiding their revision process and improving the quality of their writing. Additionally, "Confidence Building" appeared in 9 student reflections, indicating that peer assessment not only helped students refine their writing but also contributed to boosting their self-assurance in their writing abilities. This theme highlights the supportive role that peer feedback can play in enhancing students' confidence in their work. On the other hand, "Emotional Response" was noted by 5 students, showing that the process of receiving and reflecting on peer feedback also triggered emotional reactions, possibly related to self-evaluation or how students perceived the feedback given to them.

Further analysis of the data reveals that other themes, such as "Understanding Feedback" and "Peer Interaction," were also present but less frequently. "Understanding Feedback" was mentioned by 6 students, which suggests that, for these individuals, peer assessment helped them grasp the content and structure of their writing more clearly, as they reflected on the feedback provided. This theme is indicative of students' recognition of the importance of interpreting feedback effectively to improve their writing. Similarly, "Peer Interaction" appeared in the reflections of 4 students, which underscores the value of collaborating with peers during the writing process. This interaction likely facilitated deeper engagement with the assignment and promoted a sense of community within the learning environment. The diversity of themes suggests that peer assessment is a multifaceted process that influences students in different ways,

from enhancing technical writing skills to providing emotional and social support. These reflections suggest that peer assessment plays a significant role in fostering a comprehensive learning experience that extends beyond just improving writing scores.

Table 2. Reflection themes from student feedback

Student ID	Reflection Themes
S01	Revision Strategy, Confidence Building
S02	Emotional Response, Understanding Feedback
S03	Revision Strategy
S04	Peer Interaction, Confidence Building
S05	Revision Strategy, Understanding Feedback
S06	Confidence Building
S07	Revision Strategy, Peer Interaction
S08	Emotional Response
S09	Understanding Feedback
S10	Revision Strategy
S11	Confidence Building, Emotional Response
S12	Revision Strategy, Peer Interaction
S13	Revision Strategy, Confidence Building
S14	Understanding Feedback
S15	Emotional Response
S16	Revision Strategy
S17	Confidence Building
S18	Revision Strategy, Understanding Feedback
S19	Emotional Response
S20	Peer Interaction
S21	Revision Strategy, Confidence Building
S22	Understanding Feedback
S23	Peer Interaction, Confidence Building
S24	Revision Strategy, Emotional Response

The word cloud (Figure 1) generated from the students' reflections on the peer assessment process highlights the most frequently mentioned themes in the feedback. Prominent words such as "Revision," "Strategy," "Building," and "Confidence" are larger and more central, suggesting that these were key focus areas for the students. Other important terms like "Emotional," "Response," "Feedback," and "Peer" are also visible but appear in a smaller font, indicating they were mentioned less frequently but still played a role in the students' reflections. The clustering of words related to revision, confidence, and feedback shows that these aspects of peer assessment were significant to students' learning experiences.

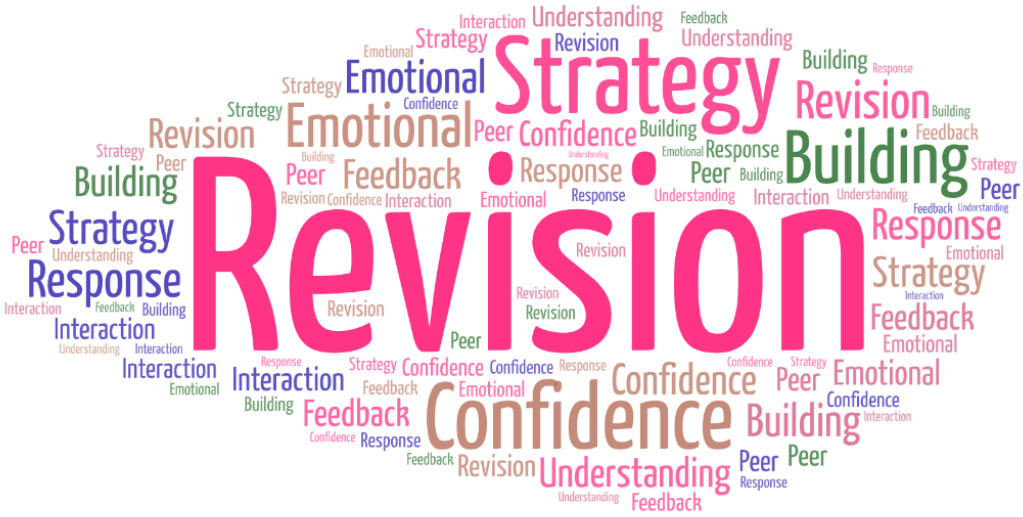


Figure 1. Reflection themes from peer feedback in writing tasks

A detailed look at the word cloud shows that "Revision" is the most frequently occurring term, appearing as the largest word, which reflects the centrality of the revision process in the students' feedback. This emphasizes that students viewed peer assessment as an essential tool for improving their writing, particularly in terms of refining and revising their drafts. The prominence of words like "Strategy" and "Building," associated with revision, further underscores the notion that students were actively engaging with feedback in a strategic way to enhance their writing. The repeated appearance of "Confidence" highlights that peer assessment also played a role in boosting students' self-assurance, suggesting that students felt more confident in their abilities after receiving constructive feedback from their peers.

While the word cloud emphasizes the importance of revision and confidence, it also reveals the presence of other themes such as "Emotional," "Response," and "Feedback." These terms, though less prominent, indicate that peer assessment elicited emotional responses from students, possibly due to the nature of the feedback process. Some students may have felt more confident after receiving feedback, while others may have experienced emotional reactions to the critiques of their work. The term "Peer" reinforces the collaborative nature of the assessment process, suggesting that students valued the interaction with their peers during the feedback stage. These findings suggest that peer assessment is not just about technical revisions but also influences students' emotional engagement and self-esteem, contributing to a holistic learning experience.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate a significant enhancement in students' descriptive writing performance following their engagement in peer assessment activities. These results confirm the growing body of literature asserting the effectiveness of peer assessment in EFL writing classrooms, particularly in developing students' accuracy, organization, and coherence. The score improvements evident across the student participants reveal that peer review is not only a mechanism for error correction but also a formative experience that

encourages deeper reflection on writing conventions. These findings resonate strongly with Rahmawati et al. (2021), who reported that the act of evaluating peers' work supports the internalization of writing criteria and reinforces students' understanding of text structure, lexical choice, and grammatical appropriateness. The students in this study likely benefited from exposure to diverse writing styles and the process of critically engaging with peers' texts, which in turn informed their own revisions. In line with Hendrajaya (2023), who emphasized that peer feedback sharpens students' awareness of rhetorical features and promotes clarity in communication, the current findings suggest that consistent involvement in peer review helps students internalize writing standards. The uniformity in score gains observed among the participants also points to a relatively equitable effect of peer assessment, implying that this pedagogical practice is not limited to benefitting only high-achieving students, but is broadly effective across proficiency levels when implemented with structure and guidance.

Moreover, the consistent improvements seen in students' writing outcomes appear to support claims made by Yousefifard and Fathi (2021) regarding the role of peer assessment in fostering collaborative learning environments that enhance student motivation and academic engagement. These authors noted that peer assessment allows learners to shift from passive recipients of teacher feedback to active participants in the learning process, a phenomenon reflected in this study through the recurring engagement students displayed with peer comments and their thoughtful revisions. The emotional and motivational benefits of peer assessment are particularly salient in the present findings, where several students reflected on feelings of increased confidence and reduced anxiety about writing. These affective dimensions support Cabrera-Solano et al. (2021), who argued that peer interactions, especially when facilitated through constructive and respectful dialogue, help students overcome writing apprehension and build positive attitudes toward learning. The emotional responses expressed by students in this study also suggest that peer feedback was received in a generally supportive tone, enabling learners to process criticism as an opportunity for growth rather than as a personal affront. This dynamic affirms the social-cognitive benefits of peer assessment and emphasizes its dual role in enhancing both cognitive outcomes and emotional resilience.

An equally important dimension revealed through this study is the metacognitive engagement facilitated by peer assessment. The prominence of the "Revision Strategy" theme among students' reflections underscores how peer feedback encourages learners to become strategic and autonomous in their revision processes. Rather than relying solely on teacher correction, students were observed to actively identify weaknesses in their drafts, formulate revision goals, and apply changes grounded in peer suggestions. This aligns with the findings of Oktavianti and Pratiwi (2024), who emphasized that peer assessment fosters self-regulation by pushing students to evaluate and rethink their writing choices. The students in this study appeared to benefit from an iterative writing process in which peer input was not viewed as a final judgment but as a springboard for improvement. This supports Herlinawati et al. (2022), who found that peer review leads to more meaningful and targeted revisions, especially when students are trained to recognize the difference between surface-level feedback and feedback that addresses deeper textual issues. The current findings thus contribute to the argument that peer assessment helps learners develop a more nuanced understanding of the writing process, enabling

them to move beyond mechanical corrections and engage in substantive rethinking of content and structure.

Another salient finding in this study pertains to the significant growth in student confidence as a result of peer assessment participation. Many students expressed that the feedback they received from their peers validated their ideas and writing abilities, which in turn enhanced their self-perception as competent writers. This is consistent with Alwaleedi (2022), who asserted that peer assessment boosts learners' self-efficacy by granting them greater control over the writing process. Likewise, the work of Al-Mwzaiji and Alzubi (2022) highlighted that peer assessment fosters a sense of agency and ownership, as students begin to view themselves as active contributors to their learning rather than passive recipients of teacher instruction. In the present study, student reflections suggest that this shift in learner identity contributed positively to their writing development. Confidence emerged not merely as a byproduct of receiving compliments but as a result of engaging meaningfully with peer feedback, revising their work, and witnessing tangible improvements. This process of feedback, reflection, and revision appears to cultivate both writing competence and emotional empowerment. These findings further illustrate how peer assessment can serve as an affective scaffold for students who may otherwise lack the self-belief needed to take risks and experiment with language.

Additionally, the theme of "Understanding Feedback" emerged as a critical cognitive component in students' reflections. Students who exhibited this theme demonstrated not only an awareness of the feedback they received but also an ability to interpret it critically, assess its relevance, and apply it to their writing. This mirrors the findings of Liu et al. (2022), who argued that the effectiveness of peer feedback is maximized when students are able to engage with it analytically rather than passively. In this study, students did not simply implement suggestions without question; rather, they made thoughtful decisions about what to incorporate based on their understanding of the assignment and writing conventions. This critical engagement indicates a maturation in students' academic literacy, suggesting that peer assessment can play a formative role in developing reflective and autonomous writers. Furthermore, the less frequently cited theme of "Peer Interaction" offers additional insight into the social learning dimensions of peer assessment. Although not all students emphasized this theme, those who did reflected positively on the exchange of ideas and the collaborative aspect of writing. This finding is supported by Kurniasih et al. (2023), who argued that peer collaboration fosters mutual learning and community building. These collaborative experiences may be especially important in EFL contexts, where peer assessment can provide low-stakes opportunities for language practice, idea clarification, and interpersonal growth.

While this study did not explicitly examine the role of technology in peer assessment, it is worth noting the relevance of this dimension in current pedagogical discourse. Hopper and Bowen (2023) and Fitria (2022) have both emphasized the affordances of digital platforms in facilitating timely, organized, and accessible peer feedback. Though traditional paper-based methods may have been used in the present study, the structured and consistent nature of the feedback outcomes suggests that the process itself was well-managed, possibly simulating the benefits often associated with digital environments. This opens up new avenues for future

exploration, particularly regarding how technology might amplify the effectiveness of peer assessment in diverse instructional settings. Digital tools could offer scaffolds, templates, and interactive comment features that enhance student understanding of peer feedback and support real-time collaboration. Moreover, integrating such tools might increase student engagement by aligning with their technological preferences and digital literacies.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive outcomes, it is also important to consider potential limitations and areas for refinement in the peer assessment process. Although the improvements in writing scores were notable, the relatively narrow range of improvement across students may suggest a ceiling effect or a need for differentiated feedback strategies tailored to individual learner needs. This aligns with the work of Tribujeńa (2023) and Asl et al. (2021), who emphasized that peer assessment should be carefully scaffolded and supported by detailed rubrics, teacher modeling, and explicit instruction. While the current study did not provide data on the scaffolding measures used, the overall success of the peer assessment sessions implies the presence of clear guidelines and rubrics. However, future implementations might benefit from integrating multiple levels of feedback complexity to challenge both lower- and higher-proficiency students appropriately. Furthermore, offering peer feedback training sessions could help students provide more balanced, specific, and actionable feedback to their classmates.

Finally, cultural considerations must be taken into account, particularly in EFL contexts like the one examined in this study. As noted by Liu et al. (2022) and Hidayah and Indriani (2021), cultural norms and interpersonal dynamics can influence how students perceive and deliver feedback. In some cultures, direct criticism may be considered impolite, which may lead to overly vague or overly positive feedback that lacks developmental value. In the current study, while emotional responses were generally constructive, it remains possible that cultural factors influenced the manner and tone of feedback exchanged among students. Therefore, instructors should be mindful of these dynamics and invest in creating a classroom environment that promotes respectful dialogue and intercultural competence. By cultivating a feedback culture that values both honesty and empathy, educators can maximize the educational potential of peer assessment while ensuring that all students feel safe and supported.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of peer assessment as a tool for improving students' descriptive writing in an EFL context. Beyond its impact on writing performance, peer assessment also facilitated metacognitive awareness, increased confidence, and encouraged social learning—all of which are critical components of language acquisition and academic development. These outcomes affirm and extend existing literature, while also highlighting new dimensions of learner experience. With proper scaffolding, attention to cultural context, and possible integration of technology, peer assessment can be a transformative pedagogical practice that supports both the academic and personal growth of EFL learners. Future research should continue to explore its long-term effects, comparative impact across genres, and optimal implementation strategies to further enhance its effectiveness and accessibility.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that peer assessment has a significant and positive impact on students' descriptive writing performance and fosters meaningful engagement throughout the writing process. After engaging in peer assessment, students demonstrated notable improvements in their writing, which suggests that the feedback they received from their peers was effectively applied to enhance the quality of their work. This improvement indicates that students were not only able to identify their weaknesses through peer comments but also had the capacity to revise and refine their writing based on that input. Moreover, students' reflections highlight a broad range of responses to the peer assessment process, revealing both cognitive and emotional engagement. Many students emphasized the usefulness of peer feedback in shaping their revision strategies, showing that they actively processed suggestions and implemented them to improve their drafts. Others reported feeling more confident in their writing abilities after receiving peer input, suggesting that the feedback process also served an affective function, boosting self-assurance and motivation. Additionally, some students reflected on their emotional reactions and the interpersonal dynamics involved in giving and receiving feedback, indicating that peer assessment promoted a deeper level of personal and social engagement. Overall, these findings suggest that peer assessment serves as a powerful pedagogical tool—not only for improving writing outcomes but also for developing critical thinking, enhancing self-reflection, and fostering a collaborative learning environment that supports both academic and emotional growth. This study has several limitations that should be considered. The small sample size from a single class limits the generalizability of the findings, as all participants shared similar educational and language backgrounds. The short duration of the study may not capture the long-term effects of peer assessment, and the natural classroom setting introduced uncontrolled variables, such as differences in feedback quality. Additionally, relying solely on written reflections may have limited the depth of students' responses. Future research should involve larger, more diverse samples, extend over longer periods, and include richer qualitative methods such as interviews or observations to deepen the understanding of peer assessment's impact.

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