

Received: 2025-02-20

Accepted: 2025-03-01

THE ROLE OF FEEDBACK IN THE WRITING PROCESS

Nutsa Sesiashvili (ns2719@rit.edu)

Abstract

The writing process requires time and willingness to refine. Feedback, such as instructor's suggestions, peer's comments, online tools, or self-assessed approach, are some of the essentials for a successful writing process. Consecutive suggestions can be beneficial not only for the author but also for the evaluator's development. Through my survey conducted among 70 students, the results showed almost every student considers feedback one of the most significant ways to improve writing. While most students preferred the instructor's feedback, some clarified according to the specific assignments often they benefit more from peer's opinions and general suggestions. Additionally, while traditional methods of feedback remain the most popular and acceptable for writers, online tools save time and provide fast results that can significantly reduce the time of writing and allow a writer to orient on content and organization better. However, for experienced writers, who are proficient in certain languages and need help with more advanced issues such as syntax, organization, or content, digital tools cannot be helpful as they mostly correct spelling and grammar mistakes. My survey demonstrated that individuals prefer and most benefit from instructor's or peer's feedback that once again clarifying how none of the platforms can substitute human feedback as people are able to think and create unique ideas. In conclusion, a combination of different types of feedback can help the writing process and allow an individual to improve this skill. The internal awareness of people about the advantages of consecutive feedback is widely accepted, which was provided in my survey, where students demonstrated a positive attitude towards the consequences of healthy, well-developed feedback provided in a timely manner.

Keywords: Feedback in Writing, Students Perceptions, Writing Improvement, Constructive Criticism, Revision Strategies.

1. The Role of Feedback in the Writing Process

Writing is a way to express oneself and discuss and explain different topics. This long process requires dedication, hard work, constant improvement, and revision. Feedback plays a significant role in refining writing and seeing one's work from a different perspective. Instructor or peer recommendations, self-assessment, or online tools ease every writer's working process. The benefits of feedback are unmatched; a person develops writing skills and acquires vital knowledge, enhances motivation, gains self-confidence, and deepens critical thinking and information analysis skills. My research conducted among 70 students showed every student considers feedback as one of the most

paramount tools in improving writing skills and that they constantly check the trusted person's opinion about their work. After answering 16 questions, 37.1% of surveyed individuals stated feedback is extremely important for their development and the other 44.2% consider it a vital tool in their writing process. Every student stated a positive attitude towards the benefits of well-structured feedback; However, the most beneficial tool and approach varies from person to person.

The role of online tools, such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and Spellcheck can be extremely useful in the writing process to avoid grammar and spelling mistakes. The popularity of these websites is unparalleled, which is the reason, in my research, students stated they do not expect or benefit from instructor's or peer's feedback about spelling and grammar as they are able to easily solve these mistakes by themselves utilizing automated feedback tools. Everyone has access to online platforms that make the process easier and allow an individual to fix errors by oneself, learn, and develop one's language proficiency and vocabulary. Additionally, the research has proved students prioritize using form-focused feedback as they understand more structured and rule-based comments better than the teacher's complex suggestions not only about grammar and vocabulary but also about content and organization of the paper (Thi, 2023). Even though people's position varies about the preferred feedback types. It is significant to utilize form-focused and more content-oriented feedback types together for better results because automated feedback tools, such as Grammarly, do not cover all the issues in writing. Discussion with professionals and hearing human-generated opinions are significantly beneficial to improving writing skills since online websites allow a student to practice more frequently but do not cover information on a deeper level (Zhang, 2020). To conclude, for people proficient in language these platforms can be not effective enough as they can easily avoid or fix the issues connected to spelling and grammar in their essays, however, improving the deeper problems such as organization, structure, unity, content, or syntax can be more challenging for non-professional author and none of the online websites can solve these problems better than instructors and people competent in the specific field.

Moreover, the popularity of artificial intelligence is rising daily. Often students get more ideas about their writing, ask the ChatGPT and similar AI platforms to diversify their papers, and receive ideas or comments that they will implement in the essays' refinement process. However, AI cannot fully assist them as their data is general and misses a deep understanding of the different topics and their specifics. My experiment once again proved the AI issues in creating a unique essay. To test artificial intelligence, I utilized this paper and asked ChatGPT to give me feedback about my strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for improvement, and generated paragraphs by it to make my paper longer and full of different and interesting information and perspectives around the topic. AI first expressed the positive parts of my essay, but when it started explaining my mistakes, it could not state precise comments. Every opinion was dramatically general and could be applied to every paragraph of my and any other writer's academic work. In addition, paragraphs created by AI lacked examples, or sources from existing papers and research, and it could not shape its own unique opinion. When I asked again a few times to clarify information better and explain my paper's negative parts in detail, it started repeating the information, correcting non-existent mistakes with the same wording as I already have implemented in my essay, and changing correct citations incorrectly. To conclude, this

experiment once again proved that artificial intelligence is not able to give writer feedback understood in depth. None of the online tools and websites can substitute peer or instructor's comments as these platforms lack the ability to think and create unique ideas. They just use existing data and change it to fit the specifics of a user's question. Utilizing AI can be useful at the beginning of the writing process when a person tries to find direction and organize ideas.

Every individual has their approach to the type of feedback they appreciate the most. 18.5% of participants in the survey expressed that they always find feedback useful no matter what is written. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) suggest some students even appreciate indirect suggestions as that method allows them to more actively participate in the revision process and explore more information by themselves. Indirect comments encourage writers to look for information by themselves, find more connections to topic articles, and diversify their vocabulary, which has long-term effects on the language learning process (Bitchener and Ferris, 2012). However, this approach is less popular as most of the students try to fix their work promptly and avoid the long process of refinement. However, most people believe that remaining specific about mistakes and recommendations is essential as 44.2% of participants in the survey clarified how general comments are which makes them harder to implement.

Furthermore, 44.2% of individuals acknowledged they applied most of the comments to their work instantly after receiving feedback. While this approach demonstrates students' responsibility and responsiveness, it can have disadvantages as students often implement changes without understanding the reasons behind the feedback. To analyze comments, having solid opinions towards them, and consulting with the evaluator are crucial to adjusting the essay with meaningful additions. Blindly trusting any person or platform to receive feedback cannot be justified as it prevents a person from developing, learning, and then utilizing these improvements in future work too, not only in the current paper.

It is worth mentioning how important it is to give a person organized, well-structured feedback so one can understand and incorporate changes with comprehension. 62.8% of students in my survey stated that lack of clarity in feedback makes it harder to implement comments into their papers, and they often require additional discussion with their instructors or peers to clarify information. Discussing with the evaluator allows a person to ask questions, exchange opinions, and provide arguments behind the writing decisions. Sometimes unclear suggestions make a person apply changes in the unintended parts of my writing and instead of improving, it completely disrupts the overall organization and structure of content. This misapplication damages the coherence and flow of essays. Thus, providing clear, structured, and direct feedback is vital to avoid misunderstanding in the revision process and allow the writer to enhance one's writing skills.

Another point the evaluator should consider is to keep a positive approach to the writer. The importance of feedback was vividly shown in surveyed people's responses as 93.8% of individuals expressed positive opinions in understanding their strengths and weaknesses. It is equally important to orient an individual's strengths and not only weaknesses to keep a writer enthusiastic about the progress of the paper. A writer and evaluator need to understand feedback is a tool to refine one's writing, and the opportunity to grow academically, and not make this process personal or negative. To keep a writer's self-

confidence high, a person needs to realize that the instructor's or peers' opinions help one to develop an essay instead of being perceived as disrespectful or offensive to an individual. Internal awareness that one understands the situation right and approaches feedback as a help instead of judgment can ease the writing process. Even if the paper gets a judgment or negative opinion, it is essential to receive it as a recommendation to adjust but not a way to fully change the idea or position. Every individual has their viewpoints toward various topics and all of them equally deserve to exist. 25.7% of people in my survey stated feedback can be unhelpful as they are overly critical without offering any suggestions for improvement. For this issue, utilizing the 'Sandwith'/'Praise-Critique-Praise' method can be very beneficial to keep the writer's self-esteem high and also express all the criticism toward the essay (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). This approach includes first mentioning positive parts of the work, then giving a writer's recommendations for enhancement or expressing negative parts of an essay, and in the end, finishing one's feedback with a positive and motivational summary. In conclusion, different methods can be used by evaluators to express their opinions without disrespecting or reducing the writer's enthusiasm and self-confidence. It is paramount to understand one approach cannot be universal for every student and thoughtful comments and underlining positive parts with negative sides are crucial.

Moreover, 44.2% of the people surveyed stated they prefer to receive written comments on their documents and afterward apply their changes. Other 37.1% think meeting with an instructor and discussing the comments is preferable as they have a chance to explain their writing decisions and clarify all the parts. Several reasons can interfere with incorporating changes in one's writing. Besides, lack of clarity, personal disagreements with viewers (55.7%), and time constraints (31.4%) can be huge issues while writing a document. It is essential to provide feedback in a timely manner, in the best scenario soon after the document submission, that allows writers to revise their work more effectively. Constant communication with individuals and feedback throughout the writing process provide more successful results than giving feedback at the end of the process when applying changes is impossible. Utilizing a method of evaluating the paper, in the end, after the deadline, evokes unnecessary stress and disappointment for a writer and possibly can affect one's enthusiasm or even mental health.

Furthermore, out of instructor, peer, self-assessment, and tutor feedback, 62.8% of surveyed individuals revealed they find all these types of feedback equally beneficial; Nevertheless, instructor feedback remains the most valuable and useful tool in the writing process. In the survey, 37.1% of students stated that they benefit more from the instructor's feedback, and another 37.1% expressed that the usefulness of feedback depends on the specifics of assignments. In my survey, none of the individuals surveyed believe that peer feedback is more advantageous than the instructor's feedback. However, Lee's (2010) research suggests how positively impacts peer interaction and cross-commenting about each other's work. This encourages them to organize content, correct each other's grammar and vocabulary mistakes, and refine ideas more effectively (Lee, 2010). Besides, correcting other individuals' work allows an evaluator to improve their writing skills too as this approach makes them see the flaws of certain errors from a different perspective. They find these mistakes by themselves which makes it easier to memorize and obtain new information successfully (Lee, 2010).

From my personal experience, I have received every kind of feedback exemplified in the paper. From the instructor's comments to my self-assessment, all of them differently affected my style and general enhancement of writing. From my perspective, like many others, instructors' feedback is the most reliable, trusted, and vulnerable as they have the most experience in the field and can give a student the right direction for adjustment. In addition, especially for institutional graded assignments, the professor's opinion, who grades one's work, is vital, and students, including me, are very flexible about changes to receive the desired grade. However, this can be the extremely negative side of applying adjustment to one's work. If an individual does not agree with the evaluator and still applies comments to the paper without consulting and exchanging opinions about the process can negatively affect the whole progress. Writing without believing in one's position is a waste of time and prevents the creation of a successful, opinionated paper full of convincing arguments. Besides, from my experience, peer feedback can be very beneficial to developing and improving content. Usually, same-generation individuals can understand each other's decisions better and see the writing from the peer author's perspective. Finally, self-commenting on one's writing is one of the most unappreciated types of feedback. It comes naturally while writing and revising an essay but the power of the writer to give oneself consecutive critical feedback and drastically improve the paper. The author best knows the meaning behind one's word choice and most precisely can compare it to the concept one has in mind. Proofreading and deep thinking about my papers constantly encourage me to develop them and form my ideas as words and sentences exactly the way I imagined and structured them in my head. The demonstration of this phenomenon happens constantly during every language or writing exam where I have nobody but myself who can check my essay and give me recommendations for adjustments. To sum up, my experience with feedback is extremely positive, and I appreciate every kind of suggestion. Even undeserved criticism and negative opinions develop my ideas and obligate me to improve my word choices.

In conclusion, feedback plays a vital role in the writing process. Peer, and instructor suggestions, online tools, and self-assessed recommendations can all encourage writers to enhance their writing and acquire new skills and valuable knowledge. Consecutive, healthy, and well-thought-out feedback is essential for an evaluator to avoid any misconceptions, disrespect, or inappropriate attitude toward the student. Keeping boundaries and an academic, formal tone is a guarantee of student's self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm will remain the same and one actively continues the paper's refinement process. Combining fast effect tools, such as Grammarly and Spellcheck can benefit an individual a lot and consume time, while an instructor's or peers' deep analysis can help to adjust structure and organize content with a deep, genuine comprehension of the topic. Artificial intelligence tools can also benefit a student in writing, especially at the beginning of the process, by giving the right direction and ideas on how to develop paragraphs and structure an essay. Utilizing every resource combined with obtaining feedback, processing information, and thoughtfully implementation in one's progress is crucial and improves a person's writing style dramatically.

2. References

- Bitchenner, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2011). *Written corrective feedback in second language acquisition and writing*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203832400>
- Lee, L. (2010). Exploring wiki-mediated collaborative writing: A case study in an elementary spanish course. *CALICO Journal*, 27(2), 260-276. <https://doi.org/10.11139/cj.27.2.260-276>
- Schillings, M., Roebertsen, H., Savelberg, H., van Dijk, A., & Dolmans, D. (2021). Improving the understanding of written peer feedback through face-to-face peer dialogue: Students' perspective. *Higher Education Research & development/Higher Education Research and Development*, 40(5), 1100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1798889>
- Thi, N. K. (2023). *The role of feedback in the processes and outcomes of academic writing in english as a foreign language at intermediate and advanced levels*
- Zhang, Z. (. (2020). Engaging with automated writing evaluation (AWE) feedback on L2 writing: Student perceptions and revisions. *Assessing Writing*, 43, 100439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2019.100439>

3. Appendix: Survey Questions

The following questions were used in the survey conducted for this study on the role of feedback in the writing process:

1. How important do you consider feedback to be in improving your writing skills?

- Sometimes: 44.2%
- Often: 44.2%
- Very important: 44.2%
- Extremely important: 37.1%
- Moderately important: 12.8%

2. Which type of feedback do you find most helpful for improving your writing?

- All equally (tutor feedback, peer feedback, instructor feedback): 62.5%
- Instructor feedback: 31.3%
- Tutor feedback: Remaining respondents

3. How often do you review feedback provided by your instructors or peers?

- Often: 37.1%
- Always: 37.1%
- Sometimes: 18.5%
- Rarely: Remaining respondents

4. How do you prefer to receive feedback?

- Written comments on my document: 45.7%
- Meeting with an instructor and discussion: 37.1%

- Group discussion with peers: 12.8%
 - All of the above: Remaining respondents
5. What aspect of feedback do you find most helpful?
- Suggestions about content: 50%
 - Guidance on structure and organization: 50%
 - All of the above: 44.2%
 - Suggestions about grammar and spelling: 0%
6. How often do you ask for feedback from instructors, tutors, or peers?
- Sometimes: 44.2%
 - Often: 44.2%
 - Never or occasionally: Remaining respondents
7. When you receive feedback, what do you usually do with it?
- Apply some of it to my revisions: 50%
 - Apply most of it to my revisions: 44.2%
 - Discuss it with my instructor: 44.2%
8. What challenges do you face while trying to incorporate feedback into your paper?
- Lack of clarity in feedback: 62.8%
 - Personal disagreement: 55.7%
 - Time constraints: 31.4%
 - Feedback can also serve as a way to make one's opinion concrete: 5.7%
9. How often do you find feedback unclear or difficult to understand?
- Sometimes: 55.7%
 - Occasionally: 37.1%
 - Never: Remaining respondents
10. How do you feel after getting criticism on your writing?
- Neutral; it doesn't affect my motivation: 44.2%
 - Encouraged to improve: 44.2%
 - Uncertain about how to improve: 18.5%
 - Extremely motivated to improve my writing: 5.7%
 - Demotivated and likely to give up: 0%
11. How does feedback from peers differ from feedback from instructors in terms of usefulness?
- It depends on the assignment: 37.1%
 - Both are equally helpful: 25%
 - Instructor feedback is more useful: 37.1%
 - Peer feedback is more useful: 0%
 - Neither is particularly useful: 0%
12. What is the most frequent reason you find feedback unhelpful?
- It is too general: 44.2%

- It is too critical without offering suggestions for improvement: 25.7%
- I do not usually find feedback unhelpful: 18.5%
- The instructor judges based on personal perception or focuses on areas I am already confident in: Remaining respondents

13. How often do you feel that feedback helped you understand your strengths and weaknesses as a writer?

- Sometimes: 44.2%
- Often: 37.1%
- Always: 12.8%
- Never: Remaining respondents

14. How does feedback impact your confidence in writing?

- Significantly positively: 25%
- Slightly positively: 31.4%
- No impact: 31.4%
- Slightly negatively: 12.8%
- Significantly negatively: 0%

15. How often do you ask the instructor for clarification on the feedback you received?

- Occasionally: 31.4%
- Sometimes: 37.1%
- Often: 12.8%
- Never: 18.5%

16. Why do you believe feedback is significant in your writing process?

- It helps me identify mistakes and areas for improvement: 61.5%
- It provides me with new perspectives and ideas: 70%
- It boosts my confidence when I receive positive feedback: 18.5%
- It guides me in refining my writing skills over time: 37.1%
- It motivates me to keep improving: 25.7%
- I don't find feedback particularly significant: 5.7%