Peer Feedback Skill Training to Improve Students' Writitng Skills

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Abstract
The study investigated the role of peer feedback skills training in improving students' writing skills. To achieve this objective, data were collected using a quasi-experiment design. The participants were 11th grade students, selected into two groups through simple random sampling. One group served as the experimental group and received instruction with the assistance of peer feedback, while the second group served as the control group and continued with the usual method of instruction. Both groups received sixteen hours of instruction over a period of five weeks. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups. The data were analyzed using independent sampling t-tests and multivariate analysis. While there was no significant difference in the pre-test results, the post-test results showed a significant difference between the two groups. The findings of this study indicate that students who received peer feedback skills training demonstrated improved overall writing skills compared to those who were taught in a traditional manner.
Key words: Peer feedback skill; Writing skills; Practical Training; High school Students; writing subskills

Introduction

Writing is one of the most important aspects of language learning (Chong, 2022; Gebremariam & Hiluf, 2023; Sufi & Ibrahim, 2021). Literacy plays a significant role in both the academic world and an individual's life (Gebremariam & Asgede 2023; Gebremariam & Hiluf, 2023; Sahle et al., 2023; Lundstrom& Baker, 2009). Well-developed writing skills have been found to benefit students academically and socially (Khairuddin, et al., 2021).

Writing has undergone practical changes over time and continues to evolve. It was initially created for communication purposes and hasdeveloped through education (Molloy & Boud, 2013). In the field of education, the grammar translation method was initially used to support grammar learning and teach language rules (Lei, 2012; Min, 2016; Nimehchisalem, et al., 2021). Over time, written language emerged from denominations and government institutions and became integrated into the education system (Min, 2008, 2016). Throughout this evolving journey, the importance of writing has been recognized and emphasized by both the community and scholars (Chong, 2022; Clark, 2012; Muhammad, et al., 2021).

However, despite this recognition, mastery of writing has not been achieved (Dempsey, et al., 2009). Errors have been present in the writing system since its inception (Farrah, 2012; Hattie &Tiperely, 2007). In the 1960s, the process-oriented approach gained acceptance and became the main approach in primary, secondary, and university levels in the 1980s (Brusa&Harutyunyan, 2019). This approach focuses on the individual steps leading to better written work (Clark, 2012). It supports students in their writing activities at each level before summarizing their writing (Alias, et al., 2021; Brown, 2007; Clark, 2012).

The challenges that students face in improving their writing skills and the various writing problems they encounter are influenced by psychological and cognitive factors (Nicol, 2010; Razali, et al., 2021). Additionally, the teaching method used to teach writing can contribute to these issues. If the teaching method does not provide sufficient practice and lacks real communication, it can hinder students' progress (Austria, 2017; Gebremariam & Asgede 2023; Orsmond, et al., 2013). Therefore, teachers' teaching approaches should guide students towards their desired goals (Orsmond, et al., 2013). This issue is also observed in the educational context of Ethiopia, where there is still much work to be done in terms of literacy education (Brusa&Harutyunyan, 2019; Dempsey et al., 2009; Min, 2008, 2016; Pol, et al., 2008).

In the process of writing education, teachers often provide corrections through written responses (Clark, 2012; Razali, et al., 2021). This typically involves assigning a topic to students, reading and correcting their work, without further involvement from the teacher (Hattie &Timperely, 2007; Muhammad, et al., 2021). However, this approach has limited impact on students' writing skills. Instead of focusing solely on providing feedback on the final work, it is more effective to provide feedback at each stage of the writing process based on students' progress (Ferguson, 2011; Lei, 2012; Sadler, 2010). Many students are dissatisfied with the feedback they receive because it is inadequate, untimely, overly critical, and fails to focus on building their skills. Additionally, students may not be receptive to the advice and corrections given to them (Lundstrom& Baker, 2009; Razali, et al., 2021).

One potential solution to this problem is incorporating peer feedback into the teaching process (Chong, 2022; Farrah, 2012; Orsmond, et al., 2013). The main problems faced by teachers include teaching methods, lack of teaching resources, lack of student interest, limited class time, and large class sizes (Nimehchisalem, et al., 2021). Peer feedback has gained popularity as a student-centered teaching approach, with many language teachers prioritizing its use (Gebremariam & Hiluf, 2023; Sahle et al., 2023; Lei, 2017; Orsmond, et al., 2013; Nicol, 2010). Peer feedback provides detailed and clear opinions that support each student, making it a preferred alternative to teacher feedback (Sufi & Ibrahim, 2021).

This study aims to examine the role of peer feedback in improving students' writing skills from the perspective of 11th grade students. The following research questions will be explored:

1. Does training in peer feedback skills contribute to overall improvement in students' writing skills?
2. Does training in peer feedback skills contribute to improvement in students' writing sub-skills?

Hypotheses of the study:

The essays presented in the background highlight the numerous benefits of peer feedback skill training and its significant role in enhancing students' learning performance. Based on these essays, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. Peer feedback skill training plays a role in enhancing students' overall writing skills.
2. Peer feedback skill training plays a role in enhancing students' writing sub-skills.

Research methods

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of peer feedback skill training in improving students' writing skills. To achieve this objective, a quasi-experimental design was implemented. The design involved two participant groups who took a pre-test before engaging in peer feedback skill-based writing skill learning. Following the pre-test, the two groups were taught using different methods. The experimental group received instruction on peer feedback skills, while the control group was taught in the usual manner. After completing the learning activities, a post-test was administered to determine the difference in skills between the two groups. This method was used to examine the results of the control and experimental groups in order to verify the impact of peer feedback skill on the improvement of students' writing skills.

Participants

The participants in this study were 72 11th-grade students at Secondary School. The 11th-grade students were divided into seven groups and taught by one teacher during the same shift. Two groups, one experimental and one control, were selected for the study through a simple lottery. This was done to ensure a semi-equal research strategy among the 11th-grade students at the school. The groups were randomly drawn, with one group serving as the control group and the other as the experimental group.

The language teacher who taught the 11th-grade students at the school was chosen to teach the students selected for the practice. The teacher taught both groups, one using the peer feedback skill and the other using traditional methods. The teacher was given a schedule that was convenient for them and received two hours of training per day for two days, totaling six hours. During the implementation process, the experimental group received assistance with the peer feedback skill, while the control group took the post-learning test after learning in the usual way.

The data for this study was collected through written tests. Both groups were given the tests before and after school for the purpose of measuring their writing skills. It was important to establish the level of writing skills in both groups before conducting the study. A pre-test was prepared for this purpose, which primarily assessed the students' previous writing skills. The writing tasks in the grade-level textbook were carefully observed to create the pre-test. Repetitive focus writing tasks and questions were selected, designed to match the content and presentation of the book. To ensure the reliability of the exam and collect relevant information, the test was divided into two parts: a pre-education exam and a post-education exam.

The tests had different content but were presented in the same format, with the same number of questions and structure. The reason for having different exams was to prevent students from remembering their previous answers and correcting their mistakes. The test consisted of four alternative topics, from which students were asked to choose one and write an essay of at least one page. Students were instructed to plan their essay in advance and prepare a first draft before writing the final version within the given time.

To ensure the accuracy of the pre- and post-tests, three grade-level teachers reviewed the tests for various basic issues. They provided feedback based on the questioning strategy and time given for the test, considering the class level curriculum. As a result, it was determined that the 40 minutes originally given for the tests were not enough, so the time was increased to one hour or more.

After the exams, the test papers were collected and given to three language teachers at the school to be corrected. The teachers used the same criteria to maintain consistency in the results. The scores given by the three teachers for each student were averaged to determine the final score.

The research consisted of eight sessions, each lasting two hours, conducted over two days per week. However, due to the closure of schools nationwide as a result of the global epidemic of the Corona virus, the post-secondary examination could not be conducted as planned.

The data collected from the pre- and post-tests were filtered and organized for analysis. The researchers confirmed that the data collection tools provided reliable and accurate data for the main study. Descriptive statistics were used to review the distribution level of the data, and inferential statistics were used to identify significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the pre- and post-tests.

Data analysis and Results

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the role of peer feedback skills in improving students' writing skills. To achieve this goal, 72 11th-grade students were divided into two groups: the control group, who attended the lesson in the usual way, and the experimental group, who attended the lesson with the help of peer feedback. Both groups participated in the implementation process. Data for the study were collected through pre- and post-tests. The learning outcomes of the tests were examined to analyze whether peer feedback skills were beneficial in improving students' overall writing skills and detailed sub-skills.

To answer the first question of this research and confirm the hypothesis, the results of the pre- and post-tests of writing skills were calculated using an independent sampling t-test, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Overall writing skill ability pre-test results in independent sampling t-test

Participants	Pre-test result				Df	T- Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	M	SD	SE			
Control group	36	53.94	5.63	0.93	70	.068	.946
Experimental group	36	53.86	4.70	0.78			

The mean results of the pre-test are shown in Table 1. The control group has a mean of 53.94, while the experimental group has a mean of 53.86. This indicates that the two groups had similar results during the pre-test. Inferential statistical analysis was used to confirm whether there is a significant difference between the two groups. The analysis showed that there is no significant difference (df(70), t = 0.68, p = 0.946) between the two groups in terms of overall writing skills.

Next, the post-test results of writing skills were also analyzed using the same calculation. The results are presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: Results of the post-test for overall writing skill ability in the independent sampling t-test

Participants	Post-test result				Df	T- Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	M	SD	SE			
Control group	36	54.33	5.66	0.94			
Experiemntal group	36	64.25	3.69	0.61	70	8.80	0.001

Table 2 displays the average difference in post-test scores for writing skills between the control and experimental groups. The control group had a mean score of 54.33, while the experimental group had a mean score of 64.25. This calculation was done using inferential statistics. The results indicate a significant difference (df(70), t = 8.80, p = 0.001) in the writing ability test scores between the two groups after the peer feedback skill training. This suggests that there is a notable distinction in overall writing skills between the groups. Therefore, the peer feedback skill training contributes to enhancing students' overall writing skills, and the null hypothesis was accepted.

To address the second question and test the hypothesis, the data from the pre- and post-tests of writing skills were analyzed. Firstly, the data from the pre-test of both groups is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean score of pre-test for writing sub-skills analyzed by MANOVA

writing sub-skills	participants groups	pre- test			df	F-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Partial Eta Squared ($\eta^{2)}$
		N	M	SD				
Content	Control	36	50.88	6.15	1,70	.194	.661	.003
	Experiemntal	36	50.34	4.19				
Idea development	Control	36	59.16	7.31	1,70	.001	.999	.001
	Experiemntal	36	59.16	5.27				
Word choice	Control	36	56.38	6.82	1,70	.417	.520	.006
	Experiemntal	36	57.36	5.91				
Language use	Control	36	51.88	5.77	1,70	.941	.335	.013
	Experiemntal	36	50.66	4.87				
Mechanics	Control	36	50.00	10.14	1,70	2.863	.095	.039
	Experiemntal	36	53.88	9.34				

Table 3 contains data on students' pre-test scores on the five sub-skills of writing. In terms of content, the mean score of the control group was 50.88, and the mean score of the experimental group was 50.34. This was calculated by MANOVA, and the result was (df(1,70), F = .194, p = .661). The mean scores for idea organization were 59.16 for the control group and 59.16 for the experimental group. When analyzed in a MANOVA, it became (df(1,70), F = .000, p = 1.00). The mean scores for vocabulary use were 56.38 for the control group and 57.36 for the experimental group. This was calculated by MANOVA (df(1,70), F = .417, p = .520). In language use, the mean of the control group was 51.88, and the mean of the experimental group was 50.66. The conclusion was confirmed by MANOVA (df(1,70), F = .941, p = .335). The mean of the control group was 50.00, and the mean of the experimental group was 53.88. When this was calculated by MANOVA, the result was (df(70), F = 12.863, p = .095). These five results showed that there is no significant difference between the two groups in terms of pre-test writing skill sub-skills. This means that there is no difference between the two groups before they learn from different approaches.

Based on the post-test results of the groups, the five sub-skills were calculated using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in the following Table 4.

Table 4: Post-test mean Score of writing sub-skills by MANOVA

writing sub-skills	participants groups	Post-test			Df	F-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Partial Eta squerd ($\eta^{2)}$
		N	M	SD				
Content	Control	36	50.55	6.40	1,70			
	Experiemntal	36	57.68	3.80		33.02	0.001	.321
Idea development	Control	36	59.16	7.79	1,70			
	Experiemntal	36	73.05	5.10		79.98	0.001	.533
Word choice	Control	36	57.22	7.69	1,70			
	Experiemntal	36	72.63	3.48		119.95	0.001	.631
Language use	Control	36	52.66	3.76	1,70			
	Experiemntal	36	56.22	3.93		15.342	0.001	.180
Mechanics	Control	36	54.44	9.08	1,70			
	Experiemntal	36	75.00	11.08		74.05	0.001	.541

Table 4 presents the results of the five sub-skills separately. The difference between the groups in each sub-skill was found to be significant in a two-tailed MANOVA result, which was obtained from Wilks' Lambda. In terms of content, the mean for the control group was 50.55, while for the experimental group it was 57.68. To determine if the difference between them was significant, the result was analyzed (df(70), F = 33.02, p = .001, η2 = .321).

For the idea development sub-skill, the average score for the experimental group was 73.05, compared to 59.16 for the control group. The result of the MANOVA was (df(70), F = 79.98, p = .001, η2 = .533). In the word choice sub-skill, the mean score for the experimental group was 72.63, while for the control group it was 57.22. The result showed a significant difference between the two groups (df(70), F = 119.95 , p = .001, η2 = .631).

In the language use sub-skill, the mean score for the experimental group was 56.22, compared to 52.66 for the control group. The final statistical result was (df(70), F = 15.34, p = .001, η2 = .18). The mean score for the experimental group was 75.00, while for the control group it was 54.44. The result of the MANOVA was (df(70), F = 74.05, p = .001, η2 = .541).

The mean scores of the experimental group were higher than those of the control group in all writing sub-skills. The extent of their superiority was also determined through inferential statistics, and a significant difference ($p < .01$) was observed in all sub-skills. These results indicate that the training of peer feedback skills plays a significant role in improving writing sub-skills. Therefore, the hypothesis that the training of peer feedback skills contributes to the improvement of students' writing skills was accepted.

Discussions

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the training of peer feedback skills in improving students' writing skills. The study formulated two questions, and the research process was implemented in two groups. In the process of the study, pre- and post-tests were used as data collection. Thus, the first question was presented to test whether peer feedback skill training has a role in improving students' overall writing skills. The results of the data analysis showed that, although they scored comparable results in the pre-tests, the average scores of the experimental group students who learned to write with the help of peers were higher than the control group students who were taught in the normal way. The difference was calculated through statistical analysis and found to be significant ($p = .001$). This result also showed that peer feedback skills can help improve writing skills in a different way than the traditional writing skill teaching approach. From this, it can be understood that the training of peer feedback skills when students are learning to write has a significant role in improving their writing skills.

The results of this study were found to be consistent with previous studies (Alias et al., 2021; Chong, 2022; Farrah, 2012; Khairuddin et al., 2021; Lei, 2017; Orsmond et al., 2013; Sadler, 2010). According to Orsmond et al. (2013), peer feedback skills have a greater role in improving students' writing skills. Although the studies differ in terms of the number of participants and class level, they have in common the objective and the fact that they are quasi-experimental. Lei (2017) also supports the fact that their results, which show that peer feedback improves students' writing skills, are similar to the current results. On the other hand, Min (2016) and Pol et al. (2008) partially contradict the study results. In fact, the studies seem to suggest that the method requires time, in relation to the state of students' learning and the teacher's knowledge seeking. However, when the implementation is conducted, the nature of the students' understanding and the direction of implementation are given to the students and implemented. Their conclusions and opinions may be moderated by these precautions, so they are considered contradictory to the results of this study.

The second aim of the study was to investigate the impact of peer feedback skill training on students' writing sub-skills. It also aimed to confirm the hypothesis that peer feedback skill training has a positive role in improving writing skills. To accomplish this, data obtained from writing skills tests were analyzed. The average scores of the experimental group, who received peer feedback skill training, were found to be higher than the average scores of the control group, who were taught normal writing skills, in the post-test writing sub-skills. The results were analyzed using inferential statistics and showed a significant difference ($p = .001$). The hypothesis, stated in a positive form, was also accepted. Therefore, the training of peer feedback skill indicates that peer-to-peer teaching plays a helpful role in developing the writing skills sub-skills of 11th grade students.

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies conducted by Austria (2017), Brusa&Hartyunyan (2019), Lundsform and Baker (2009), and Min (2016). Lundsform& Baker (2009) and Min (2016) both found that peer feedback skill plays a significant role in developing students' writing sub-skills. The similarity of the subscales, the experimental nature of the studies, and the similarity of the results make these studies supportive.

Overall, peer feedback skill training has a positive impact on improving students' overall writing skills and sub-skills. This suggests that writing education can yield better results if it receives sufficient attention and is implemented properly. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize and incorporate peer feedback in various exercises.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of peer feedback skill training in improving students' writing skills. To achieve this, the research questions were answered after the participants of the study received training in peer feedback skills and conventional writing teaching approaches. The hypotheses were confirmed through data collected from pre- and post-tests in writing skill tests. The results showed a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group, indicating that peer feedback skill training has a positive impact on the writing skills of 11th grade students. The pre-designed hypothesis was also accepted.

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following comments and suggestions were made:

1. Language teachers and students should receive training in peer feedback skills to improve students' writing abilities. They should be prepared and empowered to effectively use peer feedback.
2. By incorporating peer feedback into writing instruction, language teachers can create an environment that enhances students' writing skills. Peer feedback reduces reliance on the teacher, allowing students to independently plan and work, freely exchange ideas, and increase their self-confidence.
3. Higher education institutions should provide comprehensive training on writing skills for new language teachers. This training should include peer feedback skills as part of the overall teaching methods.
4. Language curriculum experts and textbook editors should utilize peer feedback skills in writing instruction to address students' writing issues and improve their writing abilities.
5. Schools, education offices, and students should allocate sufficient time for consultation and communication to facilitate the implementation of peer feedback, leading to improved writing skills.

While the time and session used in this study were sufficient, it is recommended to conduct future studies over a longer period of time to account for potential external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, future studies should explore the influence of age and gender by conducting a wider study that includes a more in-depth analysis of these factors.

In conclusion, implementing peer feedback skill training can lead to improvements in the writing skills of 11th grade students. Conducting further studies with a larger sample size and longer duration, involving teachers and educational professionals, can provide valuable insights for the development of students' writing skills. It is also important to investigate the perspective of students and examine the effectiveness of peer feedback training in relation to the five sub-skills of writing.

Data availability and materials

All the data are available upon the request of the editors and/or reviewers and the corresponding author can provide them.

Authors' contributions

SS designed the study and collected a part of the data with YA. SS &HT are analyzed the data and worked in the writing of the final manuscript in Amharic. Then, HT translated the Amharic Version into English. Finally, all authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This research has been supported by Arba Minch University,under School of Post Graduate School (MA in Teaching Amharic). We also thank teachers and students who participated in the study.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

We, authors, declare that this research design and data collection process has been proved by two external and internal reviewers assigned by Departmrnt of Ethiopian Languages and Literature (Amharic) DGC. And all the participants have been informed that they could voluntarily take part in the study and the results would be conducted for the educational purpose.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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All the data are available upon the request of the editors and/or reviewers and the corresponding author can provide them.

Abberivations

Not applicable

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