

Student perceptions on peer feedback training using a blended method: A UAE case

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The impact of peer reviewing for writers has been investigated extensively for the past three decades. Results have showed that peer reviewing improves writers' texts, helps in identifying their writing strategies, and develops their motivation and confidence. Less researched, however, are the ways that could improve the quality of peer-review feedback in an EFL context, compared with English dominant settings. To address this issue, the current study examined the effect of peer reviewing training on the motivation and engagement levels towards self and peer reviewing of undergraduate students who are Arabic native speakers at a foundation intermediate English class. Students received training on how to review essays and provide effective feedback on formal (related to English language structure) and global errors (related to the content and organisation of writing). Combinations of face to face training and self-paced training through mobile technology learning apps were provided to students for 10 weeks. Investigating students' perceptions and attitudes, this study found that combining peer editing training, face to face and mobile learning tools impacted positively upon EFL students' revisions and overall writing. Students were able to generate specific feedback on global as well as formal issues. This study concludes by presenting several practical implications and suggestions for future research.

Introduction

Interactionist theorists agree that for learning to happen, learners must have appropriate input to be able to produce output. To this end, Van Lier (1996) proposed three principles for learning: awareness, autonomy, and authenticity. These three concepts affect how and when students learn. Similar to the work of Schmidt (1992), Van Lier (1996) relied on the *noticing hypothesis* as an essential factor for learning. He explained that learners are able to notice their errors when they become aware of their own learning processes. When students are aware of the structures of language, they are able to notice their own output structures. As they advance to the second of Van Lier's concepts, they can produce accurate output without reliance on their mentors. The third level, which is authenticity, is achieved when learners are given a real life platform for their output.

Learning happens within a social process, where interaction, scaffolding, and/or cooperation from a mentor or a more capable peer greatly aids in the learning. The students cognitive ability is then assumed to be developed through the social interaction between a learner and a more knowledgeable peer (Vygotsky, 1978). As such, students extend their understanding when they are actively engaged in collaborative communities where they are supported by another adult or more experienced peer.

Usually, teachers are the main agents for increasing students' awareness and noticing of their errors by providing them with the necessary input as well as the tools for autonomous and authentic output. Additionally, teachers have the capacity to provide the

instruction and training needed for students to do a successful editing of their own writing and provide effective peer-editing contributions to others (Diab, 2010). This training is fundamental for equipping students with a knowledge of the topic and elevating their attitudes towards peer feedback practices (Wang, 2014). Peer feedback is a reliable and valid approach for encouraging students' collaborative learning and increasing their engagement with their learning. Additionally, this approach is considered as a tool for measure student learning and attainment in a way that develops these features, by advancing their abilities for critical thinking and self-evaluation (Boase-Jelinek, Parker & Herrington, 2013).

When comparing peer feedback to teacher feedback and self-feedback, peer feedback on editing and revisions is a valuable complementary source for EFL students. It raises their awareness of their own writing strengths and weaknesses and fosters ownership and autonomy (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al., 2008). It also increases the number of revisions on the ideas expressed and their organisation (Diab, 2011). By contrast, according to Hojeij and Hurley (2017), teacher feedback is a one-way passive process for the students and does not develop their autonomous output skills. Considering all of the above, training EFL students on peer feedback is fundamental for improving the quality of feedback provided for revision or editing purposes (Wang, 2014). To maximise the potential of this training, EFL students could be trained in class by their teacher and outside the classroom through mobile technology tools or apps.

At present little is known about current trends in training and peer feedback and peer editing in an Arabic EFL context. Additionally, factors influencing peer feedback and peer editing in relation to students and teachers have not been investigated thoroughly in this context. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate undergraduate Emirati students' perceptions and attitudes towards peer editing training as a fundamental contribution towards improving the quality of their academic writing. This study will also examine the levels of their motivation and engagement in self-paced training through accessing mobile learning apps. Specifically, the present qualitative study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions towards their classroom training for peer editing/reviewing?
2. Do students find the ubiquitous training features of mobile tools motivating in terms of peer editing and peer feedback?
3. To which extent do students believe that this training has improved their academic writing quality?
4. What are the teacher's perceptions of the benefits and limitations of students' training for peer editing and feedback?

Literature review

Peer feedback has been found very beneficial when EFL college students are learning to write and revise (Berg, 1999; Min, 2006). Discussing each others' written work and reflecting on errors can improve the students' writing, train their assessment skills, and

support collaborative learning (Alqassab, Strijbos & Ufer, 2018; Min, 2006; Smith, 2017). However, since students are not experts, they require training on how to edit. As peers are not considered knowledge sources, there may be some resistance to accepting their comments or suggestions (Strijbos, Narcisse & Dunnebier, 2010). One way to overcome this opposition is through training. Training to give peer feedback may be based on the theory of scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994). Scaffolding can be described as a learning process or instructional support that helps students to develop initial learning skills, and then as the learners become competent in accomplishing new tasks, support is gradually reduced (Sun, Wang & Chan, 2011). Yang, Yeh & Wong (2008) proposed four stages in scaffolding: modeling, practice, fading, and independent application. *Modeling* relates to the teacher who provides explicit guidance and demonstrations to the students. *Practice* refers to opportunities which students have to repeat the learning skills. *Fading* is when the teacher lessens the support, as students gradually take responsibility for learning and become more engaged. *Independent application* refers to the learners becoming fully able to provide peer feedback on their own.

Peer feedback in second language writing has been demonstrated to lead to a significant amount of learning (Rahimi, 2013). It is more compatible with the learners' level of proficiency as opposed to teacher feedback, which makes it more manageable for the students to work with. However, to ensure a higher quality of peer feedback and revisions, it is important to train students for generating specific revisions responses and higher engagement in the peer editing process (Hu, 2005; Stanley, 1992; Zue, 1995). More specifically, proper teacher training and guidance provided by teachers to ESL/EFL novice writers lessens their struggle and supports their offering of specific and helpful feedback (Leki, 1990; Tsui & Ng, 2000). This training also develops positive attitudes toward peer editing and peer feedback (Hu, 2005). Peer comments and revisions made after training were of higher quality and focused more on content as opposed to language structure (Berg, 1999; Min, 2005). As such, Min (2008) observed that after training, "peer comments were frequently revision-oriented, engaging writers in clarifying intentions, reflecting on ideas, and puzzling out meanings in collaboration with peer reviewers" (p. 301).

Moreover, analyses conducted after students received peer feedback showed progress in their writing in both *formal* and *global* issues. Min (2005) characterised formal errors as errors related to the content and organisation of writing, such as word usage, grammar, spelling, and punctuation; whilst global errors are concerned with idea development and organisation. Min's (2005) results indicated that the quantity of peer feedback comments improved with training, as the students were able to produce more relevant and meaningful comments. Such training will strengthen students' domain knowledge because they are exposed to same assignment at least twice and engaged with the same material at various levels (Smith, 2017). Additionally, involving students in peer feedback training will improve their perspective about peer feedback provision if their domain knowledge and skills are at a similar level with the task presented (Alqassab et al., 2018).

Peer feedback training in writing can lead to improvement of a student reviewer's own writing (Boase-Jelinek, Parker & Herrington, 2013). Overall, there are acknowledged

benefits to encouraging students to review each other's work. The students whose work is reviewed benefit from getting other perceptions on how to improve their work, and those doing the revisions also benefit from processing and analysing their peers' work. This might also impact their own work positively (Boase-Jelinek, Parker & Herrington, 2013).

Despite the importance of peer feedback as highlighted above, it remains a controversial issue among some different contexts. In China and Hong Kong, peer feedback was not perceived an effective source while feedback from teachers remained the main source for improving the writing quality (Sengupta, 1998; Fei, 2006). This is again related to the view that teachers are the main source for the information. In the Arab world, where peer feedback is not taken seriously due to the traditional beliefs of both students and faculty, there are doubts about passing knowledge from student to student (Al-Sawalha 2016; Mynard & Almarzouqi, 2006).

However, research showed that trust was established and the peer feedback was considered effective when students were provided with proper training (Fei, 2006; Alqassab et al., 2018; Wang, 2014). Such training targets the provision of peer feedback on different levels, namely task, process and self-regulation, and prepares students to scaffold the learning according to the task level (Alqassab et al., 2018; Rahimi, 2013). Students may be trained also on evaluating and providing peer feedback based on a proper guideline sheet or rubric. Using a guideline sheet has positively increased the perceptions and ability of Indonesian undergraduate students in writing essays (Cahyono & Rosyida, 2016). This is mainly due to the structure of these sheets that helps the students evaluate their peer writing based on five components (content, organisation, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics).

On the other hand, peer feedback has many drawbacks. Peer feedback had the lowest score when compared with peer feedback guided by a tutor, and teacher feedback (Van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans & Mulder, 2017). Smith (2017) explained that student motivation and time allocated are two important inhibitors for providing good feedback quality. Anonymity of the student is also important to consider in order to ensure constructive and collaborative work between peers. Moreover, the socio-cultural perspective in the Arab world plays a role in the provision of quality peer feedback. For instance, in an undergraduate program in Saudi Arabia, peer feedback was not focused on as a method for improve the quality of students English writing. Peer feedback was perceived more as an authoritative source and accepting it could depend on whether it is coming from a same or different gender student (Saba, 2015). Students reported that they appreciated the feedback coming from the teachers because of the natural authority that they have towards the students (Van Ginkel et al., 2017). Hence, to increase students' trust in peer feedback and boost their engagement, peer feedback training must improve their assessment skills and ability to provide feedback at the higher levels (Alqassab et al., 2018).

Training students in class or self-paced were found as equally beneficial for students learning outcomes (Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). Self-paced training offered through the use of technology has facilitated students' learning and engaged them independently of place, time or instructor (Park, 2011). Mobile learning provides flexibility

for students to access educational knowledge and materials anywhere and anytime, which in turn could produce a stronger interest among students towards learning (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009; Dew, 2010; Wang et. al, 2009). Additionally, learners found that learning with mobile devices is enjoyable specifically when they had expertise in using them (Clarke, Keing, Lam & McNaught, 2008; Rogers, Connelly, Hazlewood & Tedesco, 2010; Shih, Chen, Chang & Kao, 2010). Furthermore, ubiquitous mobile learning redefined the classroom by altering the roles of the teachers and the students, and by opening wider communication channels among peers and teachers (Motiwalla, 2007). In other words, it can complement or replace other teaching and learning methods, be modelled to support student learning, and provide feedback and remediation, motivation and guidance (Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). Another advantage in using mobile learning tools is expanding the possibilities for creating learning environments that attract student's diverse learning styles (Naimie, Siraj, Ahmed Abuzaid & Shagholi, 2010).

To summarise, literature from peer editing and peer feedback studies has found that after training, students provide more efficient, higher-quality feedback, with a focus on global rather than formal concerns. Thus, this peer feedback leads to a more developed and better-quality student writing. With that being said, the reviewed literature provides the theoretical and practical support for the current study. Theoretically, social learning theory offers substantial validation for peer editing and peer feedback. This is especially relevant for long-term improvement because scaffolding and training have a long-term impact on students' writing. Practically, peer feedback and interaction lead to improvement only if students are trained to provide modeling and experience in the reviewing of writing. This happens through careful instruction and training on the part of the teacher. Adding to this, using mobile learning tools for peer editing training and practice creates an active teaching and learning environment and increases involvement. Linking to the present study, the literature reviewed suggests there is a correlation between training students for peer feedback and their overall performance and engagement. The use of mobile learning tools is also regarded as a positive factor which contributes to higher motivation for students.

Method

Context

Zayed University (ZU) is one of the three public universities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It was established in 1998 and proudly bears the name of the Founder of the Nation – the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Zayed University has two campuses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi that welcome both national and international students. The University welcomes both male and female students, but in separate campuses as UAE local custom dictates no mixing of the genders (<http://www.zu.ac.ae>).

In the undergraduate programs, the students are mostly UAE nationals. National applicants can be admitted directly into the general education program if they have an EMSAT English Score of 1250, or an academic IELTS score of 5.5, or a TOEFL iBT 71+ score. The students in this study did not meet any of the above requirements and

therefore were enrolled in the English language foundations program, *Academic Bridge Program* (ABP), for the duration of 4 semesters before being eligible to join the majors. Upon completion of the ABP, students must have an IELTS exit score of 5.5 or above (<http://www.zu.ac.ae>).

The ABP has conducted its *iPad* initiative since 2012. All students have individual *iPads* and most of the course content is digital. They attend 20 hours of English language instruction per week, from Sunday till Thursday, as the UAE weekend is Friday and Saturday. The university has a learning management system, *Blackboard*, where all content is stored and through which digital assessments are conducted. The campus offers a very strong WiFi connection for student and faculty use with any devices they may have. Many students come to ZU with prior experiences with *iPad* or similar touch screen tablets. Additionally, the University offers unlimited technical support for all its students.

Students in the current study had not undertaken any previous formalised peer review activities in their course of studies. During their time in the ABP, the participants were enrolled only in the intensive English language course, with 20 contact hours per week.

Research design

Action research is the best systematic procedure that could help teachers be actively gathering information inside their classrooms to improve teaching and learning (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Through this design, teachers are the researchers who assess the difficulties, pose questions, gather data, and discover information to see what can be improved (Gay et al., 2009; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Additionally, action research contributes to the professional development of the teachers because it encourages them to examine their teaching practices and validate and challenge existing practices for the benefit of student outcomes (Gay et al., 2009). Among the various types of action research, this study followed a practical action research design conducted in the classroom of the researcher to investigate the role of training on peer feedback and peer editing using mobile learning tools. Gay et al. (2009, p.489) explained that in the practical action research the teacher has the authority to identify the problem, determine the data collection techniques, analyse and interpret the data and develop an action plan based on the findings. Therefore, collecting and analysing qualitative data was more appropriate for the purpose of this action research study because it will assist the researcher to collect participant perceptions in order to gain deeper insights and understanding of the investigated topic.

Participants

The participants in the present study comprised 15 female, Arabic-speaking university students. All were enrolled in the foundations program in an intermediate-level academic English course at Zayed University. Their study load was 20 contact hours of core English per week (about 1000 minutes). Their ages ranged between 18 and 20. The students were all in the same class for the full semester term. All the students in this study were of Arabic ethnicity with no differences in their nationalities. Their length of exposure to

English instruction ranged from 1-3 years. As part of their class level curriculum, they were required to write a problem-solution essay, drawing on external sources of reading and listening for ideas and support. These essays served as the content for the research. All participants had their own *iPads* with the necessary apps for this study.

To ensure that all the participants were equal with respect to their English language proficiency, an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test was given to them. Their scores were subjected to an independent t-test, which indicated no significant differences between the members of the group ($t = 2.50, p < 0.05$).

After having approval and ethical clearance granted by Zayed University prior to the project, students were assigned to complete the peer feedback training and finish the required tasks. Then, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to give them freedom to describe their own experiences and practices (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of these interviews was to collect participants' perceptions of the self-paced training provided and their peer editing experiences. A set of questions was developed, including, for example, "How useful were the peer editing examples that the teacher provided for you to follow?"; "What was your most favourite experience throughout the process?" Each interview lasted for twenty to thirty minutes, with recording on a password protected *iPad* kept locked in the researcher's office. The participants were asked to sign consent forms at the onset of the interviews and were guaranteed anonymity, being coded as numbers from 1 to 15. They were assured that the interviews aimed only to acquire their opinions and perceptions about the peer feedback trainings, and that no judgement would be made on the quality of the feedback that they will provide to their peers, and the activity would have no effect on their essay grade.

Procedure

The procedure centred upon three revised drafts of a problem solution essay. The students were asked to write a 4-paragraph essay of 400-500 words on the topic "Discuss the causes and effects of shopaholism in modern society", which was related to the theme of the unit of study. All students undertook the same topic. Prior to writing, the students worked with their teacher on a sample cause/effect essay adapted from an online resource (Appendix A). In pairs, the students read the sample essay and highlighted its various parts, then completed the outline skeleton provided (Appendix B). The outlines were shared in open feedback in the class by the teacher on a smartboard projector and basic guidelines for writing a cause/effect essay were introduced. Then, the revision training phase was initiated. Revisions to the student essays were based on peer feedback after a series of training sessions on peer editing given by the instructor. The peer training procedure was divided in three parts. In the initial input stage, specific writing strategies were introduced to the students through short, 3-6 minute instructional videos created by the instructor using *Powtoon*, a video-making website (<http://www.powtoon.com>). The instructor has more than seven years of experience in the English language teaching and ESL collaborated with another faculty member whose specialty is instructional design to create these videos. A specialised panel of three instructors and the Assistant Dean of the College of Education checked and approved the videos.

These videos addressed topic sentences, thesis statements, concluding sentences, cohesive devices, point of view, and finally supporting sentences. The videos were placed in a folder in *Dropbox* (<https://www.dropbox.com/>) where the students were asked to access and watch them on their own time before coming to their next class session. The topics were introduced and shared one by one. Once each topic video had been viewed at home, in class the students discussed the material.

In addition, in this stage, the students received training on how to edit for language as well as content. They practised on writing samples supplied by the instructor. Strategies for error correction and editing were discussed in class in order for all to familiarise and ready themselves for the next stage. The first two stages of scaffolding, modelling and practice were the focus during this stage. The instructor modelled how to edit and the students were given ample opportunities to practise the new skills. At the end of the first stage, the students wrote the first draft of their essays. They were asked to type their essays and keep them as soft copies.

The second stage was the actual implementation of the editing strategies learnt. Having watched the videos, taken notes and received training under the guidance of their instructor, students came to class with their first draft completed and were paired in order to begin peer editing. The pairing was random, each student wrote her name on a small piece of paper and then all folded papers were placed in a box and mixed. Pairs of papers were then picked at random by volunteers. The pairs were then asked to sit together. Thus, began the third stage of scaffolding, *fading*. As the students were ready to begin peer editing, the instructor's role faded thereby allowing the students to demonstrate what they had learned during their training.

In class, the students used the app *Notability* (<http://gingerlabs.com>) to share their drafts in PDF format via email, opening them in the app for editing. They were asked to edit for language while recording their discussion using the recording option in *Notability*. One student would read her partner's essay and edit the language mistakes she found and vice versa. The recordings and annotations made on *Notability* were then shared via email. After this initial peer editing session, the students reviewed and corrected their mistakes based on their partner's feedback before coming together to continue the process.

Once the formal editing was completed and language mistakes had been identified and corrected, the students met again to edit for content. The same procedure was followed – they read the essay and recorded their editing sessions. These recordings served as a resource for the redrafting of the essays as the students were asked to re-listen to these discussions before attempting to re-write. As a final step to this stage, the students wrote the second draft of their essays. At the end of this part, the students had achieved the fourth and final stage of scaffolding: independent application.

The last part of the process focused on authenticity. The students were asked to publish their second drafts on *Edmodo* (<https://www.edmodo.com>), for the whole group to read and comment on. This platform is secure and private. Only the students in the class had access to the group's page. This opportunity for sharing their work “publicly” provided an

additional incentive for the students to make sure the quality of their essays was high. The whole group read each other's papers and discussions about mechanics and content ensued. Having their essays up on the platform for all to view provided the participants with an authentic experience of sharing and added to the credibility of the process as they were held publicly responsible for the quality of their work. Throughout this process, the instructor was monitoring the exchange remotely and intervening when necessary. After one week working with *Edmodo*, the students were asked to submit a final draft to the instructor for a grade.

Overall, the process took 30 hours spread over 13 weeks to complete. The students undertook a total of 20 hours of in class activities and 9 hours of self-paced independent work. A total of 12 hours was allocated for peer feedback in class training while the remaining 8 hours were allocated for other activities described in Table 1.

Table 1: Peer feedback training and activities timeline

	Week	Activity	Hours per week
In class activities	1-2-3	Training (input, modeling, and practice)	4 (12 hours total)
	4	Writing of first draft	2
	5	Peer feedback/editing (formal errors)	2
	6	Peer feedback/editing (global errors)	2
	7	Writing of second draft	2
Self-paced independent work	8	<i>Edmodo</i> discussion forum peer feedback	3
	9	Revisions to second draft based on <i>Edmodo</i> peer feedback	3
	10	Submittal of final draft (3rd) to the instructor for a mark	2
	11	Evaluation of essays	2

By the end of the 10th week, all students had written one full essay consisting of 4 paragraphs. They had finished 12 hours of training and completed three drafts of their work. It is worth mentioning that the partners remained the same throughout the process; the students did not change partners. Figure 1 further illustrates the steps of the process.

Data collection

The data collection process was based on three qualitative evidence tools. The first one was data based on interviews with each of the participants being asked about their opinions and experience with the apps and the peer editing process as a whole. A total of 15 one on one interviews were conducted with each student in English for 20 to 30 minutes after the students submitted their final drafts. A total of 12 semi-structured questions (Appendix C) focused on (1) usefulness of the peer editing process, (2) usefulness of training for peer editing and review, (3) usefulness of using mobile learning tools (apps) for peer editing, and (4) the most and least favourite experiences throughout the process. The interviews were recorded on the researcher's *iPad* and later transcribed and coded anonymously, highlighting common trends and points of view.

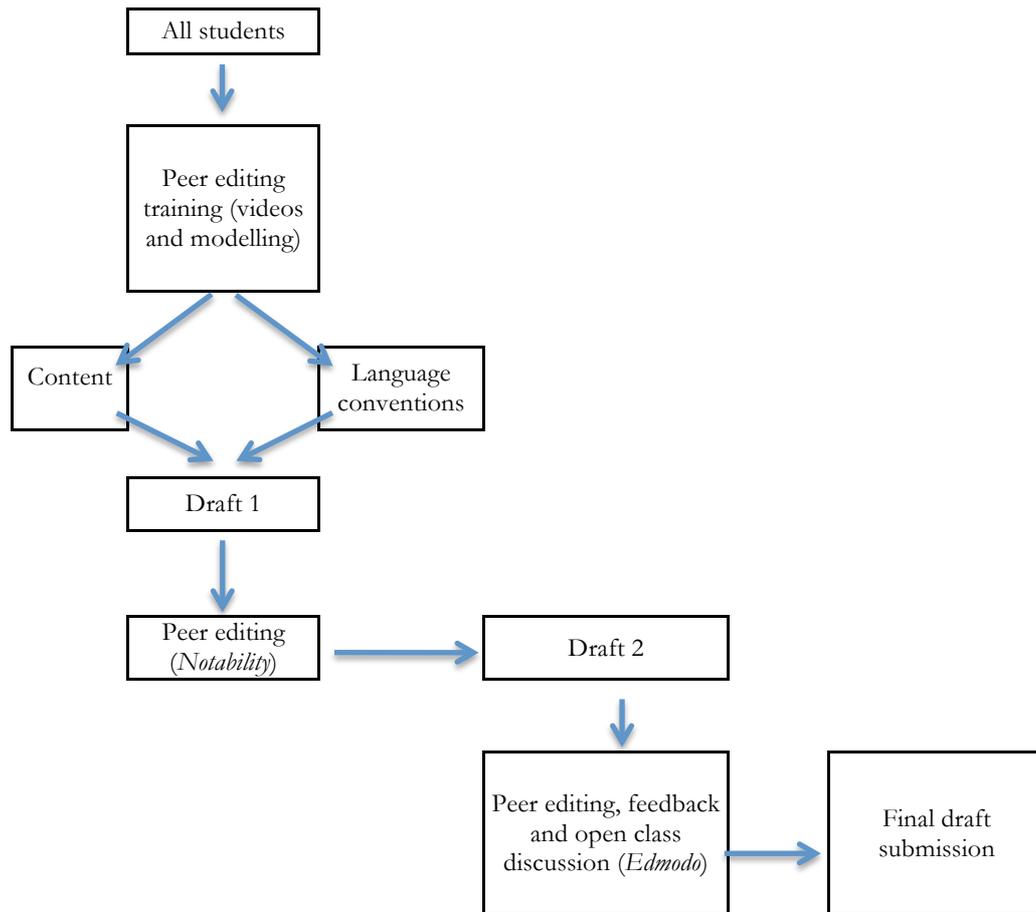


Figure 1: Steps in the training program for peer editing

Second, the students were asked to write a 250 words maximum evaluation of the process at the completion of the activity and after they submitted their final drafts. They were asked to type their reflections and submit them in hard copy anonymously in a sealed envelope to the office of the researcher. These response evaluations were an extension to the interviews. They gave the participants the chance to express any opinions or suggestions that they missed in the interview or did not feel comfortable sharing in person regarding their opinions on and perceptions of the peer editing training and process. In these reflections students were also encouraged to discuss any ideas they have relating to the experience as a whole.

Finally, the investigator kept journals and noted down her experiences and observations of the process and the student errors and engagement. Data collected from all tools were combined and analysed in relation to the project research questions.

Data analysis

The researcher transcribed and analysed data generated from the interviews following Langdridge's (2007) *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA). This technique is advantageous because it includes a thorough investigation of the interview transcriptions in order to pinpoint and categorise key ideas and topics that transpire from the interviews (Langdridge, 2007). As such, after transcribing the audio files, the researcher read the verbatim transcripts multiple times while adding explanation comments in the left-hand margin. On the right-hand margin, the researcher mentioned the emerging topics from the answers. Students' anonymous reflections and teacher's journals were analysed through open coding, categorisation, and thematic analysis. Common themes were colored coded and organised in columns based on their frequencies. Then connections were made between the emerging topics of transcriptions and reflections together in order to create a table of common themes (Table 2). Extracting common themes such as noticing own errors and identifying content errors from language errors helped identify the effectiveness of the training on the quality of feedback. In terms of students attitudes towards using mobile technology throughout the process of peer editing and review, common themes such as frequency and duration of using the tool helped the researchers determine the motivation level towards the technologies.

Table 2: Major category themes and frequencies

Category	Response records coded to category	% total records (N=15)	Top terms/term groups in category (frequency)
Content editing	14	93%	Ideas are developed and completed; ideas are focused; elaborating own ideas; expanding their opinions; flow of ideas; coherence and cohesion of essay; organised essay.
Language editing	12	80%	Noticing own and other errors; correction of grammar mistakes; correction of spelling errors; specific language comments; reviewing language structures.
Self-confidence	11	73%	Increased English language skills and acquisition; provide feedback to partner; higher quality of work; recognising what they are looking for.
Motivation	10	67%	Frequency in mobile app use; duration of mobile app use; made the process easier.

Results

In answering the first two research questions of this study, which focused on (1) the students' perceptions and insights on the face to face training they received for peer editing and on (2) using mobile learning tools to carry out the process, data was combined from the interviews and the reflections. Findings can be allocated into two categories: students as reviewers and students as writers. Below is a summary of the findings in relation to these guiding questions.

Students as reviewers

All 15 students expressed mainly positive opinions in both their interviews and reflections about the training and peer editing process. As Participant #3 stated:

Thinking about my mistakes and the way I use English is not something I used to do before the training we did in class. Now, I feel more confident when I write, I have specific points to focus on. Also, when my friend reads my paper or my work, I don't feel so bad anymore because I know what to look for and what she will look at.

Participant #6 added, "This was a new experience for me and I feel that it helped me with my own English writing". There was general agreement that the training helped them become better reviewers because it helped them notice errors in different ways. Participant #10 explained:

It helps me to know what I need to focus on when I write. This is the same for my friend. When I read her paper, I look for the same things. We all make the same kind of mistakes almost and when I reviewed her paper, I saw some of the same mistakes I make in my writing.

Additionally, Participant #8 said "There are some mistakes that I don't pay attention to in my paper but when I read my friend's work, I pay attention to mine also."

From the participant responses and researcher's observation notes, four general areas of improvement were identified: language level, writing skill, confidence, and motivation. The first benefit of the training is students' increased ability to give global and formal feedback on their partner's essays. 93% (14 out of 15) of participants reported that their ability to notice content and language errors improved as a result of the training which was conducted prior to the peer editing stage. Participant #2 said:

At first, I only tried to correct the grammar and spelling mistakes as much as I can. Then we had to look at the ideas and see if they are complete. This is not easy! We practised looking at complete ideas and at full explanations. The teacher helped us find a way to make sure ideas are developed and not short.

Also, Participant #10 indicated:

We needed to correct more than the punctuation and spelling. Sometimes I could tell something is wrong with the sentence, like it doesn't make sense but the grammar is correct. Or like there needs to be more like the meaning is not complete. I asked my teacher then and she helped me.

The second benefit is related to English language acquisition. 80% of the students (12 out of 15) indicated that the training and peer editing process helped them sharpen their English language skills. They were able to review specific language structures and they had to look up certain items in order to give feedback to their partners. Participant #2 said:

I don't like grammar. I get confused when I think about it. When the teacher showed us what to look for, it make it easier on me to work with the grammar with my paper and my friend.

Moreover, Participant #3 added:

English grammar is difficult for me but that is why I am in this class and not in the majors. The teacher helped me with what I need to look for when correcting my friend's essay. I tried my best.

In contrast, some students were apprehensive and freely expressed their concerns. Participant #1 clarified:

I'm not good at grammar. It's very difficult. I don't like it and I don't do it well. I can't correct other people. This practice didn't help me to be better in English grammar. I think I am still the same.

In addition, an example from the researcher's notes based on student work is given below:

As an Arabic speaker, I understand why many of my students struggle with the use of the present perfect/simple past combination. In Arabic, there is no equivalent to the present perfect and many of the students get confused when they attempt to use it. Teaching them to look for the differences in simple past and present perfect use helped most of them to stop and notice their own understanding of these two tenses. Revisiting this grammar point has helped them to focus again on the differences between these tenses and to make an effort to think about them while writing. Also, while editing, they were able to revisit and discuss the use of the two tenses. This discussion brought about an additional opportunity for noticing.

The third benefit is self-confidence. 73 % (11 out of 15) of total participants reported that the training helped the weaker students to notice and anticipate errors. They explained that their confidence gain from editing their peers' work is because they knew what they were looking for. Participant #6 explained:

I am not good at writing. I don't like to do it. After we studied how to review, I can do it now. I am more sure of myself when I write and when I read my friend's paper also. I know what I am looking for.

Participant #7 stated:

When I know what I'm looking for then I make sure I don't do the same mistake in my essay. I'm not afraid of making many mistakes anymore. I am more sure of my writing.

In contrast, Participant #9 expressed her concerns:

I'm not sure how the training will make me more sure of myself or give me more confidence. I'm still not good at English. I know I'm not at high level and I'm still making mistakes. Lots of them.

The last advantage is directly related to the use of the mobile learning tools. 67% of the students (10 out of 15) pointed out that using the apps helped them in their peer editing process. They mentioned that because of the apps, their motivation was higher and their anxiety was lower. Considering this was their first experience with peer editing, these 10 students indicated that the apps made the process easier and more engaging for them. Participant #8 stated:

We used our iPads to record our voices reading the essays. I like using the iPad for reading my friend's work. It is fun. I also like making my marks on her work with the highlighter and the colours. When I finish, I just send email to her and she can see and hear my comments. For me, I really like this way. It's better than paper.

Students as writers

With regards to the third research question, on the extent to which students believe that the training improved their academic writing quality, 87% (n=13) of the students thought that the peer editing training they received helped them as writers. They learned from the input videos and class discussion how to organise their essays, how to focus their ideas, and how to expand their opinions. Participant #4 explained:

I feel more confident when writing now. The sessions and training helped me to organise my ideas in a better way and to explain my ideas also. I learned how to write better.

Looking at editing content helped them in elaborating their own ideas in a more effective way. After the training, they were able to give specific comments on each other's work, which in turn allowed them to notice their own errors in writing, correct and/or avoid them to an extent, as Participant# 3 contended:

I learned how to work with my ideas and my organisation. I'm sure the practice we did in class helped me to write better.

The examples below further illustrate this point.

Draft 1: Peer feedback 1

In the first draft, the peer feedback is minimal and the quality of feedback is not very strong (Figure 2). As such, the student was not given much to work with. This feedback was given very early on during the training sessions (session 1).

There are a lot of problems that shopaholism suffer from. The first problem is that a lot of people feel lonely. For example, they sit alone and don't communicate with others. The second problem is shopaholism can get into a debt. For example, people take a money from the bank after that they get into a debt.

Although these problems are huge, there are some solutions that will help reduce these problems. One of the ways that society can help these people by supporting them by create a support centers. The second way that they can go to consigning to help them.

→ Solutions

In conclusion, shopaholism face many problems such as less communications with others and get into a debt. However society can help these people and and there family and make there life easier by creating support centers. In these way we can help them to lead happy life.

Figure 2: Example of first draft feedback

Draft 2: Peer feedback 2

In the second draft, the student was able to correct most of her errors on her own and to recognise where she should also work on content (Figure 3). After going through the training sessions, the student identified her own errors and rectified them, despite last of adequate feedback at the early stages of training.

There are a lot of problems that shopaholism suffer from. The first problem is that a lot of people feel lonely. For example, they sit alone and don't communicate with others. The second problem is shopaholism can get into a debt. For example, people take money from the bank and after they get into a debt.

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In conclusion, shopaholism face many problems such as less communication with others and get into debt. However, society can help these people and their families and make life easier by creating support centers. This way, we can help them lead a happy life.

Figure 3: Example of second draft feedback

The fourth and final research question focused on the teacher's insights on the process as a whole, combining training students for peer editing and using mobile tools to aid in the process. Due to the training and current approach to peer editing, the instructor observed a greater willingness to write on the part of all students. There was high student satisfaction with having control over the training materials at home (the videos and notes), which led to greater motivation, especially for the weaker students. There was also increased motivation to use the technology; the layering of the apps at the different stages of the process created an additional incentive for the learners. The teacher noted that the apps permitted students to cooperate and construct knowledge and to interact with a larger range of content. For instance, she mentioned in her journal:

I saw a significant improvement in their engagement and motivation by the time we got to the last step. Publishing their work on the classroom page in *Edmodo* increased their sense of ownership and made the whole process more authentic. It was suddenly an open shared process.

Finally, there was equal voice in the pair work while editing. Both students in each pair were equally important, which led to a very positive attitude and general experience:

Everyone in the group could read and comment on others' work and this was a driving force for many to go the extra mile and make sure their work was good. They didn't want to be put in an uncomfortable position in front of the whole group.

Discussion

The purpose of this action research paper was to investigate undergraduate EFL students' perceptions towards peer editing training. A combination of face to face and self-paced training through the use of mobile learning apps was provided to students for a period of

10 weeks. The qualitative analysis of individual interviews in addition to students' and teachers' reflections revealed that students as writers and as reviewers expressed positive attitudes toward the training and peer editing process. All students appreciated the training because they benefitted from it on the linguistic level as well as on improving their self-confidence in English writing. Peer feedback training helped them focus on global errors, comment on language issues, recognise and consciously anticipate their own errors in their writing, increase self-confidence as writers and reviewers, and create a classroom community. As research suggests, being able to focus on global aspects of writing, idea development and organisation, is as important as formal aspects such as grammar and spelling. Peer review/editing is successful when students are able to strike a balance and address both aspects (Leki, 1990; Min, 2005; Truscott, 1996). The majority of students involved in this research were able to reach this stage and make this balance because they were able to approach the writing process from two different perspectives, as writers and as reviewers.

As the 15 sampled students were within the same range of English language proficiency, but of the various skills, interaction and support provided from a more skilled peer helped student writers and reviewers to progress. This is in accord with social learning theory which indicates that the improvement made was mainly the result of the interaction, discussion, and thinking out aloud within each pair of students. Furthermore, students' ability to communicate increased whenever they were required to explain, discuss, and negotiate. Similar to Min's (2005) findings, effective peer feedback was seen whenever students were involved in socio-cognitive abilities such as reading, questioning, pointing to errors, discussing ideas, and giving specific comments. As a result of getting involved in such activities, there was an improvement in the writing and reviewing abilities of the learners, and a significant increase in engagement in the editing stages.

Additionally, the apps used allowed for a diverse range of benefits. The students were able to review the video resources at home at their own pace, in order to master the topics of the training; they were able to keep and learn from prior drafts of the writing task; and they were able to gain a sense of ownership and empowerment over their work. By using a three-layer mobile learning approach to facilitate in the peer editing and redrafting process, the students were more motivated and engaged. In alignment with Clarke et al. (2008) and Cavus and Ibrahim (2009), student participants indicated that using mobile devices was convenient for them and enabled learning to be personalised, flexible and portable. As Participant #4 explained:

Using more than one app helped me to finish the work easily. I think the videos were really good and I watched them many times. Then we used another app to write and mark each other's essay. This was fun. And when we put the work on *Edmodo* and everyone could see it, it was also useful. It made me want to do a better job so everyone in class can see what I can do.

The increase in their interest also affected their collaboration and results. Moreover, learning with mobile technology allowed students to expand dialogue and enquiry beyond the physical classroom. At the end of the process, the final platform (*Edmodo*) allowed the

students to come together as a community to share and comment on the final drafts before submissions. Having the open platform made them more accountable for the quality of their output.

Finally, the teacher's journals revealed that the dual role as writers and reviewers helped the students to better perceive their partner's needs and address them, because they all wrote on the same topic and so they faced similar challenges both globally and formally. As a result, the learners had the chance to learn how to revise, make comments, and model concrete suggestions as reviewers, which also translated into helping them as writers in their own essays.

Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

The focus of this action research paper was on training undergraduate EFL students with scaffolding to become peer editors. Training was provided through the teacher following a carefully designed step by step process of scaffolding. Face to face training was combined with self-paced training through the use of mobile learning apps, to ensure that students could access the training materials as much as they need to, anytime and anywhere. Collecting student perceptions through interviews and reflections, as well as teachers' reflections, indicated an improvement of the quality of peer feedback and editing. Students were able to give specific comments and helpful feedback on global and formal errors. Moreover, in the process of becoming good reviewers, students also learned to become better writers. In terms of using the mobile apps for training purposes, students reported positive attitudes towards using mobile tools to complete the process of peer editing. Mobile learning was found to enhance students' ability to learn and apply course content in context with other students. Moore and Teather (2013) stated that peer feedback increases students' responsibility, promotes independent learning, and prepares them for authentic professional experiences. It gives them the chance to give and receive constructive criticism, which increases their ability to work with others successfully.

Based on the results of this practical action research, the teacher was able to identify and gain a deeper understanding of her ESL students' weaknesses. She developed an action plan for sharing the results with her college in order to improve the practice of peer editing, promote students' independent learning, as well as increase students' motivation and self-confidence in English essay writing. As part of this action plan, the teacher suggested the implementation of the same peer editing process across other types of essays students have to write (i.e. opinion, narrative, persuasive) and to be applied at the beginning of the previous course level in order to provide students with more peer editing opportunities.

This teaching and learning activity is considered to be novel in this particular context, which is traditionally more teacher-centred. Therefore, this new approach created a dynamic/active learning space for the students to be more engaged in the feedback process. This, in turn, positively affected their motivation, autonomy, and writing skills. This project aimed to employ technology to shift the evaluation control from the teacher to the student and to create new strategies for editing, noticing, improving and sharing written work.

Limitations

It is important to note that there are some gaps in the current research, especially in how to improve the quality and consistency of peer feedback. The researchers acknowledge that the small sample size (15 students), the homogeneity of the student group (all female, all in one university, one class, one department), the restrictions of the assignment (although in various drafts, only one assignment was used throughout the editing process), and the restrictions on the apps used (three specific apps were chosen to be used, no variety or alternate choices were given) all impose limitations on generalising the results of this study. Additionally, the design of this research limits the goal of the study to solve problems of local concerns rather than producing knowledge generalisable to wider population. Thus there is considerable scope for further research.

Implications and recommendations

Despite these limitations, this study offers new insights into the importance of both classroom and self-paced training to aid Arabic EFL students in their acquisition of editing skills. Additionally, this study emphasises the importance of integrating mobile tools to increase students' motivation and attitudes towards peer review processes. This study provides practical implications for instructors and interested faculty in EFL settings who implement a training process and procedure to follow in their own classrooms, to improve the effectiveness and quality of self and peer editing. Further research is recommended to investigate specific language outcomes and writing style changes in students' writing, as the focus of the present study was on the use of mobile tools to assist students in their editing. This paper describes the students' perspectives and experiences with peer feedback using mobile technology and aims to improve the quality of feedback. Our results showed that there are many ways to improve teaching practices by giving students a chance to review each other's work and give feedback on it.

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Appendix A: Sample essay

Obesity in the world today

Despite global poverty, there is also global obesity. This demonstrates the imbalance the world is in now. In the world today, there are about two billion overweight individuals, and this number keeps growing (CNN). Obesity is a dangerous condition which has several causes and harmful effects.

To begin, fast food is the main cause of obesity. The country with the highest rate of obesity in the world is Nauru, which is a tiny island close to Australia. According to *WorldAtlas*, topping the list are small Pacific Island nations such as Samoa, Tonga and Kiribati, to name a few. Approximately four of every five citizens of these countries are obese or overweight. The reason is almost all of the food these island nations are imported and therefore expensive, but fast-food chains offer a cheap and convenient alternative.

Lack of exercise is the second reason for obesity in many countries. To illustrate, the *WorldAtlas* states that “75 percent of Middle Eastern countries’ population is overweight and well over a third is considered obese. With scorching hot temperatures of up to 40 degree Celsius, regular ‘natural’ exercise such as walking is not common with an increasing embrace for western fast food restaurants in recent years.” Besides the food choices of the citizens of these nations, the environment is conducive for relaxation. This makes exercise and doing hard work less preferable. Many wealthy native people of Middle Eastern countries have others who work for them, while they own companies and lands. This lack of movement makes them gain more weight.

Thirdly, low income and education are a main factor for obesity. In the United States, as Walter Willett, chair of the department of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, states, “Part of this is due to lower incomes and education, which result in purchases of cheap foods that are high in refined starch and sugar. More deeply, this also reflects lower public investment in education, public transportation, and recreational facilities. The bottom line: cheap, unhealthy foods mixed with a sedentary lifestyle has made obesity the new normal in America” (*U.S. News & World Report*).

In conclusion, obesity is a global catastrophe in modern nations which leads to early death, heart issues, and other medical problems. The lack of access to quality food, a lack of exercise, and a lack of education about health all contribute to obesity. According to the statistics, obesity rates are continuing to rise. Only time will tell what will stop this epidemic.

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Adapted from:

<https://academichelp.net/samples/academics/essays/cause-effect/obese-countries-world-list.html>

Appendix B: Sample outline cause/effect essay

I. Introduction

i. Hook:

ii. Thesis statement:

II. Causes of _____

Support 1 _____

Support 2 _____

Support 3 _____

III. Effects of _____

Support 1 _____

Support 2 _____

Support 3 _____

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion _____

Appendix C: Peer editing interview questions

A. Usefulness of the peer editing process.

1. What do you think of peer editing?
2. How did you find the peer editing process for this project? What did you find difficult to learn to do?
3. How useful did you find the quality of feedback from your partner?
4. Did you feel comfortable giving feedback to your partner?

B. Usefulness of training for peer editing and review.

5. How useful were the peer editing examples the teacher provided for you to follow?
6. Did the teacher provide enough input throughout the peer editing training?
7. Did you have clear instructions on what you were editing and how to do it?

C. Usefulness of using mobile learning tools (apps) for peer editing.

8. To what extent did the technology help you notice errors?
9. Which apps did you find the most useful?
10. How easy was it to use the apps?

D. Most and least favourite experiences throughout the process.

11. What was your most favourite experiences throughout the process?
12. What was your least favourite experience throughout the process?

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