

# The Role of Feedback in Reducing Errors and Enhancing Learners' Writing Composition

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**Abstract:** *Writing is one of the core skills in English language learning, especially for EFL students who often face challenges in producing well-structured compositions. Effective writing instruction requires not only teaching grammar and vocabulary but also guiding students through the process of drafting, revising, and improving. One of the key tools in enhancing writing performance is the use of feedback. This study aimed to investigate the role of immediate and constructive feedback in reducing errors and improving writing composition among secondary school EFL students in Khartoum State, Sudan. The study adopted a descriptive analytical method supported by a quantitative approach. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to English language teachers and writing tests conducted with 70 EFL students at Karary Governmental Model School for Girls. The results were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), including measures such as chi-square, means, and standard deviations. The findings revealed that students significantly benefited from receiving feedback on their writing. High mean values indicated positive perceptions of feedback in areas such as error recognition, content improvement, and motivation. Furthermore, teachers who provided immediate and focused feedback helped students avoid repeated mistakes and engage more deeply in the writing process. In conclusion, feedback is a crucial component in writing instruction. When provided effectively, it supports both linguistic development and learner autonomy. The study recommends integrating structured feedback strategies into writing lessons to foster better writing outcomes for EFL learners.*

**Keywords:** Feedback, Writing Composition, Error Reduction, EFL Learners, Writing Improvement

## 1.Introduction

Writing is a fundamental skill through which individuals express their thoughts, ideas, emotions, and experiences in written form. In the context of language education, particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing serves not only as a communicative tool but also as a means of demonstrating linguistic competence (Hyland, 2003). Teaching students how to write effectively remains one of the most enduring and essential goals of formal education. For learners, mastering writing is not a one-time achievement; it is a developmental process that evolves through exposure, practice, and, most critically, feedback (Ferris, 2002; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008).

Writing in a second language is often more cognitively demanding than speaking, as it requires a command over syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and organization, in addition to the ability to convey meaning clearly and coherently (Nation, 2009). Therefore, EFL learners frequently produce compositions that are replete with errors ranging from grammatical mistakes to organizational weaknesses. This necessitates the role of educators not only in providing writing instruction but also in offering meaningful, targeted feedback that addresses these errors in a constructive and pedagogically sound manner (Ellis, 2009).

Feedback, especially when timely and specific, plays a crucial role in the writing process. As the final stage of the writing cycle, revision involves reviewing and improving one's draft based on external input. It is at this stage that feedback becomes most effective. Whether delivered in oral or written form, feedback guides learners toward identifying their own errors and taking corrective action (Lee, 2008). Research has shown that feedback that is corrective and explanatory—rather than simply evaluative—can

significantly reduce the recurrence of errors and promote gradual improvement in writing performance (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). The main areas typically focused on during error correction include content, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics. Addressing these aspects through structured feedback can significantly enhance the learner's ability to produce coherent and well-developed texts (Ferris, 2006).

In the Sudanese educational context, writing instruction has undergone considerable transformation over the decades. During the mid-20th century, English held a prominent position in the curriculum and was the primary medium of instruction in secondary schools. Writing skills, including composition, were introduced early, and were often taught by native or highly trained teachers. Students were exposed to both controlled and free writing tasks, supported by comprehensive syllabi and adequate instructional time (Osman, 1994).

However, these positive developments began to deteriorate due to abrupt changes in language policy, particularly the Arabization of education, a reduction in English instructional hours, overcrowded classrooms, and a shortage of qualified teachers and teaching materials. These changes severely affected the development of English writing skills among students, especially in composition writing (Alzighaibi, 2021; Al-Soud et al., 2024).

Today, the consequences of these systemic setbacks are still evident. Students at the secondary level continue to struggle with writing compositions, particularly in applying grammatical rules, organizing ideas logically, and avoiding syntactic errors. From the researcher's extensive experience in teaching English at the secondary level, it has been consistently observed that many learners lack both

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confidence and competence in writing due to a persistent cycle of unaddressed mistakes. These problems are not only linguistic but also pedagogical, as many teachers lack the tools or time to provide individualized, meaningful feedback. The teaching of writing has thus become a mechanical activity, often limited to assigning topics and marking errors without adequate explanation or support for improvement (Jamil, 2022).

In response to these challenges, this study seeks to demonstrate the significance of structured feedback in reducing writing errors and gradually enhancing students' writing performance. The study is grounded in the belief that feedback is not merely a corrective tool, but an integral part of the learning process that supports cognitive development and metalinguistic awareness (Appari et al., 2009). Moreover, it recognizes that writing proficiency can be developed through consistent feedback cycles where learners are not only informed of their errors but are also guided toward self-correction and improvement.

Given the prevailing challenges in writing instruction within Sudanese secondary schools, especially the marked decline in writing competence, there is a pressing need to identify effective pedagogical interventions. One such intervention is the use of targeted feedback, which this study proposes as a key strategy for enhancing students' writing outcomes. While feedback has long been acknowledged in educational literature, its role in systematically reducing errors and fostering long-term improvement in composition writing has not been sufficiently explored in the Sudanese context (Alsmadi et al., 2022; Ali, 2023).

The central purpose of this study is to demonstrate the importance of giving feedback to learners as a mechanism for reducing writing errors and improving writing composition gradually. By empirically examining how different types of feedback influence students' writing performance, this research aims to contribute to improving writing instruction practices and supporting learners' progress in English composition, in alignment with theoretical frameworks such as Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), Game Theory (Akinwumi et al., 2017), and Deterrence Theory (Powell, 2008).

## 2. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the materials, procedures, and research design employed in this study. It provides a clear and structured explanation of the methodology used to collect and analyze data, ensuring the reliability and validity of the research findings.

### Study Design

The study adopted a descriptive analytical method, which is suitable for exploring existing conditions and assessing opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. As described by Kothari

(2004), descriptive research "includes surveys and fact-finding inquiries of different kinds. The main purpose of descriptive research is to describe the current state of affairs as it exists." Furthermore, Kothari emphasizes that the researcher does not manipulate variables but instead reports what is observed. This approach was deemed appropriate for the objectives of the current study, which aims to assess the role of feedback in improving students' writing skills and reducing errors in English composition.

### Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Khartoum State, specifically targeting English language teachers and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at the secondary school level. Student tests were administered at Karary Governmental Model School for Girls.

### Data Collection Methods

#### Primary Data

Primary data was collected through two instruments

**Student Tests:** A total of 70 test papers were administered to EFL students. The tests aimed to measure the students' writing ability before and after receiving feedback to determine any improvements in their written compositions.

#### Secondary Data

Secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed articles, prior research studies, and reputable internet resources. These sources helped to establish the theoretical foundation and support the interpretation of findings.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The following statistical tools, this quantitative analysis enabled the researcher to draw objective conclusions regarding the impact of feedback on students' writing performance.

## 3. Results

This section presents the findings related to the impact of immediate feedback on students' writing performance and error reduction. The responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including means, standard deviations, chi-square tests, and significance levels.

The overall data indicate a strong positive perception of the role of immediate feedback in helping students improve their writing skills and reduce errors. Table data were analyzed across various indicators reflecting how feedback influenced learners' behavior and self-perception in writing.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Stop repeating mistakes	3.28	1.278	28.600 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.000
Focus on mastering work	3.56	1.593	10.320 <sup>b</sup>	3	0.016
Focus on getting better	3.80	1.525	19.920 <sup>b</sup>	3	0.000
Self-satisfaction when they do something right or wrong	4.20	1.050	41.400 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.000
Identify and address difficult aspects. I need to go back to review work	4.02	0.937	48.000 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.000
My work needs additions	4.48	0.995	86.400 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.000
My current level compared to my previous level	3.92	1.192	23.400 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.000

### 1. Stopping Repeated Mistakes

The statement "Stop repeating mistakes" received a mean score of 3.28 with a standard deviation of 1.278, indicating moderate agreement among participants. The Chi-square test value was 28.600 with  $df = 4$  and a  $p$ -value of 0.000, which is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that immediate feedback helps students avoid repeating the same mistakes in future tasks.

### 2. Focusing on Mastering Work

For the item "Focus on mastering work", the mean score was 3.56 and standard deviation was 1.593. The Chi-square result (10.320,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ) also showed statistical significance. This implies that feedback contributes to students concentrating more on the quality and mastery of their written tasks rather than simply completing them.

### 3. Focusing on Getting Better

The statement "Focus on getting better" had a mean score of 3.80 with a standard deviation of 1.525. The Chi-square value was 19.920 ( $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), reflecting a significant tendency among students to perceive feedback as a tool for continuous improvement.

### 4. Experiencing Self-Satisfaction

The highest agreement was recorded for the item "Self-satisfaction when they do something right or wrong", which scored a mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 1.050. The corresponding Chi-square value was 41.400 ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), showing a very significant correlation between feedback and learners' emotional response to their writing performance.

### 5. Identifying and Addressing Difficult Aspects

The statement "Identify and address difficult aspects. I need to go back to review work" received a mean score of 4.02, with a standard deviation of 0.937. The Chi-square test yielded 48.000 ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating a strong agreement that feedback prompts students to revisit and revise their work, enhancing learning retention and understanding.

### 6. Recognizing the Need for Additions

The item "My work needs additions" showed a very high level of agreement with a mean score of 4.48 and a standard

deviation of 0.995. This item also produced the highest Chi-square value of 86.400 ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), confirming that feedback effectively helps learners identify gaps in their work and motivates them to enhance it.

### 7. Comparing Current to Previous Performance

The item "My current level compared to my previous level" achieved a mean of 3.92 with a standard deviation of 1.192. The Chi-square value was 23.400 ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), suggesting that learners use feedback to monitor their progress over time and recognize their own improvement.

The statistical results support the hypothesis that immediate feedback plays a significant role in reducing writing errors and improving student performance. Most statements showed high mean scores (above 4.00) and significant  $p$ -values ( $< 0.05$ ), indicating strong consensus among participants about the positive impact of feedback on various aspects of writing, including self-evaluation, motivation, correction of errors, and revision strategies.

These findings align with the theoretical perspective that feedback not only corrects errors but also fosters metacognitive awareness and self-regulation, both critical for long-term writing development.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence supporting the positive effect of immediate feedback on students' writing performance and error reduction. The analysis demonstrated that most students acknowledged the role of feedback in helping them avoid repeated mistakes, focus on mastering tasks, and improve their writing gradually. These outcomes are consistent with prior studies (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 2011), which emphasized that timely and constructive feedback is essential for language learners to reflect on their writing, recognize areas of weakness, and make necessary improvements.

The high mean values (above 4.0) in several items such as "My work needs additions" and "Identify and address difficult aspects" indicate that students not only accept feedback but also actively use it to guide their revisions. This supports the view that feedback should not merely correct surface-level errors, but rather serve as a learning tool that enables students to develop metacognitive awareness of their own writing process (Sadler, 1989). The feedback motivates learners to engage in self-correction and take ownership of

their improvement — which are core principles in autonomous learning (Little, 1995).

Interestingly, the emotional impact of feedback was also clear in the item “Self-satisfaction when they do something right or wrong”, which recorded a high mean (4.20). This reflects that learners derive confidence and motivation when receiving clear guidance on what they did correctly or incorrectly. Such findings are aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of interaction (including teacher feedback) in pushing learners within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The significant chi-square values across all items confirm that the responses were not due to random distribution, but rather reflect statistically significant tendencies. These results further confirm the hypothesis that feedback is a critical component in the writing development process, particularly when it is timely, specific, and consistent.

Moreover, the findings provide practical implications for English language teachers. Many students in Sudanese secondary school's struggle with writing not only because of limited exposure to the language, but also due to the lack of individualized feedback. This issue has been worsened by large class sizes, insufficient training, and the reduction of English instruction hours as noted in the introduction. Implementing structured feedback practices can thus bridge the gap between instruction and learning outcomes, and help revitalize the writing skill among EFL learners.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the role of feedback in reducing students' errors and improving their writing composition in Sudanese secondary schools. The results clearly showed that immediate and constructive feedback significantly enhances learners' ability to identify mistakes, revise their work, and gradually improve their writing proficiency.

Feedback was found to contribute to both cognitive and affective domains of learning — improving technical skills such as grammar and structure, while also enhancing students' motivation and confidence. The findings reinforce the need for educators to integrate feedback as a pedagogical strategy, not as a corrective measure alone, but as a formative tool that guides learners through the process of writing improvement.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

Teachers should provide regular, immediate, and specific feedback on students' writing tasks.

Teacher training programs must emphasize how to deliver feedback effectively and constructively.

Policy makers in the education sector should consider revising English language syllabi to include more writing tasks and feedback-focused activities.

Class sizes should be managed to enable individualized attention, especially in writing classes.

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