

L2 Writing Feedback Literacy and Writing Engagement Across Proficiency Levels: Focus on EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Feedback literacy as a knowledge vital for developing EFL learners' academic writing might be associated with several factors, including learners' second language (L2) writing engagement. Besides, variables such as learners' proficiency levels can affect the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement. This study investigated the relationship between 234 elementary (n = 85), intermediate (n = 78), and advanced (n = 71) Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' writing feedback literacy and writing engagement selected based on convenience sampling. After taking a placement test, they sat for a writing task adjusted to their proficiency level. Next, they answered a scenario-based L2 Writing Engagement Measure (WEM) and completed the Writing Feedback Literacy Questionnaire (WFLQ). The Spearman rank-order correlation indicated significant positive relationships between the three groups' feedback literacy and writing engagement. However, there were no significant differences in the relationships between EFL learners' feedback literacy and writing engagement across the three groups. The study's findings provide insights for L2 teachers, teacher trainers, and educationalists to enhance students' writing ability, feedback literacy, and writing engagement. Some suggestions for further research are proposed.

1. Introduction

Writing is the most challenging skill for EFL learners as they must simultaneously attend to different aspects of writing, such as lexicon, syntax, organization, cohesion, and coherence (Anh, 2019; Kashef et al., 2024; Ghaemi & Saeidrezaei Yazd, 2024). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writers should also coordinate cognitive and metacognitive strategies to produce good-quality writing and stay involved in the writing process (Lei et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023). Writing as a process requires second language writers to go through several phases. First, they should generate ideas, formulate them into sentences, follow planning rules to organize sentences coherently and cohesively, and draft and revise their writing products (Rashtchi & Porkar, 2020). Revising, as an essential step that can help learners produce good-quality writing and is pivotal in producing error-free compositions, usually occurs in response to feedback learners receive from teachers or peers. However, the issue is that learners should learn to focus on the feedback they receive and be able to implement the feedback in their writing. This ability is the underlying essence of feedback literacy. Accordingly, feedback literacy refers to students' ability to employ feedback while engaged in writing tasks, which, in turn, can foster their writing skills (Carless & Boud, 2018). Thus, focusing on the provided feedback is critical in improving one's writing (Nieminen & Carless, 2023). The decisive role of feedback on students' writing

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performance is supported by research findings, which show that receiving feedback leads to improvement in the writing quality of learners (Rashtchi & Mirshahidi, 2012; Szlachta et al., 2023; Wu & Schunn, 2021). However, increasing the effect of feedback requires focusing on several factors, including the quality of feedback, raising learners' attention, and encouraging them to use such data in their writings, topics that feedback literacy attempts to clarify.

Feedback is a growing concept that has evolved and found different meanings to support learning. The concept of feedback literacy can find its roots in Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding theory, which highlights the role of more knowledgeable individuals in helping learners gain information. As implied, teachers' feedback plays a supporting role in students' performance of learning tasks. The same idea is also proposed by Bruner's (1962) scaffolding theory, which states that learning occurs through the opportunities more informed individuals provide learners. Further, Bloom et al.'s (1971) ideas regarding the role of teachers as supporters of students' learning through tailored input give a new meaning to feedback. Nicol and Mcfarlane-Dick's (2006) explanations of quality feedback give way to the concept of summative and formative assessment, which are the initiating steps for developing feedback literacy theory.

In line with cognitive and constructivist theories, SLA researchers have developed a different view of feedback, changing it from simply giving information to engaging in a knowledge-construction process (Dweck, 2006; Panadero et al., 2018; Sadler, 1989). Such a view portrays itself in the underlying concept of formative assessment, which, contrary to summative assessment, emphasizes the two-way dynamic process of teaching and learning (Lipnevich & Panadero, 2021). This type of assessment motivates learners to engage in writing tasks (Yu et al., 2020) and promotes learning outcomes (Beaumont et al., 2011).

The core concept of feedback literacy is understanding, interpreting, and employing feedback to improve writing skills, which learners should employ while revising and editing their written products. Such activities help learners engage in learning and achieve higher learning outcomes. Thus, students' capacity to use teachers' feedback in writing is the core concept of feedback literacy. The primary factor in feedback literacy is students' attention to the teacher's feedback on their writing. Without such attention, the feedback will go unnoticed, thus failing to improve students' writing performance (Quinton & Smallbone, 2010; Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

The current study's researchers assume that feedback literacy can equip learners with the necessary attention, which is the prerequisite for improving the quality of their writing. However, for fruitful use of feedback literacy, students' engagement in the process of writing is vital. Thus, the present study's main focus was on feedback literacy and intended to examine whether it is associated with the degree of writing engagement. The researchers selected English proficiency as a moderator variable that could determine the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement. In other words, the current researchers were interested in exploring whether individuals with different levels of language proficiency showed different degrees of literacy in feedback and engagement in writing.

2. Review of Literature

Feedback embraces the information individuals receive and use to improve their learning and promote their performance. However, the quality of feedback is a determining element in learning. For Yang and Carless (2013), valuable feedback includes enhancing students' engagement through having dialogs with students; helping students understand their role in giving meaning to feedback by teaching them to be self-regulated; cultivating collaborative and group work activities; considering students' feelings and emotions when receiving and applying feedback; and flexibility in providing deadlines and applying feedback to their work and integrating various ways of feedback provision such as using different software or technology. Feedback is a two-way process involving teachers and students. As teachers should provide feedback on students' performances, students should also be able to make sense of the feedback, a view that perceives feedback as a process that scaffolds learning (Carless & Boud, 2018; Winstone et al., 2021). This view gives way to the concept of feedback literacy, which embraces students' ability to focus on feedback and extract the essence of the information they have received. Thus, the central issue in feedback literacy is students' sufficient

attention to the feedback they receive and implementing it to promote their learning strategies (Carless & Boud, 2018; Nieminen & Carless, 2023).

Carless and Boud (2018, p. 1316) propose a four-step model for promoting students' feedback literacy. The first step is teaching learners to "appreciate feedback," which refers to the ability to view feedback positively and value it as a process in which they can actively improve classroom tasks. As Carless and Boud argue, students should be able to decode teachers' messages and understand what they are required to do. The next step is "making judgments," through which learners need to be equipped with self-evaluation capabilities and make fair judgments to improve their work. Then, they should refrain from bias toward their performance, accept teachers' and peers' judgments of their work, and learn to be open to criticism, called "managing affect" in the model. The last step is "taking actions," which refers to applying feedback they have received to the tasks they are required to perform. Teachers' role becomes important when students start to take action and apply feedback to their work. They should adopt strategies to motivate learners to apply the feedback they have received and observe the changes in their learning outcomes. Thus, the primary issue in providing feedback is its effectiveness in boosting learning (Hyland & Hyland, 2019), which reflects the determining roles of teachers and peers in providing and implementing feedback (Yu & Liu, 2021). This view implies the interrelatedness of students' literacy in employing feedback and their capacity for self-assessment (Yan & Carless, 2022), which requires applying assessment criteria, reflecting, and making appropriate judgments.

Han and Xu (2021), in their study on Chinese undergraduate students, found that feedback literacy was affected by different dimensions, such as cognitive abilities and socio-affective characteristics, implying that individual differences and context were determining factors in feedback literacy. Ma et al. (2021) reported that while students did not believe online learning could enhance feedback literacy, they thought that feedback literacy had a crucial role in understanding feedback, making judgments, and applying them to their task performances. In another study, Yu et al. (2022) developed and validated a 28-item scale to measure learners' writing feedback literacy, highlighting the importance of such a scale in the domain.

Engagement, a multidimensional affective, cognitive, and behavioral trait, relates to students' achievements (Lei et al., 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). It is the driving force for active, deliberate, and deep involvement in performing tasks (Reschly & Christenson, 2022). Parsons et al. (2023) argue that engagement is an amalgamation of being motivated to write and getting engaged in writing, focusing on engagement as an intentional inner drive that requires active involvement. Writing engagement is the act of accomplishing writing tasks and has advantages for improving writing proficiency (Tao et al., 2022). As pivotal, writing engagement has been subject to many recent investigations. Yu et al. (2019) found that motivation and engagement in L2 writing classes were common traits among Chinese university students. Zhou and Hiver (2022) studied the relationship between self-regulated learning strategies in second-language writing, second-language writing engagement, and second-language writing procrastination among 816 participants. They reported that self-regulated learning strategies could predict students' writing engagement. They also found a negative correlation between students' engagement and procrastination, leading them to conclude that self-regulated learning strategies were associated with writing engagement. Zhu et al.'s (2022) study showed that writing self-efficacy was associated with engagement. Zhang et al. (2023) explored whether peers' comments could promote three EFL learners' feedback literacy during three months. The study showed positive changes in the participants' assessment criteria. However, they did not undergo similar changes due to differences in their language proficiency level. Besides, the researchers argued that factors such as decision-making, independence, and reflectivity could affect the participants' feedback literacy development. Fitriyah et al. (2024) investigated 30 EFL students' and two teachers' perceptions regarding feedback literacy. The questionnaire, interview, and observation findings provided insights regarding teachers' feedback. Teachers' feedback literacy, though enjoyed an acceptable level, was far from participants' expectations. The researchers reported that students' feedback literacy depended on their proficiency levels.

Proficiency level in L2 writing has been the focus of several studies (Demirkol & Demiroz, 2024; Révész et al., 2022; Vasylets & Marín, 2021) since it contributes to understanding and employing feedback, as Hattie and Timperley (2007) discuss in their seminal work. However, research

findings regarding the mediating role of proficiency level in the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement are inconclusive, considering other factors such as learners' capacity to understand, act on, and emotionally connect with feedback as more critical mediators of writing engagement (Carless & Boud, 2018). Consequently, this study aimed to find whether there is any significant relationship between EFL learners' feedback literacy and writing engagement across three proficiency levels. Focus on proficiency is significant since it can provide teachers with solutions to enhance learners' focus on the feedback they receive. Besides, it can help teachers adjust the language of their feedback to students' proficiency levels. Finally, it can partially clarify why some students do not pay attention to teachers' feedback.

Although some investigations have considered the moderating role of proficiency levels in studies on L2 writing (Zhang et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2022), previous studies have scarcely considered its role in the association between L2 writing feedback literacy and writing engagement. Accordingly, the current descriptive, correlational study explores the interplay between L2 writing feedback literacy and writing engagement of EFL students with different proficiency levels. Considering the study's objectives, the researchers proposed the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement of EFL learners with different levels of language proficiency?

RQ2: Is language proficiency level (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) a determining factor in the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement?

3. Method

3.1. Participants and Setting

The participants were selected from 360 Iranian male and female EFL learners aged 18 to 40 ($M = 25.11$, $SD = 6.11$) who studied English at different language institutes in Kurdistan province based on convenience sampling. The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) results enabled the researchers to select 234 participants, precisely at elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, the sample should comprise 186 individuals. Thus, the number of participants ($234 > 186$) was adequate ($M = 39.07$, $SD = 14.65$). The researchers grouped participants into three proficiency levels based on their scores on OQPT. Eighty-five participants at the elementary level ($M = 22.04$, $SD = 2.64$), 78 participants at the intermediate level ($M = 40.94$, $SD = 2.69$), and 71 participants at the advanced level ($M = 57.40$, $SD = 1.30$) formed the study groups. The skewness ratios for all three groups were normal (1.02 for the elementary, 0.84 for the intermediate, and 1.21 for the advanced groups, all falling within the range of ± 1.96). The participants were informed about the study and signed an informed consent form. However, they could quit participation at any stage. To show appreciation, they could take a five-session online writing course for free.

3.2. Instrumentation

The researchers used four instruments for collecting data: OQPT for determining the participants' proficiency level, a writing feedback literacy questionnaire to discover the participants' degree of literacy in employing feedback, a scenario-based writing engagement measure to determine students' degree of engagement, and writing tasks to examine their L2 writing proficiency.

3.2.1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). OQPT was used to examine participants' proficiency levels and enable the researchers to divide them into elementary, intermediate, and advanced groups. OQPT is a reliable and valid measure for assessing the language proficiency of non-native speakers. It contains 60 items and measures language performance in grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Examinees' language performance is assessed based on their scores which show their level of language proficiency from beginners to highly advanced, as provided by the test: beginner (0-17), elementary (18-29), pre-intermediate (30-39), intermediate (40-47), upper-intermediate (48-54), and advanced (55-60). The test and the evaluation criteria are available at (<https://www.vhs-aschaffenburg.de/fileadmin/vhs-aschaffenburg/PDF/OxfordTest.pdf>). The reliability index of the test using Cronbach's alpha was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.88$).

3.2.2. Writing Feedback Literacy Questionnaire (WFLQ). WFLQ consisted of 28 items on a 5-point Likert scale from (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) developed and validated by Yu et al. (2022). The instrument measures five dimensions of feedback literacy, including appreciating feedback (items 1, 22, 26, 28, 9, 2, 8, 11, 4, 15), acknowledging different feedback sources (items 25, 3, 5, 7, 12), making judgments (items 20, 10, 13, 19, 18), managing affects (items 23, 21, 17), and taking actions (items 6, 16, 14, 24, 27). Yu et al. have reported desirable psychometric properties for the instrument by utilizing exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and Cronbach's alpha indices (Appendix A).

3.2.3. Writing Engagement Measure (WEM). Zhou and Hiver's (2022) WEM, adopted from Martin's (2009) Motivation and Engagement Scale, was used (Appendix B). Before administering the measure, the researchers asked five experts to approve the relevance of the items. The instrument consists of three scenarios, each including five options. The participants were supposed to score each item from zero to 20. Thus, the total score for each question could be between 0 to 100. The participants were asked to read the items carefully, reflect on their behaviors, emotions, and cognitive engagement while participating in a second language writing class in the past, and give themselves a score (0-20).

3.2.4. Writing Tasks. Three writing tasks appropriate to participants' proficiency levels were selected. The writings enabled the researchers to evaluate the participants' writing ability. The topic for the elementary level participants was: "*After a long time, you have completed your studies and returned home. Write an email to your friends at the university,*" selected from the Key English Test (KET). For the intermediate learners, the writing topic selected from the Preliminary English Test (PET) was: "*You have just attended a conference in the UK. Write an email to your friends in Iran. You may tell them about your safe journey to the UK, enjoying most about your journey.*" The advanced-level participants wrote on a topic selected from International English Language Testing System (IELTS) task two: "*Some people think that living in big cities is a blessing for them. However, others think that living in a village is a privilege. Discuss both viewpoints and provide your opinion.*"

Two university instructors with more than ten years of teaching writing experience scored the writings using Allen's (2009) rubric (Appendix C). The rubric was selected because it easily differentiated between elementary, intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels (Allen, 2009). The inter-rater reliability computed through the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient showed high conformity between the two raters ($r = 92$). The participants' writing scores were the mean of the two ratings.

3.3. Procedures

For sample selection, the researchers administered OQPT to 360 learners studying English in different language institutes in Kurdistan. As gathering all learners in one place and at a particular time was impossible, the researchers administered the test at three different intervals in three weeks. Then, three groups with varying proficiency levels were selected: elementary (scores between 18 and 29, $n = 85$), intermediate (scores between 40 and 47, $n = 78$), and advanced (scores between 55 and 60, $n = 71$).

In the next step, the three groups performed a writing task selected from KET, PET, and IELTS. The purpose was to select writing topics appropriate for each proficiency level. The tests are designed for elementary (A2), intermediate (B2), and Advanced (C2) levels, respectively (see <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teach-ielts/test-information/ielts-scores-explained>). This stage took three sessions (one session for each group). The time allocated for the writing tasks was 45 minutes for all groups. The duration of the writing tasks was devised after consulting with five experienced university instructors who taught writing. Two IELTS examiners rated the writings; the mean of the two ratings formed the writing scores of the participants.

In the third step, the WEM (as explained in the instruments section) was administered immediately after completing the writing task. This step was followed by answering the WFLQ. The

third and fourth steps lasted one hour. At the Final stage, the participants' scores from the two instruments were entered into SPSS 26 to run the pertinent statistical analysis to address the research questions.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and z -values were used for data analysis. Since the distribution of the scores was not normal, the researchers used the non-parametric Spearman correlation coefficient. The z -value was calculated to find significant differences among the correlation indices.

4.1 Participants' Writing Performance

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics obtained from the groups' writings. The elementary group ($M = 12.58$, $SD = .98$), the intermediate group ($M = 16.23$, $SD = 1.00$), and the advanced group ($M = 22.16$, $SD = 1.02$) enjoyed a normal distribution, the skewness and kurtosis ratios falling within the range of ± 1.96 .

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Participants' Writing Performance

Groups	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Elementary	85	11	14	12.58	.98	-.84	-1.79
Intermediate	78	15	18	16.23	1.00	1.12	-1.82
Advanced	71	20	24	22.17	1.02	0.19	-1.98

4.2. Preliminary Analysis

Table 2 shows the skewness and kurtosis ratios obtained from the WFLQ and WEM. As shown, the skewness and kurtosis ratios for WEM in the elementary group (2.66), intermediate group (2.32), and advanced group (2.24) were not normal (beyond ± 1.96). Besides, the kurtosis ratios for WEM in the elementary group (3.58) and advanced group (2.29) indicated the violation of the normality condition (Pallant, 2007). Thus, the researchers used the non-parametric Spearman correlation coefficient. The z procedure score was run to find significant differences among the correlation indices.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Feedback Literacy Questionnaire (FLQ) and Writing Engagement Measure (WEM)

Groups	Measure	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
Elementary	FLQ	85	61.00	126	85.50	31.92	.44	-1.14
	WEM		21.00	89.00	63.50	6.31	2.66	3.58
Intermediate	FLQ	78	42.00	128.00	84.59	28.07	1.008	-0.62
	WEM		20.00	97.00	75.12	5.67	2.32	1.83
Advanced	FLQ	71	43.00	123.00	82.21	25.36	0.76	-1.12
	WEM		20.00	97.00	86.23	5.46	2.24	2.29

4.3. First Research Question

The results of the Spearman correlation indicated a statistically positive and significant relationship between EFL learners' feedback literacy and writing engagement in the three groups. As Table 3 shows, the elementary group ($n = 85$, $r = .50$, $p < 0.001$), the intermediate group ($r = .53$, $n = 78$, $p = < 0.001$), and the advanced group ($n = 71$, $r = .49$, $p < 0.001$) showed statistically significant correlations with feedback literacy and writing engagement. Following Cohen's (1988, pp. 79-81)

index, the coefficient of determination values for the elementary group ($r^2 = .25$), the intermediate group ($r^2 = .28$), and the advanced group ($r^2 = .24$) were small.

Table 3
Correlation Between Participants' Feedback Literacy and Writing Engagement in Three Groups

Spearman's rho	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Correlation	.50**	.53**	.49**

**Significant (2-tailed), $p \leq 0.001$

4.4. Second Research Question

The second research question investigated significant differences in the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement across proficiency levels. To answer the question, first, the researchers converted the obtained r values to z values based on the transformation table of r to z (Pallant, 2007, p. 140) and then used the following formula.

$$Zobz = \frac{z1 - z2}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{N1 - 3} + \frac{1}{N2 - 3}}}$$

Thus, three sets of comparisons were made between (a) elementary and intermediate learners' feedback literacy and writing engagement, (b) elementary and advanced learners' feedback literacy and writing engagement, and (c) intermediate and advanced EFL learners' feedback literacy and writing engagement. The r values for the relationship between feedback literacy and L2 writing engagement for elementary and intermediate-level learners were .503 and .532, respectively, and the corresponding z values were .556 and .590. The $N1$ and $N2$ indices referring to the number of elementary and intermediate learners were 85 and 78. The $Zobz$ for the difference between the feedback literacy and writing engagement between elementary and intermediate learners was $.21 < 1.96$, indicating a non-significant difference between the elementary-level and intermediate-level learners' correlation indices.

The r values for the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement for the elementary and advanced level learners were .503 and .491, respectively, and the corresponding z values were .556 and .536. The $N1$ and $N2$ indices referring to the number of elementary and advanced learners were 85 and 71. The $Zobz$ for the difference between feedback literacy and writing engagement among elementary and advanced learners was $.074 < 1.96$, indicating a non-significant difference between the intermediate-level and advanced-level learners' correlation indices.

The r values for the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement for the intermediate-level and advanced-level learners were .532 and .491, respectively, and the corresponding z values were .590 and .536. The $N1$ and $N2$ indices referring to the number of intermediate and advanced learners were 78 and 71. The $Zobz$ for the difference between feedback literacy and writing engagement among intermediate and advanced Iranian EFL learners was $0.32 < 1.96$, indicating a non-significant difference between the intermediate and advanced Iranian learners' correlation indices. Thus, the correlation indices for each pair of relationships across the proficiency levels were not significantly different. Thus, it can be concluded that no significant relationship exists between feedback literacy and L2 writing engagement among Iranian EFL learners across proficiency levels.

5. Discussion

The present study showed that a significant positive relationship exists between feedback literacy and L2 writing engagement among Iranian EFL learners, and the relationship is uniform across proficiency levels and does not vary. In other words, the relationship is independent of the proficiency level. Thus, proficiency level does not mediate between feedback literacy and writing engagement. In line with Parsons et al. (2023), this finding urges the researchers to assume that learners' engagement

is necessary to encourage them to use feedback in writing. Thus, discovering the components of engagement (Parsons et al., 2018) and implementing them during classroom practices can contribute to attracting students' attention to the feedback they receive and thus improve their writing. This assumption takes the meaning of feedback literacy beyond the skills level and gives way to the idea that feedback literacy is a multidimensional trait, embracing cognitive capacity, social-affective capacity, and social-affective disposition (Han & Xu, 2021). Considering this view, the current researchers postulate that the classroom context might have a vital role in enabling learners to use the feedback they receive effectively, giving way to the supremacy of instruction over general cognitive developments (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, through instruction, teachers can encourage learners to focus on the feedback they receive, appreciate it, and apply it while writing. Activities such as group work for discussing the feedback received, cooperative error correction, and reciting the feedback for classmates can boost learners' attention and encourage them to actively engage in revising their writing. Moreover, free discussion on topics of interest, cooperative essay writing, and interactionist dynamic assessment can create a friendly atmosphere in class. Such activities can help teachers create rapport with students and help students overcome their negative emotions to accept the teacher's feedback. Following Carless and Boud (2018), the current researchers postulate that such activities can assist learners in appreciating teachers' feedback, understanding teachers' comments, and becoming open to criticism to improve their writing.

However, the findings showed a small coefficient of determination across the three groups, indicating that other variables might affect the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement. As Han and Xu (2021) argue, socio-affective characteristics, individual differences, and cultural context are determining factors that can affect the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement. Besides, as Hattie and Timperley (2007) put forward, the type of feedback, the tone of feedback, and the time of feedback are influential factors in determining its role in students' acceptance of feedback. In their study, Rashtchi and Mirshahidi (2012) found that the quality of feedback mattered for Iranian EFL learners. The participants preferred imperative comments to questions and statements, probably due to the Iranian educational system in which teacher-fronted classes were most common. The authors of the current study postulate that cultural factors, as well as educational systems, could be influential in learners' reactions to feedback. However, such intricate issues require researchers to go beyond descriptive studies.

Another issue worthy of attention is that contrary to the current study in which learners with differing proficiency levels did not show any difference in their level of feedback literacy and writing engagement, Zhou et al. (2022) reported that high-proficiency learners showed higher levels of feedback literacy when revising their writings compared to low-proficiency learners. Along the same line, this study's findings contrast with Zhang et al. (2023) and Fitriyah et al. (2024), who reported that the proficiency level of participants was a decisive factor in developing feedback literacy in L2 writing, leading the current researchers to assume that cultural factors, individual factors, and schooling system are factors that might play a role in feedback literacy.

On the other hand, as Li and Han (2022) put forth, students' perceptions of using feedback characterize student feedback literacy in L2 writing. The current researchers believe that teachers' classroom practices should be directed toward developing positive attitudes and creating constructive relationships with students to cultivate feedback literacy. In line with Garrison et al. (2010) and Yang and Carless (2013), the current researchers highly recommend that teachers consider sociocultural factors, such as questioning and answering, having dialogs, and group work activities when providing student feedback. Thus, good quality engagement highly depends on students' mindset about the feedback they receive (Winstone et al., 2017).

Teachers' role in increasing students' engagement is undeniable. They can cultivate students' engagement through constant communication regarding the feedback they have received to enhance their focus (Beaumont et al., 2011). Feedback literacy, as a decision-making and judgmental process (Carless & Boud, 2018), necessitates higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, besides language proficiency, teachers should try to cultivate students' focus on particular skills such as judging, decision-making, and evaluating. Following Carless and Boud, teachers should also help learners to be fair when dealing with feedback. Such abilities can help learners develop a sense of appreciation toward feedback, be open to criticism, and be ready to implement the comments they receive. By

developing such capacities, learners can gain active engagement in feedback and improve their writing skills (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

According to Yan and Carless (2022), developing self-regulation promotes feedback literacy. Panadero et al. (2018) argue that learners' evaluation of their work due to the feedback received plays a vital role in self-regulation. By adopting self-regulation strategies, teachers can cultivate feedback literacy and persuade learners to be responsible for their learning. Besides, they can have a more accessible job teaching writing to their students. In this perspective and aligned with the current study's findings, the researchers postulate that the necessity of engagement with provided feedback changes learners' roles from passive feedback receivers to active agents involved in a reciprocal process of meaning construction (Beaumont et al., 2011; Turner, 2023).

This study indicated that students with higher levels of feedback literacy are more likely to engage deeply with writing tasks, resulting in higher outcomes. This finding contributes to understanding how teachers can help learners develop their writing skills by clarifying that engagement in L2 writing classes should be fostered by teachers and should comprise part of their teaching routines. Such practices can help learners develop feedback literacy and learn how to treat the feedback they receive. Besides, the study shows that developing appropriate mentalities toward criticisms and comments shaped in feedback can improve writing feedback literacy and, thus, writing engagement (Dweck, 2006; Zhu et al., 2024).

6. Conclusion

This study showed that language proficiency is inadequate for grasping the message of feedback received by learners. Active engagement with the feedback received might play a critical role in feedback literacy, giving way to some pedagogical implications. This study has implications for EFL teachers. By getting insight from the findings, teachers can adopt practical strategies, design appropriate classroom techniques, and apply activities to boost higher-order thinking skills, such as making judgments, fairness, and unbiasedness to foster learners' writing engagement. Besides, teacher trainers can draw future teachers' attention to the techniques, strategies, and practices that encourage students to have positive feelings toward writing, reflect on writing tasks, and take action to improve their learning outcomes. They can also consider dynamic assessment a necessary component of their training program to draw future teachers' attention to the importance of feedback provision in writing classes. Educators and program developers can also devise activities to encourage teachers to view feedback provision as an inseparable component of writing classes, which can improve learners' feedback literacy.

Future studies can consider learners' personality characteristics and cultural factors in writing engagement to illuminate whether such differences mediate the relationships between feedback literacy and writing engagement. Training students to focus on teachers' feedback and explaining it to peers can be a good practice to explore whether such training can improve learners' feedback literacy. Besides, a comparison between feedback types (linguistic and metalinguistic) in encouraging learners to employ teachers' feedback can be a good area for further research. Another area for future studies can be the type of teacher feedback (direct or indirect) to enhance learners' feedback literacy.

Despite its merits for adding understanding regarding the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement, this study has some limitations. First, the participants with different proficiency levels were selected from private English language institutes in a province in Iran based on convenience sampling, which can limit its generalizability. Further studies can select samples from different provinces based on cluster sampling to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between feedback literacy and writing engagement. Cluster sampling can help future researchers to include different groups with different ethnicities and cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their studies.

In discussing feedback literacy, variables such as cultural background for accepting or rejecting criticism, open-mindedness, and self-criticism require further investigation. Iranian EFL learners' cultural background, the dominance of teacher-centered classes in most English classes, and lack of training for accepting criticism as a component of critical thinking might moderate between feedback literacy and writing engagement. Thus, the educational system requires the inclusion of

subjects to teach thinking skills to Iranian students at K-12 and tertiary levels to enable students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively.

This study was also limited in its design, as it was descriptive. Experimental studies regarding enhancing learners' writing engagement by adopting appropriate strategies can reveal whether such practices can enhance learners' writing skills. Meanwhile, studies with mixed methods approaches can integrate quantitative results with qualitative findings and can provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between feedback literacy and L2 writing engagement. Additionally, incorporating longitudinal studies can help researchers delve into learners' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions to provide a richer insight into developing feedback literacy.

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While preparing this research work, the authors did not use AI for generating the content. They take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Appendix A
Students' Feedback Literacy Scale

Instructions: Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by placing a checkmark in one of the spaces (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

Items	1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5
1	I think it is important to analyze information in appropriate forms for the purpose of acting on it.					
2	I think receiving feedback on English writing can improve my ability to provide feedback.					
3	I think that feedback can improve my English writing skills.					
4	I think it important to record information in appropriate forms for the purposes of acting on it subsequently.					
5	I think communicating with feedback givers can improve my understanding of English writing standards and criteria.					
6	I can seek out exemplars as a way to make sense of the standards of English writing.					
7	I can demonstrate openness to receiving comments from others without displaying defensiveness.					
8	I appreciate the role of feedback in continually improving work.					
9	I need to refine my self-evaluative capacities over time to make more robust judgments.					
10	I think providing feedback on English writing can improve my ability to receive feedback.					
11	I recognize that feedback from multiple sources – e.g., teachers, students, and school administrators – provides a different scope.					
12	I recognize that feedback from multiple sources – e.g., teachers, students, and school administrators – have different perspectives and attitudes.					
13	I think technology can be used to access, store, and revisit feedback.					
14	I recognize that feedback from multiple sources – e.g., teachers, peers, and computers – provides different opportunities for learning.					
15	I consider myself both a receiver and a provider of feedback in the feedback process.					
16	I think standards and criteria are needed in evaluating my English composition.					
17	I appreciate the role of feedback standards and criteria in judging the work of others.					
18	I recognize that effective learners are active in identifying their own learning needs.					
19	I am willing to communicate my learning needs in English writing to others.					
20	I think writing feedback can build my capacity to develop evaluative judgment.					
21	I can maintain emotional equilibrium and avoid defensiveness when receiving critical feedback.					
22	I can manage the emotional challenges of receiving and sifting information that may be unwelcome.					

23	I can honestly exchange meaningful information about my English compositions with others.				
24	I can respond to feedback information from others through goal-setting and planning how it might be utilized in future work.				
25	I can draw inferences from a range of English writing feedback experiences for the purpose of continuous improvement.				
26	I can use feedback to adjust the setting of new learning goals in English writing.				
27	I can use feedback to promote my English writing learning.				
28	I can develop a repertoire of strategies for acting on feedback.				

Appendix B Writing Engagement Measure

Read the following scenarios and give yourself a mark between 0 and 20 for each item (a, b, c, d, e,).

1. Think about the different ways you can actively participate in a writing class:

- a. Raising your hand and asking questions,
- b. Consulting your peers and instructors,
- c. Paying attention to the teacher's instructions,
- d. Participate in brainstorming,
- e. Trying to help classmates.

How would you rate your level of participation in these ways during your writing class?

2. Think about your feelings or attitudes towards writing class and give yourself a score between zero and twenty:

- f. Enjoying it,
- g. Feeling good about it,
- h. Being eager to learn new things,
- i. Believing that the class can improve your writing,
- j. Believing that writing is a key to academic success.

How would you rate your level of positive emotions in these ways during your writing class? (0 to 20 for each)

3. Think about the different ways to invest your attention and effort in a writing class:

- k. Going through your writing carefully,
- l. Thinking about different ways to solve a writing difficulty,
- m. Understanding mistakes and fixing them when writing,
- n. Being ready to write and revise,
- o. Taking notes while writing.

How would you rate your effort and attention during your writing class? (0 to 20 for each)

Appendix C
Writing Rubric (FIPSE Project), Allen, 2009

	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Ideas	Shows minimal engagement with the topic, failing to recognize multiple dimensions/ perspectives, lacking even basic observations	Shows some engagement with the topic without elaboration; offers basic observations but rarely original insight	Demonstrates engagement with the topic, recognizing multiple dimensions and/or perspectives; offers some insight	Demonstrates engagement with the topic, recognizing multiple dimensions and/or perspectives with elaboration and depth; offers considerable insight
Focus and Thesis	The paper lacks focus and/or a discernible thesis.	There are some intelligible ideas, but the thesis is weak, unclear, or too broad.	Identifiable thesis representing adequate understanding of the assigned topic; minimal irrelevant material	Clear, narrow thesis representing full understanding of the assignment; every word counts
Evidence	Little to no evidence	There is some evidence, but not enough to develop an argument in a unified way. Evidence may be inaccurate, irrelevant, or inappropriate for the essay.	Evidence accurate, well documented, and relevant, but not complete, well integrated, and/or appropriate for the essay	Evidence is relevant, accurate, complete, well integrated, well documented, and appropriate for the essay.
Organization	The organization is missing both overall and within paragraphs. The introduction and conclusion may be lacking or illogical.	The organization, overall and/or within paragraphs, is formulaic or occasionally lacking in coherence; there are few evident transitions. The introduction and conclusion may lack logic.	There are few organizational problems on any of the 3 levels (overall, paragraph, transitions). The introduction and conclusion are effectively related to the whole.	The organization is logical and appropriate to the assignment. The paragraphs are well-developed and appropriately divided. Ideas are linked with smooth and effective transitions. The introduction and conclusion are effectively related to the whole.
Style and Mechanics	Multiple and serious errors of sentence structure; frequent errors in spelling and capitalization; intrusive and/or inaccurate punctuation such that communication is hindered. They are proofreading not evident.	Sentences show errors in structure and little or no variety; there are many errors in punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization. Errors interfere with meaning in places. Careful proofreading is not evident.	Effective and varied sentences; some errors in sentence construction; only occasional punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization errors.	Each sentence is structured effectively, powerfully; rich, well-chosen variety of sentence styles and length, virtually free of punctuation, spelling, capitalization errors.