EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF PEER FEEDBACK

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Abstract: This study investigated the perceptions of pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers regarding the peer feedback (PF) implementation. During one semester, a cohort of students enrolled in a writing class underwent three stages of a PF procedure designed by the course lecturer: theoretical knowledge, demonstration, and hands-on activity. Also, the procedure consisted of essay writing, subsequent teacher-provided feedback on the compositions, and active participation in reciprocal peer-feedback activities. Of those students, 11 were randomly selected to share their experiences during semi-structured interviews. The participants voiced their perspectives on the benefits and challenges of both receiving and providing PF. The interview data were transcribed and thematically analysed by following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis method. The data analysis suggested that while pre-service teachers encountered various difficulties when engaging in both giving and receiving PF, the overall outcome was largely positive. In terms of the perceived benefits of providing PF, two main themes emerged: preparedness for the teaching profession and the enhancement of research skills. Regarding the perceived benefits of receiving PF, the highlighted themes included gaining new perspectives, encouraging collaborative learning and improving academic writing. As for the challenges of providing PF, students reported psychological barriers such as feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. On the other hand, a significant obstacle encountered while receiving PF was the concern about credibility. It became apparent that students often sought validation from teachers, considering them authorities in the learning process. The findings suggest pedagogical implications for implementing peer feedback and offer insights for future research.

Keywords: Bilateral benefit; bilateral challenge; EFL writing course; peer feedback; providing peer feedback; receiving peer feedback

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1. Introduction

In line with the gradual embracing of a process-oriented approach in second language writing classrooms, peer feedback has begun to attract attention in writing instruction (Wakabayashi, 2013). Peer feedback enables learners to receive and provide feedback on peers' writing (Zhu 2001; Liu & Hansen 2002). It denotes the activity in which two or more students criticise, comment and provide suggestions to each other's written works with regard to lexical density to grammatical and content accuracy, as well as sentence complexity. In receiving feedback, writing knowledge is socially developed. Hence, this process can be explained through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is based on the framework of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) explained the theory as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (p. 86). Hence, the development is formed through social interaction by receiving assistance from more knowledgeable people. From this perspective, not only a teacher but also an experienced peer may contribute to learners' writing skills.

Peer feedback is considered as a type of formative assessment, mainly paying attention to process rather than product. During the process, students are active in managing their own learning (Liu & Carless, 2006). In that way, it contrasts with common feedback types in traditional education. Traditionally, learners receive feedback from their teachers after accomplishing a task or homework. According to that perspective, teachers' knowledge is likely to be more sophisticated, which in turn would enable more reliable feedback from teachers. (Gielen, et al., 2010). By counter arguments, Sandler (1988) states that learners' skills can be trained so they can provide effective feedback as teachers. Hence, learners can gain these skills in the feedback process, and the benefits of peer feedback cannot be ignored. On the other hand, when teachers' heavy workload and crowded classrooms are taken into consideration, they may not find time to give feedback to their learners (Thi & Nikolov, 2022; Tuck, 2012). This is a typical situation that many teachers encounter. Hence, in these circumstances, peer feedback enables teachers to ease their workload.

Among studies focused on peer feedback in L2 writing, research has mostly focused on L2 learners' perspectives about the peer feedback process (Cao et al., 2019; Chen, 2010; Fithriani, 2018, 2019; Lee, 2015; Lin & Yang, 2011; Vasu et al., 2016; Wang, 2014; Zaman et al., 2012). The perspectives of pre-service teachers as feedback-givers remain underexplored, which this study aims to address. Hence, this study has the potential to supply a picture of how future EFL teachers perceive peer feedback activity by focusing on the effects of the process both as a feedback-provider and receiver.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Versus Peer Feedback

The value of peer feedback in L2 writing has long been appreciated (Liu & Carless, 2006; Moore & Teather, 2012). However, the dichotomy of teacher versus peer feedback remains unresolved. Several studies attempted to investigate the effectiveness of teacher versus peer feedback (Ghani & Asgher, 2012; Gielen et al., 2009; Vasu et al., 2016) and to compare the preferences of the feedback receivers (Cui et al., 2021; Hoomandfard & Rahimi, 2020; Yang et al., 2016). Many studies show that when compared to peer feedback, teacher feedback in L2 writing is highly valued by the students (Ruegg, 2015; Yang et al., 2016). To illustrate, in their comparative study, Yang et al. (2016) investigated Chinese tertiary-level students' perceptions towards teacher versus peer feedback. The participants, divided into two

groups, were supposed to write essays on the same topics. One group received feedback from the teachers while the other received feedback from the peers. The findings of this mixed-method study showed that the students benefited from feedback from both sources; however, feedback from teachers was more likely to be accepted and led to improvements. In another study, Ruegg (2015) compared Japanese university students' perceptions of peer versus teacher feedback. Similar to Yang et al. 's (2016) study, Ruegg (2015) also divided the group into two: one receiving feedback from the teacher and the other from the peers. The participants received a 90-minute training session focusing on how to provide feedback to a peer or how to use teacher feedback. The findings of the study suggested that the students 'did pay more attention to teacher feedback than peer feedback' (Ruegg, 2015, p. 139). In light of these studies, it can be concluded that feedback from teachers is more effective on students' perceptions. In other words, the studies show that they consider teachers as authorities not only when teaching in the classroom but also when correcting mistakes.

Despite the vastness of the studies favoring teacher feedback over peer feedback, a great number of studies highlight the importance of peer feedback. One of the arguments is that 'peer feedback has some beneficial 'side-effects' or advantages that teacher feedback lacks, resulting in a positive effect on student learning' (Gielen et al., 2009, p. 144). Motivating students to perform well due to the social pressure (Pope, 2001), being more understandable and relatable as the peers are on the same wavelength (Topping, 2003), and raising awareness towards understanding and interpreting the philosophy of feedback and the assessment process (Bloxham & West, 2004) can be listed as beneficial 'side-effects' of peer feedback. Another advantage of peer feedback is usually timely. Due to busy schedules and heavy workloads, it may take longer for teachers to provide feedback than the peers. However, timeliness is one of the key dimensions of feedback (Duers & Brown, 2009; Paterson et al., 2020; Poulus & Mahony, 2008), and peer feedback is usually 'available in greater volume and with greater immediacy than teacher feedback, which might compensate for any quality disadvantage' (Topping, 2003, p. 56). Hence, it can be concluded that peer feedback offers some advantages that teacher feedback may not.

Although the literature suggests that students choose teacher feedback over peer feedback as a first preference (Yang et al., 2016), studies show that when not prompted to choose, students display positive attitudes towards peer feedback (Kitchakarn, 2013; Kuyyogsuy, 2019). Despite the lack of up-to-date literature comparing students' preferences given that teacher feedback only or peer feedback plus teacher feedback (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Zhang, 1999), recent studies investigating the efficiency of peer feedback suggests that on one hand, as teacher is usually seen as authority (Juwah et al. 2004), teacher feedback is usually regarded more reliable; on the other hand a great amount of literature advocates the benefits of peer feedback mostly because peer feedback shifts the process from a transmission to a dialogical approach (Juwah et al. 2004; Higgins et al. 2001).

2.2 Benefits of Peer Feedback

A growing body of literature advocates the social, cognitive, affective, and pedagogical benefits of peer feedback (Ferris, 2003; Hu, 2005; Rollinson, 2005). Several studies present the social benefits of peer feedback. To illustrate, Ferris (2003, p. 70) suggests that learners 'gain confidence, perspective, and critical thinking skills from being able to read texts by peers writing on similar tasks'. Providing feedback to a peer can be considered one of the very early steps in the profession of teacher as it provides learners with a 'hands-on learning experience' (Kuyyogsuy, 2019, p. 77). Hence, the learners gain not only experience but also confidence. Furthermore, as learners see what and how their peers have written on a similar topic, they have an opportunity to look at the topic from different angles and compare and contrast their writings with their peers. This experience, in turn, not only promotes gaining

perspective but also developing critical thinking skills. Moreover, peer feedback tasks help create an environment for learners to negotiate meaning (Liu & Sadler, 2003), promote collaborative learning (Hu, 2005), enhance intercultural communication skills (Hansen & Liu, 2005), and build a sense of classroom community (Ferris, 2003; Kuyyogsuy, 2019) as the learners need to study together and interact with each other.

Besides social benefits, peer feedback also has some cognitive benefits. Lu and Law (2010, p. 259) explain that '[C]ognitive feedback targets the content of the work and involves summarizing, specifying and explaining aspects of the work under review'. From this aspect, providing feedback with a critical eye may also help learners develop themselves in terms of planning and reviewing a text (Kollar & Fischer, 2010), identifying logical and organisational flaws (Lu & Law, 2012; Kreijns et al., 2003) and other pitfalls that weaken the argument (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Developing their writing ability from several aspects such as content, grammar, and structure, and 'the consciousness of the audience and the ownership of writing' (Zhang, 2022, p. 49) are some other cognitive benefits of peer feedback for the learners.

Of the pros of peer feedback, affective benefits have been highly investigated in previous research on L2 writing. Affective feedback, in turn, 'targets the quality of works and uses affective language to bestow praise (''well written'') and criticism (''badly written'')' (Lu & Law, 2010, p. 259). The importance of emotions in education has long been recognised (Pekrun, 1992; Pekrun et al., 2002). Although the significance of emotions in feedback has not received the attention that it deserves, there are studies suggesting that it helps increase student motivation, encouragement, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Farrah, 2012; Rowe, 2011) and reduce anxiety and insecurity (Värlander, 2008). Several studies suggest that providing peer feedback increases self-awareness (Kuyyogsuy, 2019; Marshall et al., 2021). When students provide feedback for their peers, they tend not to make the same mistakes in their own writing. Hence, they become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their writing practices.

As for pedagogical benefits of peer feedback, promoting learner autonomy, active learning, and self-reflection and helping learners develop problem solving skills can be listed. The main actors in the peer feedback process are the learners themselves. This role enables the learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Hence, peer feedback promotes learner autonomy (Kuyyogsuy, 2019). Similarly, peer feedback endorses active learning as it requires learners to actively engage in the learning process and to be the agents of their own learning (Odom et al., 2009). Moreover, peer feedback helps students develop problem-solving skills. During interactions, it is inevitable to face some conflicts between the students. As the students learn to negotiate meaning, collaborative works enable students to learn how to deal with conflicts (Chen, 2020; Chen & Lee, 2022).

Based on the aim of the research, this study addressed one main research question subdivided into four:

Main RQ: What are the perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers regarding peer feedback in writing?

Sub-RQ1: What are the perceived benefits of providing peer feedback in EFL writing classes in higher education?

Sub-RQ2: What are the perceived benefits of receiving peer feedback in EFL writing classes in higher education?

Sub-RQ3: What are the perceived challenges of providing peer feedback in EFL writing classes in higher education?

Sub-RQ4: What are the perceived challenges of receiving peer feedback in EFL writing classes in higher education?

3 Methodology

3.1 Participants

A cohort of 80 pre-service teachers specialising in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), enrolled in the Writing Skills module during the fall term of the 2024-2025 academic year, constituted the participant pool for this study. The educational context was situated within a public university located in the south-eastern part of Türkiye. This cohort underwent a comprehensive process during one semester. The procedure included essay writing, subsequent teacher feedback on those compositions, as well as active participation in reciprocal peer feedback engagement. Of the cohort of 80 students, 11 individuals were randomly chosen to participate in the semi-structured interview process.

3.2 Procedures

For the first three weeks of the fall semester, the students took theoretical classes regarding writing skills. Throughout those instructional sessions, the focus was mostly on writing a clear thesis statement and related supporting ideas, employing parallel structures and academic words, using grammar and punctuation appropriately. At the end of the third week, they were tasked with composing two paragraphs related to a prescribed topic and genre. The course lecturer provided online feedback individually. For the next two weeks, the students took theoretical classes again. This time, during the classes, the lecturer highlighted some general mistakes that the students made while writing their paragraphs. At the end of the fifth week, the students were asked to write another two paragraphs. Nevertheless, an additional requirement was introduced wherein participants were instructed to send their paragraphs to a peer prior to submitting them to the instructor. The peers were expected to provide feedback and forward the paragraphs to both the author and the instructor. They were specifically directed to focus on the aspects that had been addressed in the theoretical sessions. The instructor reviewed both the paragraphs and the peer feedback, delivering input to students who engaged in both offering and receiving feedback. Following an additional two-week theoretical class, the students were tasked with composing a five-paragraph essay and send it to a peer. The designated peer was then responsible for providing feedback and sharing it with both the author and the instructor. The lecturer furnished feedback from two vantage points: one addressing the feedback offered to peers and another pertaining to feedback on students' paragraphs. The instructor critically examined the peer feedback and subsequently comment on it to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the student's performance regarding peer feedback and the other student's writing. So, the same procedure as the previous task was applied for the rest of the semester (See the figures 1 & 2).
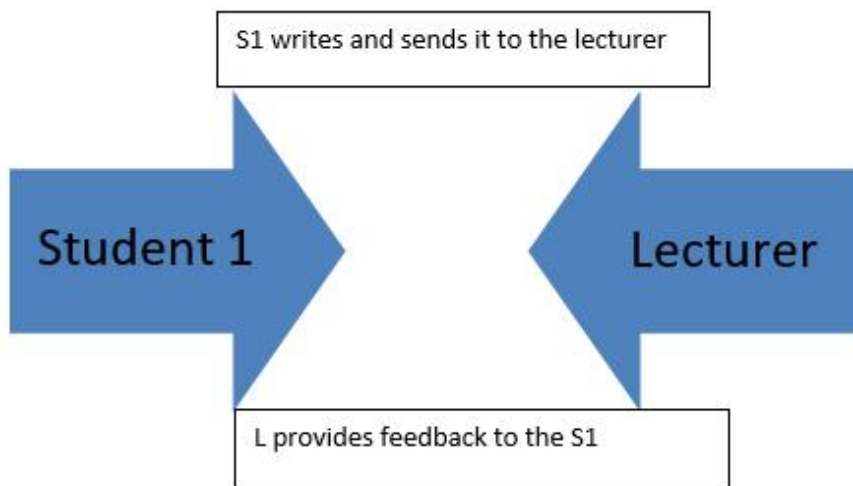
First assignment

Figure 1.

First assignment
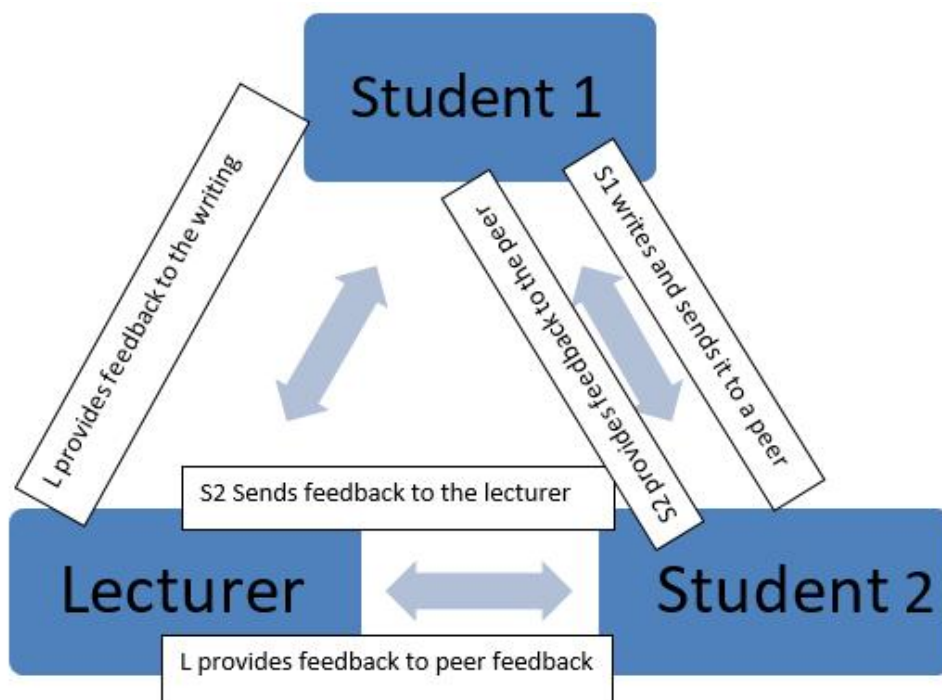
Proceeding assignments

Figure 2.

Proceeding assignments

Upon undergoing the peer feedback procedure, eleven of the students were chosen randomly and invited to comment on their experiences in this process. Ethical considerations were taken into account while conducting and recording the interviews. The participants were assured that the collected data would be treated confidentially and used only for research purposes. While employing probing questions such as 'Why do you think…?' or 'What do you

mean by…?', the researchers tried to maintain an impartial stance by refraining from indicating any inclination towards a particular perspective.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview was applied to explore the Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions regarding peer feedback in writing classes. The interviews were administered to eleven participating students. All the interviews were transcribed. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis method. The member-check strategy was used to increase reliability of the data. Hence, the respondents were asked to verify whether interview analyses and their interpretations were consistent with their responses. All the participants confirmed that there was no conflict between their responses and the researchers' interpretations.

4 Results

Following an extensive analysis process, four main themes were discerned pertaining the participants' perceptions regarding the peer feedback activity: perceived benefits of providing PF, perceived benefits of receiving PF, perceived challenges of providing PF and perceived challenges of receiving PF.

4.1 Perceived Benefits of Providing Feedback

The first question in this study sought to determine pre-service EFL teachers' perceived benefits of providing peer feedback in writing classes. When the codes were analysed, the pedagogical and cognitive domains were touched upon. With respect to the initial research question, it was found that pedagogical domain was mostly stated benefit of providing feedback. The participants assumed that they could transfer the gained skills from peer feedback processes in their future professional practices. The second theme pertains to cognitive domains, which the focus of the participants is on enhancing their research skills. With regard to this domain, the interviewees stated a necessity to search for relevant learning materials to learn accurate knowledge thereby this search encouraged them to identify the deficiencies in their sentence constructions and lexical choices. Figure 1 below illustrates the categories and themes pertaining to the initial research question. As can be seen in the figure, there are two main categories for the benefits of providing feedback: pedagogical and cognitive domains.
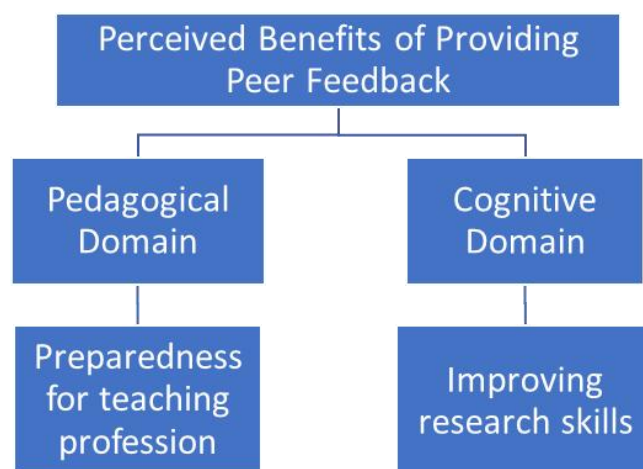
Figure 3.

Perceived benefits of providing peer feedback

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The data analysis suggested that pedagogical domain is the one of the prominent themes of perceived benefits of providing peer feedback. Majority of informants reported that peer feedback practices contribute to their teaching profession. They felt themselves as if they were the teacher while giving feedback to their peers. Hence, it can be inferred that peer feedback activities prepare student teachers for their profession. Participant 4 illustrates that

> It is a nice experience for me. because I am currently studying at the English language teaching department and I want to teach in the future.... and as a teacher, I have to tell my students about their mistakes in the future. Hence, peer feedback is a good experience to find out the mistakes.

In a parallel vein, Participant 9 also suggests that providing peer feedback is beneficial to possess teacher identity before they begin to teach. She expresses her idea by stating that "since we will be teachers in the future, I see my peers as my students. So, I wonder how I can provide better feedback to my students in the future". This excerpt suggests that she tries to improve herself in terms of correcting mistakes. Similarly, another participant also emphasized the importance of peer feedback in terms of considering themselves as a teacher. P6 highlighted that 'I think peer feedback is useful because we are studying at the ELT department. In the future, we also provide feedback to our students, so this practice is like an experience to us." By looking at these transcripts, it can be concluded that involvement in activities as peer feedback seems to be a rehearsal for pre-service teachers' actual profession.

The second main theme emerged as the cognitive domain. Within this domain, the data analysis yielded that participants' perceived insufficiency in academic writing served as a catalyst for their endeavor to encourage their research skills. Accordingly, some participants are aware of their weaknesses, leading to a sense of apprehension about misinstructing their peers while providing feedback. Hence, they tend to search and master their academic writing skills. With this respect, they highlight the problematic sentence structures or words which are not appropriate in academic writings. The following extract has been taken from the P1's narratives to illustrate the hesitation in giving feedback by stating that

> … the drawback is that when I provide feedback to my peer, I wonder if my comment is wrong. Do I provide wrong information? Would I misinform my classmate? But the good thing is that before I give that information, I research it to see if it is true. Just because I do not know if it is true. So I am more confident. So, I am learning more.

Likewise, the preceding extract, P5 shares her sentiments on searching by affirming that 'there were some words repeated throughout the essay, so I searched for its alternatives, and I also used in my writings'. It is conceivable to posit that searching before offering feedback has a positive impact on the feedback providers' writing, as well. P7 illustrated this phenomenon by exemplifying that:

> I encounter a grammatical structure that I do not know. Then, I either translate it or search for what it means from other sources. Later, I keep the correct version in mind so as not to make the same mistakes when I write it myself.

As for providers, peer feedback has significant benefits for improving their writing. As can be understood from the extracts when the participants search for the correction, they also learn the correct way of writing. Hence, it can be suggested that peer feedback promotes learner autonomy. In that way, feedback providers are clued in on how to write and provide feedback academically.

Based on the findings of data analysis, providing feedback has seemingly positive outcomes: pedagogical and cognitive domains. Mostly stated upside is that peer feedback provides pre-service teachers a space to practice regarding how to supply feedback. Engaging

in such activities prepares prospective teachers for their future professions. Secondly, the other finding for the first research question touches upon the enhancement to the participants' research skills. In this aspect, providing feedback offers dual benefits upon the participants in terms of enhancement of their research skills and strengthening their writing proficiency.

4.2 Perceived Benefits of Receiving Peer Feedback

The results showed that the participants' perceived benefits of receiving peer feedback fell into two main themes: social and cognitive domains. In this regard, gaining new perspectives and collaborative learning were two recurrent categories under the main theme of social domain. As for cognitive domain, improving academic writing, specifically in terms of word choice and sentence structures, was prominent in the interview data.
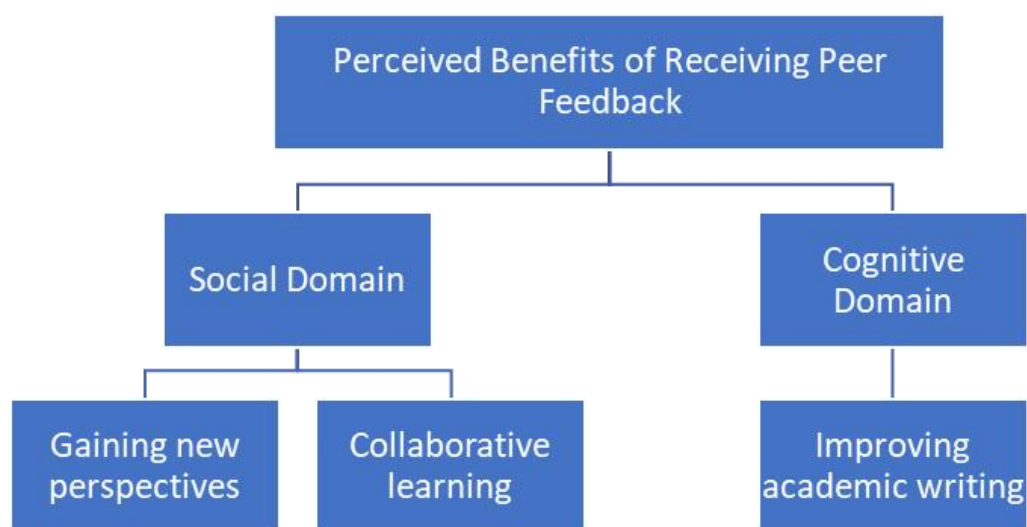
Figure 4.
Perceived benefits of receiving peer feedback

The analysis of the interview data suggested that the participants enjoyed the social aspect of receiving peer feedback. The themes of gaining new perspectives and learning while socialising recurred throughout the dataset. In relation to gaining new perspectives, one of the participants articulated that while analysing the given peer feedback, peers become more aware of each other's perspectives. Hence, she commented that

> My peer… My classmate… I get to learn about their views. For example, rather than a teacher, I get to have a different perspective from someone who is in the same class as me. That is why it (receiving peer feedback) is beneficial (P11).

Aligned with P11, P5 also thought that 'I get to see my own mistakes from their eyes… Therefore, it is useful for me'. The excerpts suggest that it was significant for participants to gain insight to their peers' standpoints. Without further commenting why they valued their peers' perspectives, most of the participants agreed that receiving feedback from their peers expanded their horizons. Similarly, P6 also highlighted that

> You get to have feedback twice. At the end of the day, your work gets to be assessed by two different individuals. They tell you their own opinions. In that way, you get to have feedback from two different brains. Therefore, you get to improve yourself better.

As the excerpt above suggests, the participants assumed that analyse how their peers evaluate their writings would help them enhance in academic writing. Although they did not specify how exposing to peers' opinions would facilitate learning, the data suggested that receiving peer feedback enabled them to enrich their cognitive scope and support them to examine their own writing from a different angle.

Another theme that emerged from the data analysis was receiving peer feedback helped students to socialise with their peers. The participants implied that the collaborative aspect of peer feedback eventually led to not only socialising with their peers but also improving their writing. To exemplify, P11 explained why she perceived receiving peer feedback has some advantages over teacher feedback by stating that 'differently from teacher feedback, we get to communicate with our peers. In line with P11, P2 also explained why she favored receiving peer feedback by stating that:

> When a classmate sends me their feedback… When they explain to me in detail, I both get to see my mistakes and teach them whatever I know. Hence, there is a mutual exchange of information. Of course, this is really good for us.

Similarly, P1 also stated that she benefitted from receiving peer feedback as it helped her improve her academic writing as well as collaborative learning skills. She explained herself by stating that:

> (Thanks to peer feedback) I realised that I was wrong about many things that I thought I knew. Let me explain it in this way… let me exemplify this through a word… for example, claim… It is often used in academic writing. I did not know that. I think it (peer feedback) is useful. As I said, we get to learn together by showing each other's mistakes.

The excerpts above suggest that receiving peer feedback enabled students to learn from each other. The process of recognising mistakes made by others may be comparatively simpler than discerning one's own mistakes, as individuals often exhibit a tendency to be less perceptive of their own pitfalls. Hence, collaborative work helped students recognise their mistakes. Within the framework of this assumption, P1 posited that peer feedback was beneficial in terms of elucidating a peer's weaknesses and encouraging them to rectify their shortcomings. While practicing collaborative learning, the students had an opportunity to have a glimpse at their classmates' inner worlds through their writings. This practice eventually helped them build relationships with their peers as well as enhancing their academic writing.

Besides the social domain, the cognitive domain was the other main theme that emerged from the data set. Under the cognitive aspect of receiving peer feedback, improving academic writing was a recurrent theme amongst the interviewees. When analysed in-depth, it was seen that peer feedback mostly focused on the form of the essay rather than the content. Hence, both feedback and improvements were identified on the form level. To give an example, P3 explained how she benefited from the peer feedback practice specifically from the academic writing aspect:

> On my first feedback, I got a comment that my paragraphs are too long and I was trying to work on it for my second writing … So, I was paying attention to this more… and ... some specific words… I can place with more academic words. I was trying to avoid using it and... I was always trying to see where I have mistakes and make it not perfect but work on it in the next writing.

As can be seen from the excerpt, peer feedback that P3 received mostly focused on the length of the paragraphs and academic word usage. Hence, the excerpt suggests that the participant exerted effort to improve her academic writing in the light of the feedback she received. Similarly, P4 also highlighted that she improved her writing thanks to peer feedback.

I believe I write in an academically correct way but when my classmate sends me her feedback I realise where I get it wrong... Normally, I also know the rule that my classmate highlights but sometimes it slips our mind while writing. For example, especially when we use pronouns. Sometimes, I assume they (the reader) will understand whom I refer to (with the pronoun that is used). But when my classmate indicates it, I realise that it is hard to understand. So, I try to work on it for my next essay.

Being in the same line with P3, P4 also pointed out that she improved her academic writing in the light of the peer feedback that she received. During the writing process, certain information or details may inadvertently escape the writer's attention. The findings suggested that peer feedback yielded students to focus on those details such as use of the pronouns. This view was echoed by another informant who stated that:

I think peer feedback is useful. We get to see strengths and weaknesses (of ourselves). For example, we (I and my classmate) provide a great amount of peer feedback so that it guides us about what to do or how to write better for our next assignment. I take notes... Is it the grammar (that I have a weakness) or have I missed a comma? Do I have a run-on sentence? P11 pays a lot of attention to that. I have a weakness in that. She (the feedback provider) helps me realise those. So, I try to make less of the same mistakes for my next assignments (P10).

The findings suggest that peer feedback had a notable positive impact on the participants from the aspects of social and cognitive domains. The excerpts above showed that students mostly received feedback on the form level such as the sentence structure, paragraph length, grammar and punctuation. The findings also showed that although the students shared a similar knowledge level in terms of academic writing, receiving peer feedback helped them not only to see their essays from a different perspective but also to identify the mistakes that they missed.

4.3 Perceived Challenges of Providing Feedback

The findings of the study highlighted that the affective domain was the most dominant theme as the participants experienced mostly psychological challenges while providing feedback to a peer. Feeling worried, scared, nervous, and insufficient while providing peer feedback were the prevailing expressions that the participants stated.
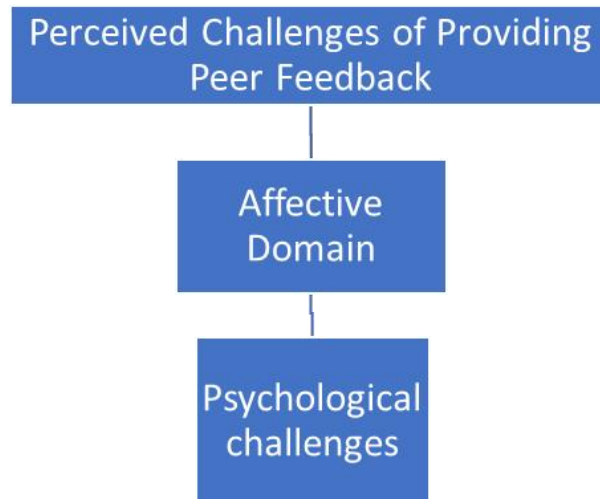
Figure 5.

Perceived challenges of providing peer feedback

Articulating one of the disadvantages of providing peer feedback, P1 highlighted that:

... it is a little bit bad… well, the good side is I am learning with the peer. But, the con is that… while providing peer feedback, I am always worried that I will get something wrong… I will transmit wrong information… (P1)

The majority of participants agreed with the statement that providing feedback to a peer was challenging. This view was echoed by an informant who stated that the process of providing feedback to a peer 'makes me nervous' (P4). Similarly, P3 also thought that providing feedback to a peer is 'beautiful but a kind of scary'. P3 shared the same worries with the P1 and P4. She stated that:

… it is kind of scary for me. Because… when I correct someone's mistake, I am always saying 'what if I am wrong?' 'What if they are right?' … Always scares me, because I do not correct things and I am not quite sure about it … like… maybe I am sure but I have a wrong idea… I got it the wrong way. So, it always scares me… And I am always telling my partner that 'Okay, I am going to send you my feedback. Okay, I have found some mistakes but let's check it again or ask someone who has knowledge or is more professional than me'. (P3)

Concerns regarding the ability and capacity to provide feedback to a peer were rather widespread. The excerpt above suggests that the participant experiences a psychological challenge as she lacks confidence and she feels insufficient. Her suggestion to ask validation might show that she needs and values an expert opinion which is the teacher in most of the cases.

In a similar vein, P5 also stated that 'as I do not regard myself extremely good (in providing feedback), I cannot see every mistake. The lecturer points out the mistakes that we cannot see anyway'. She supposed that as a feedback provider, she had to see each and every mistake and highlight them. However, not being able to see each and every mistake was not a problem as the authority, in this case, the lecturer, provided feedback, too. This might suggest that the participants do not perceive themselves adequate as a feedback provider and seek approval from an authority.

Similarly, another interviewee (P9) commented on her experience and expressed that:

I do not consider myself competent enough (in academic writing), let alone providing feedback. So, for example, the other day, we did it (the assignment) together. I detected one of their mistakes. What I did correctly seemed wrong to them, and vice versa. So, now, we do not know who is right. Correct? According to whom? I, myself, have deficiencies. How can I say that something correct is wrong? That is what I am scared of... I think it (peer feedback) is useful but in my case, I feel insufficient.

As the results and excerpts above suggest that although the participants valued feedback, they do not see themselves professionally ready to provide feedback to a peer. Lack of self-confidence and experience can be seen as the main reasons for the student-teachers to have psychological challenges while providing feedback.

4.4 Perceived Challenges of Receiving Peer Feedback

Apart from the benefits of receiving peer feedback practices in writing class, the participants stated some challenges in receiving feedback. When the last research question was analysed, two main themes emerged: hesitation for credibility and conflict. Below, Figure 4 demonstrates the affective domain which represents the feelings of the participants throughout the peer feedback practices.
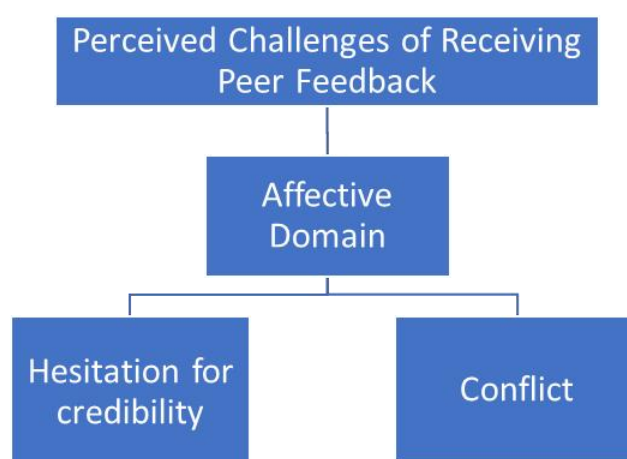
Figure 6.

Perceived challenges of receiving peer feedback

On the one hand, the participants were concerned about the credibility of feedback provided from their peers. The following excerpt exemplifies the challenges for the first theme:

I get a little stressed when my peer identifies my mistake which I cannot consider as a mistake, because I am wrong. I search and check whether I did make a mistake. When my friend says it is wrong, I wonder if it is really wrong (P5).

Interview quotes regarding this category reveal that the learners may doubt the credibility of peer's feedback as their peers are students and in the process of learning just as they are. Therefore, they feel that they are in need of validating the reliability of feedback. It can be seen that the participants questioned the correction during the peer feedback process. This situation can be explained by the understanding that teachers are the source of information and correct answers. Another participant (P8) supports this idea by stating that '[W]e generally discuss our mistakes (with my peer), and we ask each other why we think in that way. For example, we consulted the teacher the other day and asked which one of us was

correct.' The feeling of inadequateness forces them to seek guidance from their instructors to enlighten them about their mistakes because receiving peer feedback may not be convincing from time to time. This might suggest that the participants seek for an authority approval in not only providing but also receiving peer feedback.

On the other hand, the last theme is the conflict that peers experienced in correcting each other's mistakes. P2 expresses that 'when I point out her mistakes, she says no, it is not like this and there can actually be a discussion, but we can settle down later.' Owing to insufficiency of writing proficiency performed by both peers, they feel suspicious about their knowledge, which makes it hard for them to find common ground. Similarly, P3 shared confliction experience by stating that 'she was saying I am wrong and I was saying she was wrong. Also, we are in between. I do not have much knowledge and I am not professional.' In this situation, due to lack of knowledge and experience, it is hard for them to make their peers believe that their writing is deficient in some aspects.

5 Discussion

The current study aimed to determine the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions regarding peer feedback in writing. With this intention, the perceived benefits and challenges of both providing and receiving peer feedback were sought. The study results indicated that, in general, although pre-service EFL teachers faced several challenges during the process of both providing and receiving peer feedback, they mostly benefited from it, specifically in terms of improving their academic writing and research skills. The significance of this study's results is that the peer feedback practice assisted prospective teachers be prepared for the teaching profession. Mostly faced challenges, however, were found to be concern for credibility as it appeared that the students sought teacher approval as they considered the teacher as the authority in the learning process.

The results of this study showed that the prospective EFL teachers enjoyed the peer feedback process in their writing classes. The results consistently indicated that both providing and receiving peer feedback enhanced the pre-service EFL teachers' academic writing. In a similar vein, Cahyono and Rosyida (2016), in their experimental study conducted with 71 Indonesian EFL students, concluded that the participants given peer feedback had better ability in essay writing than the ones who did not engage in self-correction. Similarly, in their analysis, Cho and Schunn (2007) discovered that students benefiting feedback from multiple peers improved their academic writing more than those who benefited feedback from a single expert. The nature of the current study was not experimental. Nevertheless, previous research demonstrates mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of peer feedback in improving academic writing. In contrast to the abovementioned studies, Huisman et al. (2018) concluded that students' perceptions of peer feedback as beneficial may not always align with the enhancement of their writing performance. However, it should be taken into consideration that the participants in their study experienced the peer feedback practice only once. Hence, the researchers also admitted that a single peer feedback experience was not a sufficient indicator to assess the correlation between the students' perceptions and their performance. Similar to Huisman et al.'s study (2018), in a meta-analysis study, Double et al. (2020) discovered that although peer assessment, which is defined as one of the methods of providing feedback effectively, had been found to be beneficial for academic performance, it did not significantly differ from self-assessment when compared to no assessment or teacher assessment. The study at hand was not comparative in nature. Hence, the findings did not indicate any comparison among multiple peers versus single expert feedback or no feedback versus peer feedback. However, the participants, in general, expressed a notable improvement in their academic writing skills. Conflicting findings in earlier studies could be explained by methodological or contextual differences, such as learners' prior feedback literacy or the

frequency of peer review sessions. Notwithstanding these discrepancies, the current results show that frequent peer interaction increased participants' motivation and sense of improvement in their writing. This implies that PF can function as a formative method for fostering critical reflection and autonomy in the academic writing of pre-service EFL teachers when it is integrated within a supportive instructional framework.

Another remarkable finding of the study illustrated that peer feedback activity impacts on the participants' professional identity. As peer feedback, by definition, includes engagement in identifying peers' mistakes and guiding how to write, they resembled this activity to the teaching profession. In such cases, the participants considered their peers as students, and assumed roles typically associated with teachers. Hence, in their initial year, they begin to gain some aspects of teacher identity. The findings of the current study align with the existing literature which draws attention to the proposition that peer feedback plays a contributory role in equipping students with requisite readiness for their future professional endeavors (Al-Barakat & Al-Hasan, 2009; Crichton & Gil, 2015; Kayacan & Razı, 2017; Ion et al., 2019). To exemplify, Al-Barakat and Al-Hasan (2009) examined the use of peer assessment in improving student teachers' preparation. The findings revealed that peer assessment plays a crucial role in developing teacher preparation. During these activities, the participants experienced a perception of pretending teachers' roles the same as the participants of the present study. In a similar perspective, Crichton and Gil (2015) investigated how reflection helps students to improve effective practices in the classroom. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students consider feedback as a way to enrich their efficacy as prospective teachers. Although the participants are students, they begin to build a professional competency bridge through gaining experience. Similarly, Ion et al., (2019) studied the benefits of providing and receiving feedback in the improvement of affective, professional, cognitive and metacognitive competences. As a result of the study, the researchers suggested that engaging pre-service teachers in peer feedback activities can serve as a valuable method to develop their capability to analyze others' work, and this activity contributes to enrichment in professional development competences.

Apart from the benefits of peer feedback found in this study, some drawbacks were stated by the participants. The most striking drawback was hesitation for credibility. Although one of the advantages articulated by the respondents pertained to their readiness for professional engagement, instances arose wherein they perceived themselves as inadequately equipped to deliver feedback. It appeared that students perceive teachers as authoritative figures within the educational setting, a perception that conceivably engenders a potential diminishment in their self-esteem to provide feedback. The students' perceiving themselves as not qualified enough to provide peer feedback and regarding the teacher as an authority has been widely documented in the scholarly literature. To exemplify, Yang et al., (2006) conducted an empirical inquiry involving two cohorts, wherein they undertook a comparative analysis to ascertain the efficacy of teacher versus peer feedback. Employing a mixed-method approach encompassing data gleaned from student texts, a questionnaire, video-based observations, and in-depth interviews, the researchers unearthed parallel outcomes, underscoring students' proclivity to repose confidence in the precision of teacher feedback. In a corresponding empirical investigation involving 48 students and two teachers, Cho and Schunn (2007) ascertained that students demonstrated a greater propensity to accept and integrate teacher-provided feedback as opposed to peer feedback. This preference could be attributed to the perception of the teacher as the wisdom-holder, coupled with the recognition of deficiencies in student-written work, which aligns with the outcome of the current study. This phenomenon can potentially be elucidated by the prevailing authoritative position that educators hold within educational environments such as in Korea and Türkiye. Traditionally,

teachers serve as sources of knowledge, transmitting it to their students. Consequently, students situated within such pedagogical contexts might encounter difficulty in placing their trust in peers for the purpose of rectifying their errors.

Limitations, directions for future research, and practical implications

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present study when interpreting its findings. In light of these limitations, future research should aim to address them and strengthen the overall design. First, although students received both theoretical and practical instruction on the peer feedback process, the study lacked a specific guideline or framework to structure their feedback. Future studies could consider implementing a more systematic framework to fill this gap and enhance methodological rigor. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that a pure qualitative method was chosen for the current study. Further research could adopt a mixed method. By incorporating quantitative data collection and analysis alongside qualitative methods, researchers could gather more comprehensive information about the pre-service teachers' perceptions of peer feedback process. Quantitative data, such as correlations with performance improvements, would provide a broader overview of the patterns and trends in the feedback process. Lastly, the current study, adopting a qualitative method, aimed to have a deep understanding of participants' perceptions, so the data was collected from a small group of participants, potentially constraining the generalisability of the study's outcomes.

Based on the findings of the current study, three dimensions of implications would arise with regards to policy-makers, theoretical frameworks and practitioners. Considering the current study's outcomes regarding the benefits of peer feedback, it is highly recommended for policy-makers to adopt a student-centered curriculum promoting peer feedback in the educational system. In the evaluation of activities in the course books, peer feedback can precede the educators' evaluation of the learners' achievements, which then directly impact on practitioners. This may be helpful for the practitioners to minimize their feedback time and workload. In that way, students actively participating in the classroom practices may also foster a sense of mutual trust in both their individual knowledge and that of their peers. Consequently, such a dynamic stands to mitigate the potential drawbacks associated with peer feedback, particularly stemming from hesitation for credibility. In the realm of theory, researchers may develop a guideline potentially with a checklist, which would eliminate the mostly stated drawbacks of peer feedback which was hesitation for credibility.

6 Conclusion

In summary, this study adopted a qualitative method to seek the perception of pre-service teachers on providing and receiving peer feedback activities in EFL writing classes. The data analysis revealed that the participants articulated several challenges associated with the providing and receiving of peer feedback, such as concerns about credibility. However, they mostly reported the benefits of providing and receiving peer feedback in educational practices. This engagement was predominantly viewed by students as a pivotal progression towards their forthcoming professional endeavors. The contribution of the study offers a holistic perspective including pros and cons of not only providing but also receiving peer feedback. This distinctive feature sets this research apart from other extant studies within the scholarly literature. As the benefits of engaging in peer feedback activity regardless of providing or receiving outweigh its challenges, it is recommended that stakeholders incorporate the peer feedback process within educational environments.

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