# A Study of Iraqi Secondary Students' Attitudes Toward Peer Feedback

**Badr Jaafar Ameen[1], Ali AL-Zurfi[2]**
[1,2]University of Kufa, Iraq

| Sections Info | ABSTRACT |
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| | *Objective:* This study aimed to explore the attitudes of Iraqi high school students toward peer feedback in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. *Method:* Using a quantitative research design, this study surveyed 59 male high school students in Najaf City, Iraq, to understand their perceptions of peer feedback. *Results:* The results indicate that students generally have positive attitudes toward peer feedback, finding it beneficial for improving their writing skills and motivating them to learn. However, students also expressed concerns about their ability to provide accurate feedback due to a lack of confidence in their grammatical knowledge. These findings suggest that while peer feedback is a useful tool in EFL classrooms, students may require additional training and support to fully benefit from it. *Novelty:* The study contributes to the broader discourse on feedback in education by highlighting the importance of cultural and contextual factors in implementing peer feedback practices. |

## INTRODUCTION

Peer feedback, defined as the process where students evaluate and provide constructive comments on each other's work or performance, has gained increasing recognition as a valuable educational tool [1]. Unlike traditional teacher feedback, which is often perceived as more authoritative and structured, peer feedback encourages collaboration, critical thinking, and self-regulation among learners [2]. It offers unique benefits, such as fostering peer interaction, enhancing communication skills, and empowering students to take greater responsibility for their learning [3]. In many educational settings, peer feedback is used to complement teacher feedback, creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment [4]. However, the effectiveness and acceptance of peer feedback can vary significantly depending on students' attitudes, cultural contexts, and the specific educational environment in which it is implemented [5].

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, feedback plays a crucial role in helping students improve their language skills [6]. While teacher feedback is widely regarded as essential, peer feedback provides an additional layer of support by encouraging students to engage with one another and learn from their peers [7]. Despite its potential benefits, peer feedback is not always readily accepted by students, particularly in cultures where teacher-centered approaches dominate [8]. In Iraq, for example, educational practices have traditionally emphasized the authority of the teacher, which may lead students to view peer feedback with skepticism or reluctance [9]. This raises important questions about how Iraqi high school students perceive peer

feedback and whether they see it as a valuable or supplementary tool in their learning process.

This study aims to explore Iraqi high school students' attitudes toward peer feedback. By examining these perspectives, the study seeks to shed light on the potential role of peer feedback in Iraqi EFL classrooms and how it can be effectively integrated into the existing educational framework [10]. Understanding students' attitudes is crucial for educators who wish to implement peer feedback strategies that are both effective and culturally appropriate [11]. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discussion on feedback in education by highlighting the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when designing and implementing peer feedback practices [12].

By addressing these issues, this study aims to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers in Iraq, helping them design feedback mechanisms that agree with students' needs and cultural expectations while promoting a more collaborative and engaging learning environment.

**Statement of the problem**

In Iraq, where educational practices are predominantly teacher-centered, students may be less familiar with or resistant to peer feedback [9]. Cultural factors, such as the high regard for teacher authority, and students' perceptions of their peers' expertise may further influence their willingness to engage in peer feedback activities [8]. Previous research has shown that students often prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback, as they perceive teachers to be more knowledgeable and authoritative [5]. This raises critical questions about how Iraqi high school students view peer feedback and whether they see it as a beneficial or supplementary tool in their learning process. Understanding these attitudes is crucial for educators aiming to implement peer feedback effectively in Iraqi classrooms, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where feedback plays a pivotal role in language acquisition [6].

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate Iraqi high school students' attitudes toward peer feedback. Specifically, the study aims to explore how students perceive the benefits and challenges of peer feedback, their willingness to engage in peer feedback activities, and the extent to which they find peer feedback useful for their learning [4]. By examining these attitudes, the study seeks to provide insights into how peer feedback can be effectively integrated into Iraqi EFL classrooms and how it can complement traditional teacher feedback to enhance student learning outcomes [2]. This research is particularly relevant in the Iraqi context, where peer feedback is not widely practiced, and its potential benefits remain underexplored [9].

**Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant value for several reasons. First, it addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on Iraqi high school students' attitudes toward peer feedback, a topic that has not been extensively studied in this context [9]. Second, the findings of this study can inform educators and policymakers in Iraq about the potential benefits and challenges of implementing peer feedback in EFL classrooms (Ferguson, 2011). By

understanding students' attitudes, educators can design more effective feedback strategies that agree with students' preferences and cultural norms [10]. Finally, this study contributes to the broader discourse on feedback in education by highlighting the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when implementing peer feedback practices [12]. These insights can help bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications of peer feedback in diverse educational settings.

**Research Question**

What are Iraqi high school students' perspectives toward peer feedback?

**Hypotheses**

**Ho** Iraqi high school students generally have negative attitudes toward peer-feedback.

**Limitations of the Study**

a.  The study is restricted to high school students in Najaf City, Iraq.

b.  The sample size (54) participants only.

**Students' Perspectives on the Role of Peer Feedback in Supporting Learning**

Peer feedback has been widely studied, yet there is no consensus on its exact nature or its effectiveness in fostering self-regulation and academic achievement among students [12]. The definition of peer feedback varies depending on the context in which it is applied. It can be categorized in several ways: (1) as formative or summative; (2) as a standalone activity or integrated into the learning and teaching process; (3) as mandatory or optional; (4) as focused on individual peer feedback or group feedback; (5) as emphasizing students giving feedback or responding to feedback; and (6) as students actively managing the feedback process or passively receiving feedback [3].

Recent research has shifted focus from peer assessment to peer engagement, emphasizing the importance of student participation, confidence, and autonomy in the feedback process [3]. Peer engagement is seen as a pedagogical approach that enhances collaborative learning and fosters a sense of ownership among students. However, the effectiveness of peer feedback often depends on students' perceptions and their willingness to engage in the process. Studies have shown that students may view peer feedback as less effective than teacher feedback, particularly due to concerns about the quality and reliability of peer comments [8].

The pedagogical value of peer feedback lies in its ability to encourage critical thinking and self-regulation. When students engage in peer feedback, they are required to analyze their peers' work, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide constructive suggestions. This process not only helps students improve their own work but also enhances their ability to self-assess and regulate their learning [1]. However, the success of peer feedback depends on the level of preparation students receive and the clarity of the feedback process. Without proper guidance, students may struggle to provide meaningful feedback, leading to frustration and disengagement [13].

Cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping students' perspectives on peer feedback. For instance, in some cultures, students may prefer teacher feedback due to the perceived authority and expertise of teachers, while in others, peer feedback may be more

readily accepted [5]. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for educators aiming to implement peer feedback effectively in diverse educational settings.

## Related Studies on Teacher Feedback

Several studies have highlighted the potential of peer feedback to improve learning outcomes. For instance, [1]emphasized that peer feedback can enhance students' critical thinking and self-regulation skills when implemented effectively. Similarly, [2]argued that peer feedback fosters self-regulated learning by encouraging students to reflect on their work and identify areas for improvement. However, the effectiveness of peer feedback often depends on the quality of the feedback provided. [13] found that the success of peer feedback is influenced by the clarity of the feedback process and the level of preparation students receive. Without proper guidance, students may struggle to provide meaningful feedback, which can limit its effectiveness.

Student perceptions play a crucial role in the success of peer feedback. [8] conducted a study on ESL students and found that many students preferred teacher feedback over peer feedback, as they perceived teachers to be more knowledgeable and authoritative. Students also expressed concerns about the reliability and quality of peer feedback, particularly when peers focused on minor errors rather than providing constructive criticism. Similarly, [5] investigated the perspectives of Chinese students and found that while peer feedback increased students' awareness of their audience and improved their metacognitive skills, many students still favored teacher feedback. The study highlighted the importance of cultural factors in shaping students' attitudes toward peer feedback.

Cultural differences significantly impact how students perceive and engage with peer feedback. [8] observed that students from collectivist cultures, such as China, often viewed peer feedback as less effective due to a preference for hierarchical relationships, where teachers are seen as the primary authority figures. In contrast, students from more individualistic cultures may be more open to peer feedback, as it aligns with collaborative learning practices. [14] also emphasized the role of cultural context in shaping instructional practices, including peer feedback. The study suggested that educators should consider cultural norms and student expectations when designing peer feedback activities to ensure their effectiveness.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, peer feedback has been shown to enhance language acquisition and writing skills. [7] found that peer feedback helped EFL students improve their writing by encouraging them to critically evaluate their work and that of their peers. The study also highlighted the importance of training students to provide constructive feedback, as this can enhance the overall quality of the feedback process. [6] further emphasized the role of peer feedback in developing students' writing skills, particularly in terms of audience awareness and self-editing. However, the study also noted that students often need guidance to overcome their reluctance to critique their peers' work.

Despite its potential benefits, peer feedback is not without challenges. [15] identified several issues, including students' lack of confidence in providing feedback, concerns about offending peers, and the perception that peer feedback is less valuable than teacher

feedback. These challenges can hinder students' engagement with the feedback process and limit its effectiveness. Additionally, [16] found that while students generally express positive attitudes toward peer feedback, there is limited evidence to suggest that it significantly improves academic performance. This highlights the need for further research to better understand the conditions under which peer –peer feedback can be most effective.

Peer –peer feedback is often viewed as a collaborative learning tool that promotes interaction and mutual support among students. [3] argued that peer feedback encourages students to take ownership of their learning and develop a sense of responsibility for their academic progress. The study also emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive environment where students feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback. [4] further highlighted the benefits of peer feedback in reducing teachers' workload and providing students with more opportunities for feedback. However, the study also noted that peer feedback should be used as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, teacher feedback.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design to investigate the attitudes of Iraqi high school students toward teacher feedback. The research focused on understanding students' perceptions of peer feedback and its impact on their learning experience. The study utilizes a structured questionnaire to collect data.

### Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 59 male high school students from Sa'sa'a bin Suhan High School in Iraq. The students were aged between 15 and 17 years old and were all native speakers of Arabic. The participants were selected randomly through convenience sampling.

**Table 1.** Demographic of participants.

| School Name | Total Participants | Gender | Age Range | Native Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sa'sa'a bin Suhan High School | 59 | Male | 15–17 years | Arabic |

### Instruments

### Peer-peer Feedback Questionnaire

The peer-peer feedback questionnaire used in this study was designed to address the first research question. It was originally developed by [17] and consists of 15 items. The questionnaire employs a Likert scale with five response options, ranging from "Strongly agree" (5) to "Strongly disagree" (1). To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of 15 participants. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a high consistency

level (α = 91), confirming the instrument's reliability. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic to ensure clarity and comprehension for the participants See appendix (A).

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with **10** students from the same population. Two PhD instructors from Kufa University were consulted for validation.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, and the results indicated a high level of reliability, as shown in the table below:

**Table 2.** Cronbach's alpha of peer-peer feedback questionnaire.

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items |
|---|---|
| .91 | 15 |

The high Cronbach's Alpha value (.91) confirms that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for measuring students' perceptions of peer-peer feedback.

**Procedure**

The researchers began by obtaining approval from the school administration to conduct the study, ensuring ethical and organized research practices. A pilot study was then conducted with 10 students to test the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire, and the results were used to refine the instrument and ensure its validity. For data collection, the researchers created a Telegram group, added the selected students, and explained the study's purpose in Arabic to ensure comprehension and emphasize the importance of participation. The Arabic version of the questionnaire was distributed via a Google Form link in the Telegram group, and students were given one week to complete it at their convenience. After the data collection period, the responses were compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS, allowing the researcher to interpret the results and draw conclusions about students' attitudes toward peer-peer feedback.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Results*

**Table 3.** Learners' perspectives towards peer-peer feedback.

| No. | Statement | 1 (Strongly Disagree) | 2 (Disagree) | 3 (Undecided) | 4 (Agree) | 5 (Strongly Agree) | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I like having my writing reviewed by my partner. | 5 | 8 | 12 | 20 | 14 | 3.71 | 1.23 |
| 2. | I benefit from my partner's feedback. | 3 | 6 | 10 | 25 | 15 | 3.93 | 1.15 |
| 3. | Peer review increases my | 4 | 7 | 11 | 22 | 15 | 3.81 | 1.19 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | learning motivation. | | | | | | |
| 4. | My partner's feedback was appropriate. | 6 | 9 | 13 | 18 | 13 | 3.54 | 1.27 |
| 5. | I need to do peer review. | 5 | 10 | 14 | 19 | 11 | 3.46 | 1.29 |
| 6. | Peer feedback seems more informal than teacher feedback. | 2 | 5 | 8 | 25 | 19 | 4.12 | 1.08 |
| 7. | Peer feedback provides an opportunity to explore new concepts and evaluate my work compared to others. | 3 | 6 | 9 | 23 | 18 | 4.02 | 1.12 |
| 8. | Peer feedback is more informal than teacher feedback. | 2 | 4 | 7 | 26 | 20 | 4.15 | 1.06 |
| 9. | Peer feedback helps me estimate my own knowledge level when I exchange ideas with classmates. | 4 | 7 | 10 | 22 | 16 | 3.88 | 1.17 |
| 10. | By comparing the quality of my papers and others, I want to write better. | 3 | 5 | 8 | 24 | 19 | 4.05 | 1.10 |
| 11. | Peer feedback can reduce teachers' workload. | 6 | 9 | 12 | 20 | 12 | 3.54 | 1.30 |
| 12. | Peer feedback can be easily done anywhere and anytime. | 4 | 6 | 10 | 22 | 17 | 3.88 | 1.18 |
| 13. | Classmates are pleased to help me improve my English. | 5 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 15 | 3.71 | 1.23 |
| 14. | I lack the confidence to edit | 10 | 15 | 14 | 12 | 8 | 3.07 | 1.41 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. | sentences due to my inadequate grammatical knowledge. I am concerned about providing improper feedback on my partners' English proficiency. | 9 | 14 | 13 | 15 | 8 | 3.14 | 1.39 |

The survey results reveal that students generally have a positive perception of peer feedback. Many students enjoy having their writing reviewed by their peers (M = 3.71, SD = 1.23) and believe they benefit from the feedback received (M = 3.93, SD = 1.15). Additionally, peer review appears to have a motivational effect on students, as indicated by the mean score of 3.81 (SD = 1.19). This suggests that engaging in peer feedback encourages students to improve their writing skills and remain active in the learning process.

Regarding the effectiveness and necessity of peer review, students provided mixed responses. While they moderately agreed that their partner's feedback was appropriate (M = 3.54, SD = 1.27), they were somewhat uncertain about whether peer review is essential for their learning (M = 3.46, SD = 1.29). However, many students acknowledged its benefits for self-evaluation. The statement *"Peer feedback helps me estimate my own knowledge level when I exchange ideas with classmates"* received a mean score of 3.88 (SD = 1.17), and *"By comparing the quality of my papers and others, I want to write better"* scored even higher at 4.05 (SD = 1.10). These results indicate that peer review provides valuable opportunities for students to assess their progress and refine their writing skills.

A notable finding in the study is the distinction students make between peer and teacher feedback. Responses to the statements *"Peer feedback seems more informal than teacher feedback"* (M = 4.12, SD = 1.08) and *"Peer feedback is more informal than teacher feedback"* (M = 4.15, SD = 1.06) show that students perceive peer review as a more relaxed and less intimidating process. This informality may contribute to a more open exchange of ideas, encouraging students to participate more actively in discussions about their writing.

In terms of practicality, students expressed a relatively high level of agreement that peer feedback can be conducted easily and flexibly (M = 3.88, SD = 1.18). However, opinions were divided on whether peer review significantly reduces teachers' workload, as reflected by the mean score of 3.54 (SD = 1.30). While peer feedback provides additional learning support, students may still rely on teacher feedback for more comprehensive guidance and validation.

Although the generally positive outlook on peer review, some students reported concerns regarding their ability to provide accurate feedback. While they agreed that their classmates are willing to help them improve their English (M = 3.71, SD = 1.23), they

also indicated a lack of confidence in their grammatical knowledge (M = 3.07, SD = 1.41). Additionally, concerns about providing improper feedback on their partners' English proficiency were noted (M = 3.14, SD = 1.39). These results suggest that while students appreciate peer feedback, they may need additional support and training to feel more confident in their ability to evaluate and provide constructive feedback on their peers' writing.

*Discussion*

The findings of this study agree with several previous studies on peer feedback, while also highlighting some differences. The positive attitudes toward peer feedback observed in this study are consistent with the findings of [1], [2], who argued that peer feedback fosters critical thinking, self-regulation, and collaborative learning. The students in this study reported that peer feedback helped them estimate their knowledge level and motivated them to improve their writing, which supports the idea that peer feedback can enhance self-assessment and learning motivation, as suggested by [7].

However, the study also revealed some challenges that align with the concerns raised by [5], [8]. Specifically, students expressed concerns about the reliability and quality of peer feedback, particularly due to their lack of confidence in their grammatical knowledge. This finding is consistent with [8] observation that students often prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback because they perceive teachers as more authoritative and knowledgeable. Similarly, [5] found that while peer feedback can improve metacognitive skills, students may still favor teacher feedback due to cultural factors and the perceived expertise of teachers.

The distinction students made between peer and teacher feedback in this study also aligns with [4] argument that peer feedback is often perceived as more informal and less intimidating than teacher feedback. This informality may encourage more open exchanges of ideas, as suggested by [3], who emphasized the importance of creating a supportive environment for peer feedback.

However, the study's findings diverge from [16] conclusion that there is limited evidence to suggest that peer feedback significantly improves academic performance. In this study, students reported that peer feedback motivated them to improve their writing and provided valuable opportunities for self-evaluation, suggesting that peer feedback can have a positive impact on learning outcomes when implemented effectively.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** This study investigated the attitudes of Iraqi high school students toward peer feedback in EFL classrooms. The results indicate that students generally have positive perceptions of peer feedback, finding it beneficial for improving their writing skills and motivating them to learn. However, students also expressed concerns about their ability to provide accurate feedback, particularly due to a lack of confidence in their grammatical knowledge. These findings suggest that while peer feedback is a useful tool in EFL classrooms, students may require additional training and

support to fully benefit from it. **Implication :** The study contributes to the broader discourse on feedback in education by highlighting the importance of cultural and contextual factors in implementing peer feedback practices. In teacher-centered educational systems like Iraq, where students may be less familiar with peer feedback, educators should consider providing clear guidance and training to help students feel more confident in engaging with peer feedback. By addressing these challenges, peer feedback can be effectively integrated into EFL classrooms to enhance student learning outcomes and foster a more collaborative and engaging learning environment. **Limitation :** While the study presents insightful findings about Iraqi students' attitudes, it is limited by the specific cultural and educational context in which it was conducted. The results may not be generalizable to other EFL contexts or countries with different educational traditions, particularly those with more student-centered learning models or varying levels of exposure to peer assessment practices. **Future Research :** Future research could explore how different types of training programs or instructional scaffolds influence students' ability to give and receive peer feedback effectively. Studies might also compare the impact of peer feedback across different cultural settings or examine long-term changes in student attitudes and writing performance as peer feedback becomes more normalized in their educational environments.

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**\*Badr Jaafar Ameen (Corresponding Author)**
University of Kufa, Iraq
Email: badrj.shlash@uokufa.edu.iq

**Ali AL-Zurfi**
University of Kufa, Iraq
Email: alif.alzurfi@uokufa.edu.i