

ESL Trainees' Perceptions of Peer Feedback: Impact on Materials Design and Professional Development

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Abstract

Peer feedback, a collaborative strategy where learners engage in mutual evaluation and constructive critique, has emerged as a cornerstone of learner-centered pedagogy in language education. By fostering critical thinking, metacognitive awareness, and communicative competence, it shifts the traditional teacher-dominated dynamic to one of shared responsibility and active participation. For ESL trainee teachers, this practice not only refines linguistic accuracy but also cultivates empathy and adaptability—skills vital for navigating diverse classroom contexts. Despite its pedagogical promise, the efficacy of peer feedback, hinges on learners' perceptions of its value, clarity, and applicability. Along these lines, this study examines how English as a Second Language (ESL) trainee teachers perceive peer feedback as a pedagogical strategy in materials design. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 18 postgraduate diploma students through questionnaires and semi-structured group interviews. Results reveal positive attitudes toward peer feedback, with participants reporting significant benefits for materials development, language skills enhancement, and metacognitive awareness. Challenges identified include time constraints, interpersonal dynamics, and feedback literacy limitations. This research contributes to an

understanding of how collaborative assessment practices can be optimized in ESL teacher education programs to foster both technical competence and professional skill development.

Keywords: Peer Feedback, ESL Teacher Education, Materials Design, Learner Perceptions, Collaborative Learning

Introduction

Peer feedback has gained traction in language education as a formative, learner-centered strategy that engages students in evaluative roles, facilitates metacognitive reflection, and enhances collaborative learning. Grounded in socio-constructivist theory and Assessment for Learning paradigms, peer feedback leverages the Zone of Proximal Development to enable reciprocal support among learners. Despite growing adoption, questions remain regarding how ESL trainees perceive peer feedback's pedagogic value, its influence on their materials-design process, and the factors that support or hinder its effectiveness.

This study specifically addresses a gap in the literature by examining peer feedback in the context of materials development for ESL instruction. While numerous studies have investigated peer feedback in language writing classes (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Min, 2005; Berg, 1999; Rollinson, 2005), fewer scholars have explored its application in teacher education programs where trainees evaluate instructional resources designed by peers. By focusing on this context, this research contributes to understanding how collaborative assessment practices can strengthen both pedagogical knowledge and professional skills among future language teachers.

The following sections synthesize key research on peer feedback as a pedagogic strategy in second-language contexts, details of methodology, present findings organized by themes, discuss implications, and suggest directions for future research.

Theoretical Foundations of Peer Feedback

Peer feedback is grounded in socio-constructivist and formative assessment frameworks. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes how learners advance when supported by more knowledgeable others—a role that can be played by peers during collaborative critique. Black and Wiliam's (1998) work on Assessment for Learning situates peer feedback as a means to make learning goals explicit, foster self-regulation, and guide subsequent revisions. Building on this foundation, Boud and Molloy (2013) argue for rethinking models of feedback for learning to meet the challenge of design in educational contexts. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) elaborate a model of effective formative feedback, arguing that dialogic exchanges among students can raise motivation and metacognitive awareness, while Burke and Pieterick (2010) provide practical frameworks for delivering effective written feedback.

When integrated into teaching-learning processes, peer feedback redistributes evaluative authority, challenging traditional teacher-centered paradigms while developing learners' capacity for critical analysis and self-assessment. This theoretical grounding positions peer feedback not merely as an assessment technique but as a transformative pedagogical approach that aligns with contemporary educational values of collaboration, autonomy, and reflective practice.

Peer Feedback in English as a Second Language (ESL) Contexts

Peer feedback, defined as the process through which learners collaboratively evaluate and critique one another's work, has become a cornerstone of communicative and learner-centered pedagogy in language education. Rooted in social constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize knowledge co-construction through interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), the practice gained prominence in the 1980s-1990s alongside the shift from product-oriented to process-oriented language teaching.

In ESL contexts, peer feedback is employed across writing, speaking, and multimodal tasks to foster linguistic accuracy, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Its importance lies not only in its capacity to democratize classroom dynamics but also in its alignment with real-world communication, where negotiation, clarification, and adaptation are essential skills.

In the writing domain, peer feedback often takes the form of structured peer review sessions, where learners analyze drafts for coherence, grammar, and rhetorical effectiveness. Hyland and Hyland (2006) observe that ESL learners frequently benefit from peer review of drafts, noting that peer comments—while sometimes less technically precise than teacher feedback—can prompt deeper reflection on audience awareness and revision strategies. This is attributed to the relatability of peer perspectives, which may lower affective barriers and encourage risk-taking. Guardado and Shi (2007) further explore ESL students' experiences with online peer feedback, revealing both opportunities and challenges in digital environments.

Similarly, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) demonstrated that students who both gave and received peer reviews produced revisions comparable in quality to those guided by teacher feedback, underscoring the reciprocal benefits of the practice: providing feedback hones analytical skills, while receiving it nurtures receptivity to diverse viewpoints. This finding is further supported by Min and Chiu (2021), who examined the relative effects of giving versus receiving comments on students' revision processes.

The speaking domain leverages peer feedback through activities such as peer-led pronunciation drills, collaborative dialogue analysis, and reflective peer evaluations of oral presentations. Here, peer interactions mimic authentic communicative exchanges, allowing learners to practice turn-taking, paraphrasing, and pragmatic adjustments in low-stakes environments.

Cultural and contextual factors significantly shape implementation. Min (2005) highlights the role of cultural norms in East Asian contexts, where hierarchical teacher-student relationships and collectivist values may initially inhibit candid peer critique. Her work shows that structured, protocol-driven peer-review frameworks—such as rubrics emphasizing "growth-focused" language—help mitigate reticence and encourage substantive commentary. Cheng and Warren (2005) complement this understanding by examining peer assessment of language proficiency and the importance of training in evaluation techniques. Tsui and Ng (2000) demonstrate that secondary L2 writers can indeed benefit from peer comments when appropriate scaffolding is provided.

Documented Benefits of Peer Feedback

Research converges on several documented benefits of peer feedback in ESL contexts, spanning cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions.

Cognitive benefits include enhanced metacognitive awareness and analytical skills. Engaging in evaluative tasks requires learners to articulate assessment criteria and critically analyze texts, which reinforces their own writing strategies and metacognitive awareness (Topping, 1998). Falchikov (2001) further demonstrates that those who provide feedback often achieve greater gains in linguistic accuracy and fluency than passive recipients, as the act of critiquing deepens their analytical engagement with language structures.

Affective and social benefits emerge through increased learner autonomy and community building. Studies highlight increased learner autonomy and confidence as students transition from passive recipients to active participants in the assessment process. The collaborative nature of peer review fosters a supportive community of practice, reducing anxiety around error correction. Fluckiger et al. (2010) emphasize how involving students as partners in assessment can enhance learning outcomes and engagement.

Practical benefits include distributed workload and sustainable assessment practices. From a practical standpoint, peer feedback alleviates the instructor's workload in large or writing-intensive courses by distributing responsibility for formative assessment, ensuring timely and iterative feedback cycles. Carless (2006) argues that well-structured peer systems can maintain feedback quality even at scale, making it a sustainable strategy for fostering language development without compromising pedagogical rigor.

Challenges in Implementing Peer Feedback

Despite its benefits, peer feedback presents challenges that require careful scaffolding to ensure quality and efficacy.

Reliability and accuracy concerns arise as learners may lack the expertise to identify higher-order issues such as argument coherence or organization, often focusing instead on surface-level errors like grammar or spelling (Berg, 1999). Training in rubric use and modeling exemplar feedback can help calibrate their evaluative focus, as demonstrated by Cheng and Warren (2005) in their work on peer assessment training.

Interpersonal dynamics further complicate implementation. Students may soften criticism or avoid negative comments to preserve peer relationships, particularly in cultures prioritizing harmony. Clear norms for constructive language and anonymized exchanges can mitigate such affective barriers (Rollinson, 2005).

Feedback literacy—the ability to interpret, prioritize, and act on feedback—poses another hurdle, as learners often struggle to translate peer comments into actionable revisions. Scaffolding through reflection tasks, revision plans, and instructor-led debriefs can enhance their strategic use of feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018). Recent research by Little et al. (2024) provides evidence that students' feedback literacy can indeed be improved through targeted interventions, while Molloy et al. (2020) offer a learning-centered framework for developing feedback literacy.

Addressing these challenges demands intentional design, balancing autonomy with guidance to maximize peer feedback's transformative potential.

Implications for Materials for Skills Development Course

In the *Materials for Skills Development* course, part of the Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English programme, trainees design instructional materials targeting the integrated development of listening, speaking, reading, writing (LSRW), and grammar-vocabulary competencies. Here, peer feedback emerges as a critical tool for refining pedagogical resources.

Research in materials-design settings underscores the value of iterative peer review cycles, where trainees collaboratively evaluate whether materials align with communicative clarity, task authenticity, and linguistic accuracy—core objectives of LSRW skill-building (Tsui & Ng, 2000). For instance, peers might critique a speaking activity's scaffolding for inclusivity or a reading task's alignment with learners' proficiency levels, ensuring materials are both theoretically grounded and practically viable.

Group discussions and negotiated feedback further enrich this dialogic process where collaborative critique surfaces nuanced insights into design principles, such as balancing form-focused grammar exercises with meaning-driven vocabulary tasks. By engaging in peer review, trainees not only hone their skills in material design but also internalize the interconnectedness of language subsystems (e.g., how vocabulary choices impact listening comprehension or writing fluency), fostering a holistic understanding of language pedagogy.

Recent Empirical Studies (2019-2024)

Recent research on peer feedback reveals shifting paradigms and innovative approaches. Four key dimensions emerge from studies published between 2019 and 2024:

Metacognitive strategy training enhances feedback quality and confidence.

Structured workshops that develop evaluative skills have shown significant impact on both

feedback quality and learners' confidence in assessment. These interventions typically focus on developing criteria understanding, analytical language, and constructive framing of suggestions, as demonstrated by Yu (2019) in examining learning from giving peer feedback on postgraduate theses.

Technology-mediated strategies streamline feedback processes and enhance precision. AI-enhanced platforms and mobile scaffolding tools are transforming peer feedback by providing structured frameworks, anonymity options, and automated guidance for constructive commentary. Guo et al. (2024a) demonstrate the effects of AI-supported approaches to peer feedback on university EFL students' feedback quality and writing ability, while Guo et al. (2024b) investigate how AI-supported peer review can enhance feedback literacy through students' revision of feedback on peers' essays. These technologies help standardize feedback quality while maintaining the social benefits of peer interaction. Aghizadeh Kerman et al. (2023) provide a comprehensive synthesis of online peer feedback practices in higher education, while Gao et al. (2024) offer a systematic review of key components in online peer feedback practices.

Collaborative strategy instruction democratizes feedback processes through role rotation and blended approaches. Role rotation within peer groups and blended-learning models that combine face-to-face and digital feedback exchanges have shown promise in distributing feedback responsibilities more equitably. Gustary et al. (2022) explore peer feedback in blended learning contexts, while Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo (2024) examine students' affective engagements in peer feedback across offline and online English learning environments in Thai higher education. These approaches help mitigate power imbalances that can emerge in peer feedback contexts.

Identity development occurs through reflection on feedback practices. Reflective journaling and narrative inquiry reveal how engaging in peer feedback shapes learner agency

and professional identities. Wang and Lee (2021) investigate L2 learners' agentic engagement in assessment as learning-focused writing classrooms, while Yu (2019) documents voices from Master's students in the Macau EFL context. For pre-service teachers, these identity transformations may directly influence their future classroom assessment practices.

Collectively, these studies position peer feedback not merely as an evaluative exercise but as a scaffolded, iterative practice that cultivates cognitive, social, and identity-oriented growth in language learning.

Research Questions

Given the centrality of peer feedback in refining materials for LSRW and grammar-vocabulary development, this study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

How do ESL trainees perceive the impact of peer feedback on their learning and materials-design skills?

What challenges and opportunities do trainees encounter when engaging in peer feedback activities?

Which aspects of peer feedback structure and training do trainees identify as most supportive of effective feedback practices?

Research Methodology

Context and Participants

The study took place in a university in Telangana, South India, where the *Materials for Skills Development* course is offered as part of a Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English programme. This optional course aims to develop participants' professional skills in designing effective instructional materials for ESL contexts.

The sample comprised 18 trainees (10 female, 8 male) with diverse English proficiency levels. According to questionnaire data, 61% had no prior experience with peer feedback practices. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 29 years, with an average of 24.3

years. All participants were pursuing careers in English language teaching at various levels (primary to tertiary education).

Intervention Design

The peer feedback intervention spanned 12 weeks (January-April 2024) and progressed through three distinct phases:

Orientation Phase (Weeks 1-4): Participants were introduced to theoretical frameworks of material development and worked in groups to design reading skill activities. Initially, the instructor provided all feedback, modeling effective evaluation strategies.

Guided Peer Feedback Phase (Weeks 5-8): Participants worked in groups of three to design activities targeting LSRW skills and grammar/vocabulary development. Each group's materials were distributed to other groups for structured feedback based on evaluation criteria established and discussed beforehand.

Independent Peer Feedback Phase (Weeks 9-12): Participants were given complete freedom to provide constructive feedback on peers' work without instructor-provided frameworks, encouraging autonomous application of learned evaluation principles. After each feedback cycle, the instructor facilitated reflective discussions on both the designed materials and the feedback mechanisms employed.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through a mixed-methods approach:

Questionnaire: An 18-item instrument combining Likert-scale items (1-5 rating scale) and open-ended questions assessed participants' perceptions of peer feedback utility, impact on learning, confidence development, and encountered challenges. The questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of the course.

Semi-structured Group Interviews: Five group interviews (3-4 participants each) explored experiential reflections, specific examples of feedback application, and suggestions for

improvement. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed.

Both instruments were validated by two applied linguistics experts for alignment with research objectives and clarity. A pilot test with a few graduate students not participating in the study helped refine question wording and structure. Inter-rater reliability for coding interview themes yielded a Cohen's kappa of 0.82, indicating strong agreement between coders.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Data were anonymized during analysis, and participants were assured that their responses would not affect their course grades.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations). Open-ended questionnaire responses and interview transcripts underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization with data, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Two researchers independently coded the data before comparing and reconciling differences to enhance reliability.

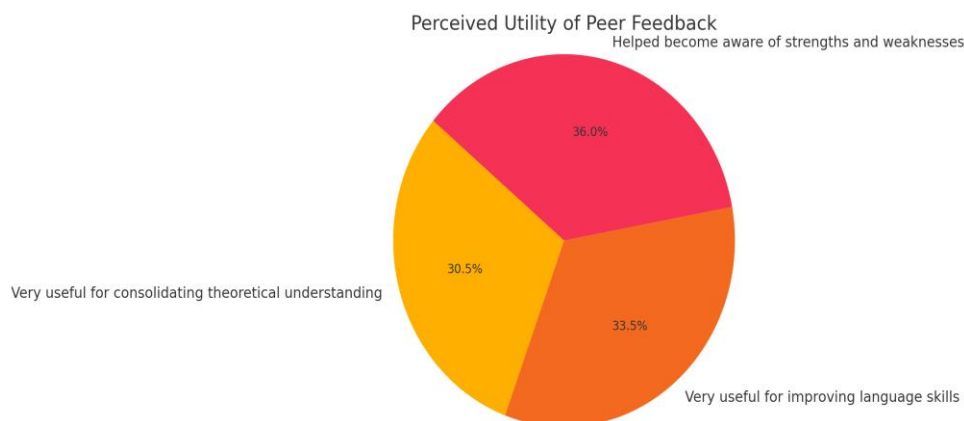
Results

This section presents findings organized by major themes that emerged from both data sources. For each theme, we integrate quantitative questionnaire results with qualitative insights from interviews, providing a comprehensive picture of participants' experiences.

Overall Perception and Value of Peer Feedback

Both data sources revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions regarding the utility of peer feedback. Questionnaire data showed that 61% of students found peer feedback "very

useful" for consolidating theoretical understanding; 67% rated it "very useful" for improving language skills; and 72% reported that peer feedback helped them become aware of their strengths and weaknesses "to a large extent" (Fig. 1).

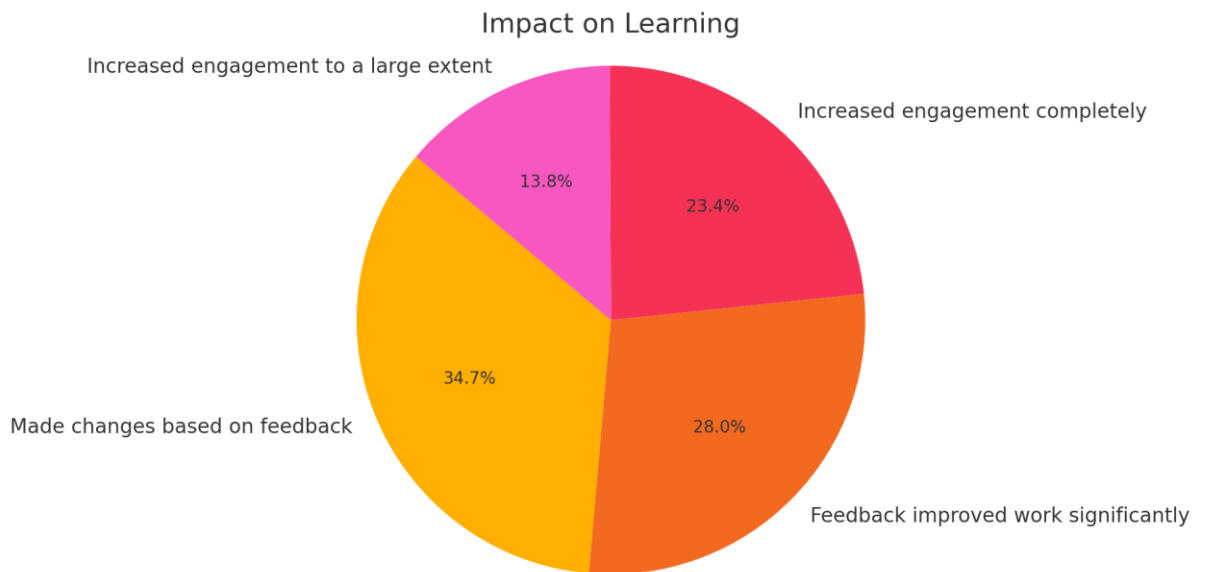


Interview data corroborated these findings. All five groups described the experience using positive descriptors such as "fun," "helpful," and "engaging." Participant 7 explicitly noted it was "a great way of learning that connects theory to practice," while Participant 12 appreciated its "practical approach to learning that textbooks alone can't provide."

The complementary data sources confirm that students highly valued the peer feedback experience despite acknowledging its time-intensive nature. As Participant 3 explained: "Yes, it takes more time than just getting teacher feedback, but the depth of learning makes it worthwhile."

Impact on Learning

Participants reported significant positive impacts on their learning across both data collection methods. Questionnaire responses revealed that 83% of students made changes based on peer feedback; 67% reported that feedback "improved their work significantly"; and 56% reported increased engagement in learning "completely" (with another 33% "to a large extent"). Grammar and vocabulary emerged as the areas most positively impacted by peer feedback, with 56% and 50% rating it "very helpful" for these areas respectively (Fig. 2).



Interview findings provided specific examples of learning impact. Participant 15 reported: "I learned not to write lengthy instructions after three different peers commented on this issue." Another valuable insight came from Participant 9: "Our group discovered our materials weren't multidimensional in nature—we focused too much on reading and not enough on integration with other skills."

Perhaps most significantly, participants noted that feedback criteria became "internalized" through repeated use. As Participant 4 explained: "By the end, I was mentally running through the criteria checklist when designing materials, not just when giving feedback."

Both data sources indicate that peer feedback facilitated not only specific improvements in materials design but also broader metacognitive development and engagement with the learning process.

Developmental Journey: From Initial Challenges to Growing Confidence

A significant finding across both data sources was the developmental trajectory from initial discomfort to growing confidence in providing and receiving feedback.

Show Image

Questionnaire data revealed that 61% of students expressed initial uncertainty about the correctness of their feedback, and 56% worried about hurting peers' feelings. However, participants described a journey from being "hesitant to provide feedback" to becoming "comfortable with the basics" as the course progressed (Fig. 3).



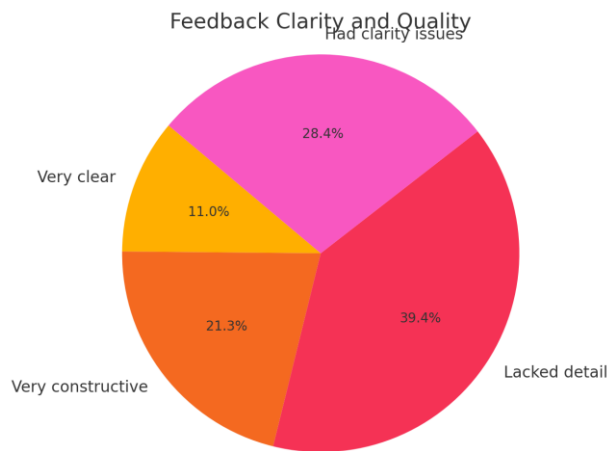
Interview responses elaborated on this developmental arc. Participant 11 reflected: "In the beginning, I was so afraid of saying anything negative. By the end, I could point out issues while still being supportive." Group dynamics played an important role in building confidence, with Participant 2 noting that working as a group created "a comfortable space" for voicing opinions. As Participant 8 observed: "Our confidence increased with each round as we developed a better understanding of what makes effective materials."

This progression suggests that peer feedback skills develop gradually through practice and supportive structures—an important consideration for implementation in teacher education programs.

Feedback Quality and Structure: Preferences and Effectiveness

The structure and quality of feedback emerged as critical factors in both data sets. Questionnaire analysis showed that participants had clear preferences regarding feedback format: 39% preferred point-form observations against criteria, while another 39% favored summary observations against criteria. Only 17% found received feedback "very clear," and

33% found it "very constructive." Regarding problems with received feedback, 61% reported lack of detail and 44% noted clarity issues (Fig. 4).



Interview data offered insights on structure. All five groups emphasized the importance of the provided feedback criteria. Participant 13 described evolution "from using criteria as a simple checklist to a tool for reasoned justification," while Participant 6 noted that "task-evaluation criteria served as a reference point for both designing tasks and providing feedback." Several participants mentioned that repeatedly using criteria led to internalization of evaluation standards.

Both sources underscore the importance of clear frameworks and guidance for effective peer evaluation, while revealing room for improvement in feedback quality.

Benefits of Giving and Receiving Feedback: Dual Learning Opportunities

A compelling finding across both data sets was the dual benefit derived from both giving and receiving feedback. Questionnaire responses highlighted three key benefits:

Value of diverse perspectives: "When you design activities, you don't find anything wrong, but when some other learner reads it, they can easily identify the weaknesses" (Participant 10)

Metacognitive benefits: "When giving feedback I was able to reflect on my own work as well" (Participant 5)

Development of transferable skills: "The analytical process we used for peer feedback is something I'll carry into my teaching practice" (Participant 14)

Interview data provided further evidence. All groups reported that giving feedback positively impacted their own work. Group 3 noted that it helped in "strengthening our concepts and analytical skills," while Group 1 mentioned that "evaluating others' work helped identify common mistakes in our own materials." Group 4 explained how feedback criteria became "analytical lenses" they could apply to their own work even before receiving peer comments.

These findings confirm that peer feedback creates a reciprocal learning environment, with benefits accruing to both feedback providers and recipients.

Challenges and Barriers: Common Obstacles

Several consistent challenges emerged across both data collection methods. Questionnaire data revealed three primary barriers:

Time constraints: 78% of participants identified this as their biggest challenge

Social dynamics: 56% worried about hurting peers' feelings

Feedback literacy: 44% reported difficulty interpreting vague feedback received from peers

Interview data echoed these concerns, with all five groups mentioning the time-consuming nature of the process. As Participant 1 noted: "We needed more time to really engage deeply with the materials before giving thoughtful feedback." Group 2 discussed interpersonal challenges: "Sometimes we softened our criticism too much because we were friends with the other group."

The consistency between data sources strengthens the identification of these challenges as important considerations for peer feedback implementation.

Value of Group-Based Feedback: Social Learning Benefits

An important finding primarily from the interview data but supported by questionnaire responses was the value of group-based (rather than individual) feedback approaches.

Interview responses showed that group-based feedback was valued for:

Creating a "comfortable space" for voicing opinions (mentioned by 4 of 5 groups)

Helping reach consensus about feedback through discussion (all 5 groups)

Increasing perceived reliability of feedback when it came from multiple perspectives (3 of 5 groups)

Enhancing confidence through group decision-making (all 5 groups)

As Participant 16 explained: "When I wasn't sure about my assessment, discussing it with my group either validated my thinking or helped me see another perspective."

Questionnaire data provided similar contexts. One student noted a transformation "from an introvert, self-centered, self-sufficient learner" to "an extrovert, collaborative group learner."

Enhanced engagement and independence were reported by a large majority of participants.

This indicates that group-based peer feedback may offer significant social learning benefits beyond individual feedback exchanges.

Discussion

This study's findings reveal that ESL trainees perceive peer feedback as a valuable teaching-learning strategy with significant positive impacts on their materials design skills, language awareness, and professional development. By triangulating questionnaire data with interview insights, we can identify patterns that both confirm previous research and offer new perspectives on peer feedback in teacher education contexts.

Perception and Value of Peer Feedback

The overwhelmingly positive perception of peer feedback among participants aligns with previous research highlighting its role in enhancing learner engagement and fostering

collaborative learning environments. For instance, studies by Topping (1998) similarly indicate that peer feedback not only improves learners' critical thinking skills but also encourages a deeper understanding of material through active engagement. Our finding that 72% of participants reported increased awareness of their strengths and weaknesses extends these earlier studies by specifically connecting peer feedback to metacognitive development in the ESL teacher education context.

What distinguishes our findings from previous research is the specific application to materials design. While earlier studies focused primarily on writing improvement (Min, 2005; Berg, 1999) or general language development (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), our research demonstrates peer feedback's effectiveness in helping trainees develop instructional materials—a complex task requiring both pedagogical and linguistic expertise. This suggests that peer feedback may be particularly valuable in professional preparation contexts where applied skills are central to learning outcomes.

Developmental Journey in Feedback Competence

The transition from initial apprehension to increased confidence observed in this study supports findings from Casinto (2023), who demonstrated that scaffolded peer feedback can enhance second language writing proficiency and promote inclusive ESL teaching practices. Our study extends this understanding by documenting the specific stages of this developmental journey in the context of ESL teacher preparation. The progressive increase in confidence across the three phases of our intervention (orientation, guided, and independent) suggests that peer feedback skills develop incrementally and require sustained practice—a finding with important implications for curriculum design.

This developmental trajectory appears to be mediated by group dynamics, with our participants consistently reporting that collaborative evaluation reduced anxiety and increased confidence. This social dimension of peer feedback deserves greater attention in future

research, as it may help explain why some peer feedback implementations succeed while others fail to achieve their potential.

Feedback Quality and Structure

The emphasis on feedback quality and structure that emerged in this study is consistent with the work of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), who argue that well-defined criteria enhance feedback effectiveness. Our findings refine this understanding by identifying specific structural preferences among ESL trainees: point-form observations against criteria (39%) and summary observations against criteria (39%) were strongly preferred over unstructured comments.

This study also revealed a gap between participants' appreciation for peer feedback and their assessment of its quality, with only 17% finding received feedback "very clear." This apparent contradiction suggests that while trainees value the peer feedback process, the actual feedback received may not always meet their expectations—highlighting the need for more explicit training in feedback provision techniques. This finding is supported by recent work from Little et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of targeted interventions to improve students' feedback literacy, and Molloy et al. (2020), who provide frameworks for developing learning-centered feedback approaches.

Challenges and Implementation Considerations

The challenges identified in this study—time constraints, interpersonal dynamics, and feedback literacy—corroborate findings from researchers who similarly argue for providing learners with adequate training and support to navigate these obstacles effectively. However, this study contributes additional nuance by identifying specific challenges in the ESL teacher education context.

The time-intensive nature of peer feedback emerged as the most significant barrier (78%), suggesting that curriculum designers must carefully consider workload implications

when integrating peer feedback activities. This finding has practical implications for course scheduling and assignment weighting in teacher education programs, as noted by Williams (2024) in evaluating challenges and best practices in delivering effective student feedback.

Interpersonal dynamics presented another significant challenge, with 56% of participants reporting concerns about hurting peers' feelings. This finding was especially salient in the Indian context, where cultural norms may emphasize harmony and face-saving. This underscores the importance of considering cultural context when implementing peer feedback, a factor highlighted by Min (2005) but frequently overlooked in feedback research. The work of Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo (2024) on students' affective engagements across different learning environments provides additional context for understanding these cultural dimensions.

Unexpected Findings and Contradictions

This study yielded several unexpected findings that warrant further investigation. First, while previous research often emphasizes the value of peer feedback for higher-order concerns like coherence and organization (Berg, 1999), participants in this study reported greatest benefit for grammar and vocabulary—typically considered lower-order concerns. This may reflect the specific needs of ESL trainees, who must demonstrate linguistic precision in the materials they design for learners.

Second, participants reported stronger benefits from giving feedback than receiving it—a finding that aligns with Lundstrom and Baker's (2009) counterintuitive discovery that reviewers often gain more than recipients. This is further supported by Min and Chiu (2021), who examined the relative effects of giving versus receiving comments. This suggests that teacher education programs should emphasize the act of providing feedback as much as or more than receiving it.

Third, the strong preference for group-based rather than individual feedback approaches was not anticipated based on previous literature, which has often focused on one-to-one peer review. This finding suggests that social learning dimensions may be particularly important in professional education contexts, as supported by research on collaborative learning approaches (Fluckiger et al., 2010).

Pedagogical Implications

The study's findings hold significant implications for ESL teacher education, particularly in designing peer feedback frameworks that balance autonomy with scaffolding. Based on the findings, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

Progressive Implementation: Peer feedback should be introduced gradually, beginning with structured formats and clear criteria before transitioning to more independent evaluation. This aligns with the developmental trajectory observed in the participants of this study and supports the approach advocated by Quinton and Smallbone (2010) for feeding forward through feedback.

Explicit Training: Dedicated workshops on feedback provision techniques should precede peer review activities, addressing common challenges such as vague commentary and exclusively positive feedback. This recommendation is supported by the work of Burke and Pieterick (2010) on delivering effective written feedback.

Group-Based Approaches: Organizing peer feedback in small groups rather than pairs can leverage social learning benefits and reduce anxiety, particularly in cultural contexts where direct criticism may be uncomfortable. This finding extends the work of Fluckiger et al. (2010) on involving students as partners in assessment.

Balanced Workload Planning: Course schedules should allocate dedicated time for both providing and processing feedback, recognizing the time-intensive nature of quality peer

review. This consideration is supported by findings from Pitt and Quinlan (2022) on the impacts of assessment and feedback policy on students.

Metacognitive Scaffolding: Guided reflection activities should accompany peer feedback to help trainees connect peer commentary to broader learning goals and professional development. This approach aligns with Quinton and Smallbone's (2010) model of using feedback to promote student reflection and learning.

These recommendations extend beyond mere adoption of peer feedback to thoughtful integration that recognizes its developmental nature and cultural dimensions.

Implications for Research and Policy

This study also highlights gaps in current peer feedback scholarship and suggests directions for future research:

Longitudinal Investigation: Future studies should examine how trainees transfer peer feedback strategies from coursework to classroom practice, addressing the research-practice gap in teacher education. This extends the work of Yu (2019) on learning from giving peer feedback in postgraduate contexts.

Cultural Dimensions: More research is needed on how cultural factors influence peer feedback dynamics, particularly in collectivist societies where direct critique may conflict with social norms. The work of Peungcharoenkun and Waluyo (2024) provides a foundation for such investigations in Asian contexts.

Technology Integration: The potential of digital tools to streamline peer feedback while preserving its social benefits deserves further investigation, especially in contexts where face-to-face interaction may be limited. Recent studies by Guo et al. (2024a, 2024b) on AI-supported peer feedback and the synthesis by Aghizadeh Kerman et al. (2023) provide starting points for such research.

Assessment Standards: Education policymakers should consider integrating feedback literacy into teacher competency frameworks, recognizing its central role in professional practice. This recommendation is supported by the work of Carless and Winstone (2023) on teacher feedback literacy and its interplay with student feedback literacy.

These research and policy implications highlight the need for continued investigation of peer feedback as both a pedagogical strategy and a professional skill for language educators.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the relatively small sample size (N=18) limits statistical power and generalizability. The participants were enrolled in an optional course, suggesting possible self-selection bias toward students already predisposed to collaborative learning approaches.

Second, the reliance on self-reported measures creates vulnerability to social desirability bias, particularly given that the researcher was also the course instructor. Although measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and separate research participation from course evaluation, this dual role may have influenced participant responses, as noted in research on student perceptions (Poulos & Mahony, 2008).

Third, the study's single-institution, single-course context may not reflect the experiences of trainees in different educational settings, disciplines, or cultural contexts. The specific focus on materials design likewise limits generalizability to other aspects of language teacher education.

Finally, the study's duration (12 weeks) may not have been sufficient to capture long-term impacts of peer feedback on professional development. A longitudinal design following participants into their teaching careers would provide stronger evidence of transfer to professional practice.

Future research should address these limitations through larger samples, multi-institutional designs, objective measures of feedback quality and impact, and longitudinal follow-up to assess sustained effects.

Conclusion

The consolidated findings from both questionnaire and interview data provide compelling evidence for the value of peer feedback in ESL teacher education, particularly for developing material design and evaluation skills. Despite challenges related to time, workload, and interpersonal dynamics, students overwhelmingly endorsed the practice and reported significant benefits for their learning.

The developmental journey from initial uncertainty to growing confidence emerges as a key theme, suggesting that peer feedback should be conceptualized as a progressive skill requiring sustained practice and scaffolding. The dual benefits derived from both giving and receiving feedback highlight the reciprocal nature of the process, while the value of group-based approaches points to important social learning dimensions often overlooked in feedback research.

These findings suggest that peer feedback, when implemented thoughtfully with clear structures, adequate time, and attention to group dynamics, can foster both technical competence in materials design and broader collaborative learning dispositions essential for future teaching professionals. As one participant aptly summarized: "Peer feedback taught me not just how to design better materials, but how to be a better colleague—something every teacher needs to learn."

By documenting both the benefits and challenges of peer feedback in this specific context, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how collaborative assessment practices can enhance ESL teacher preparation and professional development.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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