

Student Feedback Literacy (SFL) Profiles in an L2 Writing Classroom and the Influence of Peer Feedback on the SFL Features

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ABSTRACT

Feedback plays a pivotal role in the development of foreign language writing skills, and within the scope of the new paradigm of feedback, the active role of learners in feedback processes has been acknowledged with the conceptualization of student feedback literacy (SFL). This paper reports on a qualitative inquiry into the SFL profiles of a group of Turkish undergraduate students in an English writing classroom and the effects of a four-week online peer feedback activity on the students' perceived SFL features. The study utilized multiple data sources consisting of pre- and post-task surveys, which were filled by the whole subject group; the feedback comments and interactional moves of four focal students on Peergrade, a digital platform enabling peer feedback; the essay drafts of these focal students and the drafts reviewed by them; and lastly the researcher's notes from a discussion session with the students during the activity. The results revealed that each focal student distinctly demonstrated discrete SFL features at varying levels. The findings also showed that the peer feedback activity did not produce considerable improvement in the students' feedback literacy in L2 writing, yet changes were detected in student reports with respect to the perceived SFL features of making judgments, managing affect and taking action. The study extends our limited knowledge of SFL profiles of L2 writing learners in a Turkish context and informs the ongoing discussion on the efficacy of peer feedback in SFL development.

Key words: Student Feedback Literacy, L2 Writing, Peer Feedback

INTRODUCTION

Feedback has been noted to have a powerful impact on learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It has gone through a shift of paradigm from being viewed as information transmission where students are passive receivers to a learner-centered and process-oriented activity during which students are actively and proactively engaged (Chong, 2022; de Kleijn, 2021; Winstone et al., 2019; Winstone et al., 2022; Wood, 2021). Students who deal with feedback comments cognitively, socially and affectively, assimilate feedback content, and tend to implement their improved understanding to subsequent performances are considered to be feedback-literate (Malecka et al., 2022a).

Feedback literacy was initially suggested by Sutton (2012, p. 31) as an academic literacy skill to be defined as "the ability to read, interpret and use written feedback". Carless and Boud (2018, p. 1316) slightly extended and elaborated on this definition and described it as "the understanding, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies". Feedback literacy has been argued to be so powerful as to reshape feedback, particularly in higher education

(Nieminen & Carless, 2023). It is appraised as a potential solution to the problems of students' indifference and reluctance towards feedback (Malecka et al., 2022b) as it entails student agency and an increased tendency towards uptake (Wood, 2021). Although feedback literacy pertains to both teachers and students as the two active agents of feedback practice, this paper concentrates merely on student feedback literacy (SFL henceforth) in accordance with its scope. Notwithstanding the elevating trend of distinguishing it as a crucial capability that should be developed, little scientific evidence has been proposed on the SFL potentials of students and the factors and/or practices contributing to SFL enhancement.

To address this gap, I examined SFL development and the SFL profiles in an undergraduate L2 writing class of students majoring in English language and literature at a Turkish state university through a four-week online peer feedback activity. Peer feedback enables learners to share their judgments on each other's work and find the opportunity for developing their evaluative abilities, and peer feedback activities fulfilled in digital environments provide several gains ranging from higher mobility, faster delivery to increased engagement and reduced teacher interference (Carless & Boud,

2018). Considering the available literature, the present paper will be one of the rare studies reporting an attempt to monitor tertiary-level students' feedback literacy profiles in second or foreign language (L2) writing, and potentially the first empirical study determining the role of peer feedback in SFL development in a Turkish context of learning L2 writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for SFL

Social constructivist and sociocultural learning theories set the ground for feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018). Three salient concepts in the Sociocultural Learning Theory of Vygotsky (1978) particularly inform the construct: scaffolding, mediation and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In instructional contexts, these interrelated concepts highlight the role of a teacher's or capable peers' supportive assistance and interactive attempts in attaining students' learning goals, and such behaviors are quite manifest in the essence of feedback practices. Feedback literacy necessitates acknowledging the rationale of feedback and responding to it to augment learning (de Kleijn, 2021), and hence assumes an active role of students in constructing their own learning through negotiation and collaboration. Such reciprocal interactions between the provider and receiver of feedback stimulate cognitive development (Carless & Winstone, 2020).

There have been several conceptualizations concerning feedback literacy since the past decade. Sutton (2012) suggested feedback literacy as a three-dimensional construct consisting of epistemological, ontological and practical aspects. The epistemological dimension pertains to learners' understanding of a teacher's qualitative and quantitative evaluations (feedback on knowing) and guidance for further studies (feedback for knowing). The ontological dimension refers to the development of educational being or identity (achieving higher self-confidence and lower anxiety) via feedback, and thirdly, the practical dimension appertains to the actions to be taken upon feedback. In later years, Carless and Boud (2018, p. 1315) conceptualized four components constituting student feedback literacy: "appreciating feedback, making judgments, managing affect and taking action". In their understanding, feedback appreciation entails acknowledging the importance of feedback and being actively engaged in feedback processes. Making judgments refers to the students' ability to make self-evaluations or evaluations about others' work (Tai et al., 2017). As the third component of feedback literacy, managing affect relates to students' control over their emotional reactions to the feedback they receive from their teachers or peers. Last of all, feedback-literate students actively react to comments from others, striving to make sense of the feedback content and displaying uptake, i.e., using it in subsequent work for improvement (Carless & Boud, 2018).

The conceptualization of Carless and Boud (2018) became a basis for much of the succeeding work on SFL. As an example, in a comprehensive study drawing on a large data set, Molloy et al. (2020) empirically supported this conceptual framework and further determined SFL features in

seven groups: associating feedback with improvement, acknowledging feedback as a dynamic process, eliciting information for better learning, processing feedback content, appraising and dealing with affect, appraising the mutuality of feedback, and responding to the feedback by enacting the outcomes. Similarly, drawing on the conceptualization of Carless and Boud, Chong (2021) suggested a model with an ecological perspective to feedback literacy, drawing on two groups of factors influencing the cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement of students with feedback: contextual and individual factors. The contextual factors are suggested to operate at interpersonal (related to teacher-student or student-student relationships), instructional (related to teaching and learning processes), textual (related to feedback format and features), and sociocultural levels (related to roles of the counterparts), whereas individual factors encompass students' learning objectives, beliefs, previous experiences, and subject-specific skills (Chong, 2021). More recently, Gravett (2022, p. 269) disclosed a socio-material perspective on feedback literacy. This perspective also criticized the conceptualization of feedback literacy highly focusing on students' cognitive skills, and asserted that it should not be disentangled from the relationship between "social, material, spatial and temporal actors." Finally, the association of feedback literacy with other learner skills has also been conceptualized. Yan and Carless (2021) advanced the enabling role of feedback literacy in developing self-assessment. They advocate that two basic components of feedback literacy, feedback seeking and internal feedback, enhance students' self-evaluation and reflections regarding their weaknesses, strengths and needs, and inform their pursuit of advancement by verifying the accuracy of their self-judgments. Briefly, these approaches to feedback literacy accentuate students' acquaintance with the multifaceted and multiphase nature of feedback processes.

Empirical work on SFL

As the advent of feedback literacy as a research area has been quite recent, the relevant literature is mostly conceptual, and empirical studies are observed to be limited in number and diversity. In a recent review of intervention studies on SFL, Little et al. (2023) reported only 16 papers, mostly administered to students in British and Australian higher education contexts. The review revealed that the predominant techniques applied to improve the participant students' SFL involved self- and peer assessment activities, discussions, and self-reflection entries, whereas the students' SFL evaluation was grounded on the data from students' self-perceptions, self-report questionnaires, reflective writings, and peer assessment performances. Below more elaborate information is provided on the scopes and results of some individual studies on SFL in general and of those with a specific focus on SFL in L2 writing.

Intervention studies on SFL primarily aimed to determine the effectiveness of certain practices on the students' SFL skill development. Winstone et al. (2019) disclosed a paper on the development of student feedback literacy through a resource toolkit entitled Developing Engagement with

Feedback Toolkit (DEFT). The participant students' feedback literacy perceptions were found to be affirmative, and the perceived usefulness of the toolkit in SFL improvement was demonstrated. Hoo et al. (2021) researched feedback literacy development of undergraduate students through an intervention course. The students' SFL was developed after the intervention consisting of a consciously-designed curriculum and teacher orchestration during a recurring process of self-assessment (ipsative assessment and reflection) and peer assessment. In another intervention study, Man et al. (2022) aimed to develop SFL through training. The training activities demonstrated to be effective in the development of the five components of SFL, determined in the study as acknowledging the significance of peer review, being more knowledgeable about peer feedback, being proactively engaged in the process, learning from providing comments, and managing feelings in feedback interactions.

The relevant literature also involves descriptive studies scrutinizing SFL capabilities and self-perceptions of students. Han and Xu (2021), for instance, conducted a study to describe the feedback literacy profiles of a group of Chinese university students as well as determine the mediating role of their feedback literacy in their feedback engagement. They disclosed that the students' feedback literacy appertained to multiple facets, including their cognitive and social-affective capacities and social-affective tendencies. Zhan (2022b) addressed the SFL conceptions of a group of Hong Kong university students. The results demonstrated that the students displayed competence in eliciting and processing feedback, yet directed limited attention to act upon feedback. The perceived components of feedback were highlighted as activity, modesty and commitment. Furthermore, such factors as culture, setting, subject course and prior experiences with feedback influenced the students' perceived SFL. The influence of prior experiences was more elaborately studied in another work, carried out by Malecka et al. (2022b). It was a long-term study with an attempt to elucidate the effects of past feedback experiences and contexts on students' new learning experiences in different contexts, and the results demonstrated that the students' use of feedback in new settings was influenced by their feedback histories having taken place at different institutional, pedagogical and disciplinary contexts.

Feedback studies are usually conducted in a tertiary-level education context, but studies from other levels of education are also present. Ketonen et al. (2020), for instance, examined the SFL development of secondary school students, and concluded that the students' SFL could be developed through formative peer assessment.

There have also been several attempts to design quantitative measures of SFL. Zhan (2022a) introduced a validated scale consisting of six dimensions: eliciting (seeking out others' evaluative comments), processing (making sense of feedback comments and making judgments about it), enacting (feedback uptake and practical use in later work), appreciation (acknowledging the purpose, role and benefits of feedback), readiness (being emotionally prepared to receive feedback), and commitment (devoting the necessary time and effort to act on feedback). Another scale development

and validation study was specifically designed for the L2 writing context. Yu et al. (2022) developed and validated a measure to assess L2 writing SFL. The study bears scholarly value as it may be the first and only psychometric instrument to be used for a quantitative description of SFL in L2 writing. Other empirical work on SFL in L2 writing is provided in the following sub-section.

Research on SFL in L2 writing

Feedback interactions are highly valued in second or foreign language (L2) classrooms, particularly in the development of writing skills (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Drawing on previous definitions of feedback literacy, Han and Xu (2021, p. 3) define L2 SFL as a three-component construct: "the cognitive capacity, social-affective capacity, and social-affective dispositions" preparing students for active engagement with feedback. In this understanding, cognitive capacity comprises students' conceptual and metalinguistic knowledge regarding L2 writing and feedback, and cognitive and metacognitive strategies adopted by the students. Social-affective capacity entails effective management of affective factors such as motivation, commitment, and self-esteem. Finally, social-affective disposition refers to students' beliefs and attitudes influencing their emotional regulation. Investigating the case of a pair of Chinese undergraduate students, Han and Xu (2021) confirmed the presence of the three components of L2 SFL, yet with an unbalanced development. Li and Han (2022) also explored the components of SFL in a disciplinary writing course in a MA TESOL programme. The study suggested that SFL had context-specific and multi-dimensional components such as the students' field knowledge, L2 competence, active engagement, and attitudinal tendencies towards feedback.

Relevant classroom research indicates an active role of teachers and teaching processes in SFL development. Han and Xu (2020) investigated the effects of teacher feedback on student drafts having received peer feedback, and reported noticeable effects of teacher feedback on L2 SFL development, at varying degrees according to the students' abilities and dispositions. Ma et al. (2021) investigated the outcomes of teachers' following a learning-oriented assessment (a three-element approach to assessment involving facilitative tasks to foster students' evaluative skills and active engagement with feedback) in order to determine its influence on L2 students' SFL in writing with an ecological perspective, and identified increased SFL competencies in addition to substantial variations among students, and negative effects of misalignment between micro- and macro-level factors on the development of SFL. As a final example, Zhang and Mao (2023) examined an L2 writing classroom in which multifarious approaches and practices were utilized to create feedback opportunities to develop SFL. They concluded that a systematic teacher approach and varied feedback activities enhanced the SFL capabilities of the students.

Regarding the cultural context of the present study, Türkiye, only one descriptive work submitted as a master's thesis, was identified to have focused on the SFL skills of pre-service English language teachers (Kara, 2021). In the

study, the SFL indicators and individual, instructional, textual and social factors fostering and hindering SFL development were determined.

Research concentrating on approaches that may enhance SFL is still in its infancy. Considering that feedback literacy itself is still a conceptually and practically developing area (Chong, 2021; Yan & Carless, 2021), further research is required to reinforce its conceptual formation and to yield pedagogical implications. Furthermore, SFL within the discourse of L2 writing remains as an underexplored territory, and little is known about the SFL characteristics of L2 writing learners. In an endeavor to fill this gap, this study, which involved the case of a group of Turkish undergraduate students, sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the focal students' SFL profiles in L2 writing?
2. How does the students' perceived SFL change over a four-week online peer feedback activity?

METHOD

Context and Participants

A 14-week "Advanced English Writing Skills II" course at the English Language and Literature department at a state university in the eastern region of Türkiye was the context of the present study. The course is a department elective taught in the spring semester of the first year of the undergraduate programme at the department. It is a follow-up course subsequent to "Advanced English Writing Skills I" delivered in the preceding semester. The medium of instruction is English, and the course is delivered with a process-genre approach highlighting pre-writing, drafting, editing and revising stages of writing different essay genres with both rhetorical and language focus. In spring 2022-2023, when the study was undertaken, all courses in the department were delivered online due to a national emergency situation, a devastating earthquake leaving more than one million citizens homeless in Türkiye. Some of these people were allowed to shelter temporarily in student dormitories all around the country, and higher education was compulsorily transformed into distance education. Although voluntary-basis hybrid education was suggested later by the Higher Education Council, the department students preferred only attending online classes. The Zoom-delivered sessions took around 90 minutes per week.

Total number of students enrolled on the subject course was 60. All students spoke Turkish as their first language. Their English writing proficiency was generally at an intermediate level. The students were invited to participate in pre- and post-task surveys on a voluntary basis. A total of 30 students responded to the pre-study open-ended survey, whereas 29 of them filled in the post-study survey. The responses of the students attending both surveys and taking regular part in the peer feedback activity, 22 in total, were admitted for evaluation. Among these, four focal students were selected for a deeper analysis on the basis of their prevalent features diverging in terms of their literacy profiles identified through an overview of their peer feedback performances and their responses to the pre- and post-task surveys.

The respondents of the survey were labelled as S1, S2, S3, ... S22, whereas pseudonyms (Mehmet, Ali, Demet and Sibel) were determined for the focal students.

Descriptive information regarding the focal students is provided in Table 1. The students had similar language learning backgrounds. They all received the English writing skills course for two semesters in the foreign language preparatory program in the department in the preceding year and the "Advanced English Writing Skills I" course in the previous semester delivered by the same instructor.

The Peer Feedback Activity

In the subject course, the students were expected to submit end-of-unit essays written according to the conventions of the essay types introduced in separate units in the course book. In face-to-face education in the preceding term, the course instructor had provided feedback on individual student papers. Therefore, the students were familiar with teacher feedback, but not much experienced in peer feedback as a curricular activity. A typical peer feedback activity involves the phases of writing the first draft of an assignment, receiving reviews from a peer or some peers, and then doing necessary revisions to submit the final draft (Nicol et al., 2014). During the study period, the students were requested to upload two consecutive assignments on Peergrade, an online platform where students share their work, and receive and provide feedback based on a rubric assigned by the instructor. They could also react to the feedback they received by flagging, liking or commenting on the feedback. An online tutorial session lasting for approximately 40 minutes was held to instruct the students about how to use Peergrade for submitting essays, providing rubric-based reviews and reacting to reviews. The session involved YouTube videos providing step-by-step instructions on how to use the platform supported with the explanations of the course instructor. The students were assigned to provide anonymous feedback on each other's work in two rounds. In the first round of the activity, each student was requested to review one essay, whereas in the second round, each of them had to review two papers. The subject essay types in the two rounds of the study period were comparison-contrast essay and cause-effect essay, respectively. The students were expected to write a five-paragraph well-developed essay on each round on the topics specified in the relevant units of the course book. The work plan of the activity is provided in Figure 1.

The students uploaded their final drafts to the learning management system of their university. Both peer feedback activity performance and the final drafts were included in the overall grading of the subject course.

Table 1. Demographic information of the focal students

Pseudonyms	Gender	L2 writing proficiency
Demet	Female	Intermediate
Mehmet	Male	Intermediate
Ali	Male	Intermediate
Sibel	Female	Intermediate

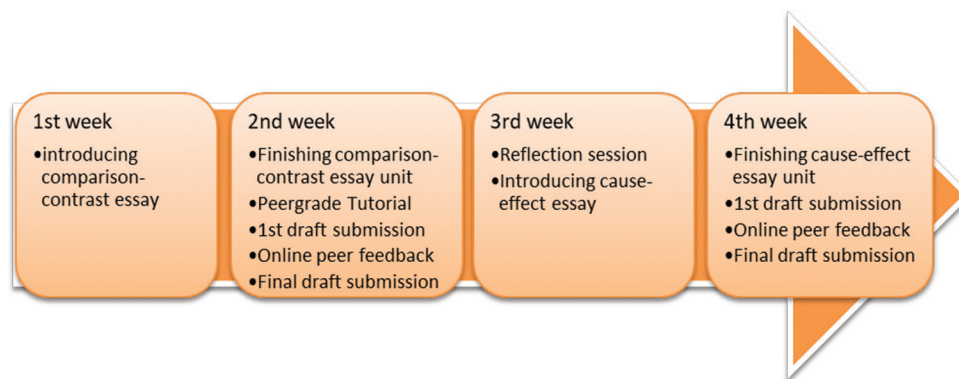


Figure 1. Work plan of the peer feedback activity

Data Collection

In the study, primary and supplementary data sources were utilized. One primary data source was an open-ended online survey form designed after a comprehensive literature review with the purpose of yielding information about the students' self-reported SFL. The survey questions were informed by the four-feature conceptual framework of SFL by Carless and Boud (2018). The first two questions requested students' perceptions of the purpose and importance of feedback in order to yield information regarding the feature of appreciating feedback. The third question interrogated the students' description of the characteristics of effective feedback to explore their capability of making judgments. The fourth question addressed the feature of managing affect by asking about the students' emotional reactions to the feedback they received and how they dealt with the effects of feedback. The last question common to both surveys concerned the taking action feature of SFL, and the students were requested to provide information about whether or not and how they used the feedback they received. The form was filled in twice by the students, once before and once after the peer feedback activity.

The other primary data sources included the comments and interactional moves of four focal students on Peergrade, and the first and final drafts of their essays and the essays they reviewed. The Peergrade performances were included as they provided valuable data concerning the students' engagement with feedback. The essay drafts would more specifically enable the researcher to observe to what extent the students took action after the feedback.

The supplementary data embodied the researcher's notes from students' reflections during the mid-task discussion session held after the first round. The discussion session was open to all students on voluntary basis. The reflections comprised the students' perceptions about the peer feedback experience and the perceived challenges of giving and receiving feedback on Peergrade. The reflections were considered to contribute to understanding the students' impressions about the peer feedback experience, and therefore complement the information about their SFL.

Data Analysis

The student responses to the open-ended survey forms were analyzed through thematic analysis. In order to reach

a deep understanding of the meanings in responses, the researcher read and reread the data set, and created a list of codes extracted from the students' words (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the initial coding, the data set from pre- and post-task responses were compared and the changes in student responses were tracked carefully. The final themes were determined based on the changes identified in the responses of individual students to the two surveys. The transcriptions of reflective comments during the discussion session were also examined with thematic analysis.

The focal students' rubric-based feedback comments were analyzed through content analysis. The central notion in content analysis is making inferences out of a text in order to reach a summary of meaningfully connected words or phrases in fewer content categories (Weber, 1990). In accordance with the formalities of content analysis, the researcher first scanned, then carefully analyzed, and finally interpreted the data to draw inferences about the students' feedback literacy reflected in their performances on Peergrade. This process was carried out simultaneously with the document analysis of the focal students' first and final draft submissions in order to obtain a full-range profile of the students' SFL. Document analysis is defined as a procedure of systematically scanning and evaluating documents that enable researchers to track changes and improvement, particularly when earlier versions are accessible (Bowen, 2009) as in the present case. In the study, the changes between the first and final drafts of student essays were tracked and prominent features of uptake were critically analyzed through a comparative examination across the drafts with reference to the peer comments. Furthermore, the drafts reviewed by the focal students were also cross-checked in order to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the feedback they provided. Finally, the focal students' responses to the survey were also resorted as a supplementary source in forming their SFL profiles. Eventually, individual profiles were created for each focal student based on the data from their 1) comments on their classmates' first drafts, 2) reactions to their reviewers' comments, 3) revisions based on the feedback they received, 4) responses to the surveys, and 5) reflections in the discussion session.

The above-explained multiple sources enabled data triangulation, contributing to the dependability and credibility of the study. In addition, peer debriefing was carried out with

an outside researcher disinterested in the present study, holding a doctoral degree in applied linguistics, and specialized in English for Academic Purposes with a specific focus on feedback research.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are the Focal Students' SFL Profiles in L2 Writing?

The analysis results exhibited distinct profiles for the four focal students. Features of the students on the basis of the SFL components are displayed in Table 2.

Demet

Demet displayed a strong profile of SFL. First, she demonstrated genuine appreciation of her role in the feedback process. She was highly responsive to the peer feedback she received and she was in constant interaction with her peers both as a reviewer and as a writer. She recognized the contributions of her reviewers' comments to the formation of her essays. Second, she exhibited a developed capacity of sound and accurate judgments (Appendix 1) and high sensitivity to both major components and minor details of essay writing conventions. She also had the capacity to question the appropriateness of the review given to her (Appendix 2). Third, she could calmly respond to critical feedback with sound reasons, and she had the motivation to use the feedback she received, indicating that she could manage her emotions, maintain her resilience, and proactively elicit suggestions from her reviewers. Fourth, she acted on both peer feedback and, apparently, self-assessment since her final drafts in both assignments involved both self-initiated and elicited revisions. Although few minor corrections suggested by her reviewers were overlooked, she edited and revised her papers meticulously.

Mehmet

Mehmet displayed a rather complicated SFL profile. His appreciation of feedback was limited to teacher feedback in both his survey responses and discussion notes. He said peer feedback could be "misleading and harmful, especially when the source of feedback was less proficient than the writer" and therefore did not appear to recognize peer feedback as a reliable source of information. His ability to make judgments, however, was highly sophisticated. He productively participated in the feedback processes by providing very elaborate, diligent and proficient feedback comments (Appendix 3). He supported his reviews with detailed explanations, examples and even alternative statements. Despite this strong judgment capacity, he was not very successful at managing his emotions upon the feedback he received. Even though some reviews he received were sensible and appropriate, he refused them in a defensive manner. For unsophisticated and superficial feedback, his reactions were more aggressive. Parallel with these reactions, he did not edit or revise his papers in both assignments. Despite his reviewers' rightful comments on his poor handwriting, and other punctuation, capitalization and minor grammar errors, which were detected with a further examination of his essays (Appendix 4), the first drafts remained untouched and were uploaded as final submissions in both rounds of assignments.

Ali

The third student, Ali, also had a different SFL profile. Unlike Mehmet, he displayed a tendency to acknowledge and value peer feedback as a beneficial source of information. On the other hand, his academic judgments were hardly consistent across his reviews. While his initial feedback was partly incomprehensive and ignored the fact that the paper he evaluated needed major revisions, his reviews in the second round of the activity were rather detailed, successfully

Table 2. SFL features of the focal students

	Appreciating feedback	Making judgments	Managing affect	Taking actions
Demet	- Appreciates peer feedback (PF) - Highly responsive to comments	- Makes sound & sophisticated judgments - Sensitive to major and minor components - Questions the accuracy of feedback	- Actively engaged in dialogues with the reviewers - Is motivated to use PF	- Makes both self-initiated and elicited revisions on both papers
Mehmet	- Does not appreciate PF; recognizes the contributions of teacher feedback (TF)	- Provides elaborate & sound feedback - Highly productive in PF processes	- Defensive & aggressive reactions to feedback - Very reactive to unsophisticated and superficial PF	- No revisions on either paper
Ali	- Acknowledges PF - Stores fb for further reference	- Gives superficial feedback in the first round, detailed FB in the second round	- Gives positive verbal reactions to critical feedback;	- Minor revision in the first round; no revisions in the second round
Sibel	Recognizes the contributions of TF; limits feedback to error correction - Does not acknowledge PF	- Makes proper comments in the first assignment; superficial, inaccurate feedback in the second assignment	- Overly defensive against negative comments	- No revisions on either paper despite receiving sophisticated PF

identifying the irregularities and inappropriateness in his peer's paper (Appendix 5). He displayed an appreciative and motivated attitude towards the feedback comments he received (Appendix 6), and in the same vein, the feedback he gave was mostly affirmative and constructive. Still, his verbal appreciation of the feedback comments did not lead him to revise his papers properly. Although he did minor revisions elicited from the reviewer's comments, he did not edit or revise his first draft in the second-round assignment although there were organization, grammar and punctuation errors in his essay.

Sibel

Sibel maintained a relatively low profile in all areas of SFL. She failed to recognize peer feedback as a reliable source for improving her work and her understanding of useful feedback was restricted to error corrections provided by teachers. As for her academic judgment skills, especially her second-round reviews were observed to be mostly superficial and short (Appendix 7), and furthermore inaccurate when the texts she reviewed were examined. Her affective reactions to feedback were not sophisticated, either. She was observed to be overly defensive against the critical comments of the reviewers (Appendix 8), even though the comments were mostly rightful and proper (one of her anonymous reviewers was Mehmet). Conforming these reactions, she did not edit or revise her initial drafts in either assignment and submitted the same documents as her final drafts.

The four different student profiles showed that students possess SFL features at varying extents. The students' individual profiles did not exhibit an observable and meaningful change between the two rounds of peer feedback activity. However, determining the changes in the perceived SFL of the whole subject group was possible with the findings from pre- and post-task surveys. The findings are provided below.

Research question 2: How does the Students' Perceived SFL Change over a Four-week Online Peer Feedback Activity?

The differences between the students' responses to pre- and post-task surveys were determined on the basis of the changes in their self-perceptions concerning the four components of SFL.

Appreciating Feedback

As regards the first component, *appreciating feedback*, no observable change was identified in the students' perceptions after the peer feedback activity. The students wrote very similar responses to those questions interrogating the purpose and significance of feedback. Both before and after the activity, they shared the understanding that feedback provided an outside perspective and consequently raised awareness regarding the conventions of academic writing and facilitated the recognition of their deficiencies and errors, and eventually improved their writing skills. Below are extracts from the student responses that exemplify these findings:

To the question regarding the purpose of feedback, S4 wrote:

To see our errors, become more careful next time and improve better. [S4, Survey 1]

The purpose of feedback is to realize our errors and not make them again in later essays. [S4, Survey 2]

To the question about the importance of feedback, S9 wrote:

Yes, it is important, because I learn more from my own mistakes than instruction. [S9, Survey 1]

Yes, it is very important, because I do not forget what I learn from my mistakes and I believe it is better than instruction. [S9, Survey 2]

S20 similarly wrote how feedback contributed to the editing phase of her essays in both responses:

Yes, feedback is important to me because we sometimes do not see our mistakes as we write our essays. The person who reads and reviews it helps us about it. [S20, Survey 1]

For me, feedback is an important activity. Thanks to feedback, the reviewers can see the mistakes I haven't seen, and I can reread my essay and check my mistakes. [S20, Survey 2]

Making Judgments

The students' understanding of the second focal SFL component, *making judgments*, was found to undergo some transformation at the individual level after the activity. Despite a general tendency observed in student responses both before and after the activity towards the viewpoint that feedback should be elaborate and comprehensive, encompassing both negative and positive comments, it was noticed that some students provided more proper, clearer and more elaborate responses to the survey item interrogating the students' understanding of this SFL component. For instance, S7 wrote an insufficient and obscure response to the question interrogating the components of an effective feedback in the initial survey, whereas she provided a rather inclusive and detailed description in the post-task survey, indicating that her approach to effective feedback has evolved into a more sophisticated one after the peer feedback activity. Her responses are presented below:

It is good if my mistakes are carefully monitored and shown to me. I cannot see my own mistakes when I look myself. [S7, Survey 1]

For me, good feedback should involve all aspects, from thesis statement to conclusion... Topic, content, title, body paragraphs... Not only these, but also punctuation or spelling, all should be thought. The reviewers should pay attention to give effective feedback, not make comments casually. [S7, Survey 2]

For some other students, a shift of focus was observed in their conceptions of effective feedback practices. For instance, S8 had focused on feedback content as they initially described effective feedback, whereas in their post-task survey responses, they put a higher emphasis on the accuracy of the given feedback. In the quote from S8's response below, it is seen that while she preserved the opinion that grammar

and appropriateness to essay type were important aspects, knowledge was her priority in making effective judgments.

I believe that attention should be paid to the presence of all necessary components in the evaluated essay. For example, grammar, appropriateness to the essay type, essay rules, use of language, all these should be evaluated. [S8, Survey 1]

First of all, the person who gives the feedback should also have enough knowledge on the subject (giving feedback). Unity, grammar rules, appropriateness to the essay type should be evaluated. [S8, Survey 2]

Another change in student responses was the increased demand for elaborateness in their description of effective feedback. In the first survey, S12 superficially stated that “good feedback is the correction of mistakes in an appropriate way”, whereas elaborateness became the focal point in her description of effective feedback in the second survey, where she wrote “I think every sentence should be individually examined, because there might be errors in every sentence in both grammar and meaning”. In a similar vein, S22 extended her description of effective feedback in the second survey by adding that it should be “consistent and elaborate”. S19 also responded to the second survey in a more sophisticated statement underscoring the comprehensive nature of an ideal review:

I believe it should be done according to certain criteria. For instance, grammar, punctuation or information mistakes should be separately evaluated. [S19, Survey 1]

Feedback comments are usually error-specific. I believe that errors should be explained understandably and a proper statement that may replace the incorrect statement should be provided with explanation. In addition to this, the correctly used statements should be appreciated by the reviewers. [S19, Survey 2]

Managing Affect

Of all 22 respondents, those who reported a positive attitude towards receiving feedback, finding it instructive and motivating both before and after the activity were noticeable. The activity apparently did not affect these students’ ability to manage their emotional reactions to feedback in a positive or negative way. An example quote is as follows:

The feedback I get makes me feel good. I feel that my teacher cares about me. As I understand where I make mistakes, I make fewer mistakes next time. [S14, Survey 1]

I feel happy when I get positive feedback, and with negative feedback I realize my mistakes and improve myself. [S14, Survey 2]

In addition to these results, a finding worth consideration was the presence of those students whose emotions on feedback transformed from positive or neutral to negative after the peer feedback activity. S6 was one of these students, and his calm and judicious approach changed into being annoyed by unexpected errors revealed with feedback:

Positive aspects may be motivating. The negative ones do not have any emotional influence on me. [S6, Survey 1]

It (the feedback) usually feels puzzling. The mistakes I make even after my final revisions are sometimes annoying. [S6, Survey 2]

S13 and S16 were other students whose positive and tolerant approaches to feedback were replaced with a rather cautious attitude, depending on the direction or content of the feedback. S13 wrote:

The feedback I get affects me totally in a positive way. It makes me more enthusiastic for the next project and thus, motivates me. [S13, Survey 1]

(It affects me) Sometimes in a good and sometimes in a bad way, it depends on the evaluation. [S13, Survey 2]

S16 wrote how reactive she became on receiving improper feedback in the second survey although she had alleged to be motivated by feedback, assumedly corrective or negative, and did not appear to consider the quality of the feedback as a condition in her initial response:

Unlike many people, seeing my errors, making mistakes and even making mistakes makes me feel happy. At least I realize my mistakes and it inspires me to study effectively. [S16, Survey 1]

If the feedback I get is good and proper, then I find my friends (reviewers) very successful and feel happy for them, but if the feedback is totally nonsense, then I can't help reproaching. [S16, Survey 2]

S2 reported having felt frustration on negative feedback in her response to the second survey, although in her initial response, she had stated that the feeling she experienced in such cases was only sadness, which later evolved into motivation to write better. The alteration in her reaction appears to have emerged after receiving unfair peer comments. Extracts from her responses are as follows:

If I have many mistakes, that would sadden me, but of course that could also enable me to avoid making the same mistakes and write better. If I have fewer mistakes, that would make me feel happier and I would feel improved. [S2, Survey 1]

If I get a positive review, I get happy and feel improved in this subject, but I inevitably get frustrated with negative comments because I had a friend who criticized something I think I did right. The part I cared about the most was the thesis statement and my friend wrote that I did not write a thesis statement. It both made me question myself and my friend's knowledge on thesis statement. [S2, Survey 2]

Taking Actions

The final feature of SFL also determined as the last theme of the study was *taking action* on feedback. The analysis of the students’ self-reports indicated that the students were inclined to be proactive upon feedback, to correct their mistakes immediately and further use feedback in later writing tasks. Some students (S1, S13, S9, and S20) further reported that they recorded and stored the feedback information for future reference. It was also seen that some students provided superficial and overly assertive responses of not making the same mistakes ever again after receiving feedback. That these assertions were unrealistic was evidenced by the

students' performances in the peer feedback activity and their uptake tendencies reflected in their essay drafts. S4, a low-performer who did not edit her essays after reviews, gave the following responses to the question interrogating how she acted on the feedback she received:

I do not make the same mistakes again. [S4, Survey 1]

We can have a flawless essay by not making the same mistakes. [S4, Survey 2]

A significant change in some of the students' reports on taking action after feedback in the second round of survey was that they adopted a relatively more skeptical and cautious approach before acting on feedback. Although their initial responses involved immediate corrective actions on feedback, they disclosed circumspect statements emphasizing the significance of the accuracy of the feedback in the second survey. Following quotes from two different students exemplify this:

S2:

The feedback I get is helpful as there might be mistakes I have overlooked. With the feedback I receive, I correct my mistakes and rewrite my essay accordingly. [S2, Survey 1]

First I look at the parts my friend (reviewer) thinks are incorrect or missing. Then, I think how I can improve these parts in my essay. I revise it and make additions or extractions if I consider them necessary. [S2, Survey 2]

S17:

If I made mistakes, I correct them after feedback. I particularly pay attention to correcting vocabulary mistakes. [S17, Survey 1]

In the cases where I was certain of the correctness of my statements, I did not make any changes on my essays after peer reviews, but mostly it helped me gain a different perspective. [S17, Survey 2]

A summary of all findings from the survey reports and focal student profiles indicated that the students demonstrated feedback literacy features at varying levels. The students with higher or lower capacities in certain areas of SFL displayed distinct behavioral engagement with feedback. The findings also revealed that the peer feedback activity did not produce considerable improvement in the students' feedback literacy in L2 writing, yet changes were detected in student reports with respect to the perceived features of *making judgments*, *managing affect* and *taking action*. While the students reported high appreciation of feedback both before and after the activity, and therefore, no significant difference was observed in relevant pre- and post-task survey results, their understanding of the constituents of effective feedback shifted in focus from feedback content to the accuracy and elaborateness of the feedback. Furthermore, their emotional reactions to feedback were influenced by the peer feedback experience, and for some of them in a negative way leading them to be less tolerant and more critical and cautious towards the feedback they received.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study gathered qualitative data from multiple resources to elucidate the feedback literacy profiles of a group of L2

writing students through a four-week peer feedback activity and to identify the changes in their self-reported feedback literacy features over the period. The students' perceptions after the activity were largely informed by their negative impressions of peer feedback after the Peergrade experience. As a matter of fact, the negative effect was mutual in that the students' insufficient feedback literacy features affected their engagement with feedback; meanwhile, their SFL development was not enhanced through the peer feedback activity as hypothetically expected since the necessities of the task were not fulfilled by most of the participants. Relevant literature lends support to the assertion that the relationship between peer feedback and SFL is bidirectional; however, contrary to the present results, the mode of this relationship is supposedly positive. Peer feedback contributes to the development of SFL, whereas SFL is necessary for being deeply engaged with peer feedback (Zhan, 2021). In the current study, those students who felt disappointed with the poor feedback performance of their reviewers developed unexpectedly negative and defensive dispositions towards peer feedback, which adversely affected their affective and behavioral responses, which were strongly interconnected.

Another significant finding that should be highlighted is the variations identified in student capacities both across the individuals and across the different components of SFL. The characteristics of each focal student illustrated a different portrait of SFL and feedback engagement. This divergence among the focal students might be explained with the factors related to individual learner characteristics that mediate the development of feedback literacy. This interpretation aligns with the prior research contending that SFL development and its mediating effect on feedback engagement are shaped by individual factors such as metalinguistic knowledge (Han & Xu, 2021), self-regulated skills and self-perceptions such as self-confidence and self-efficacy beliefs (Winstone et al., 2017), or affective features such as volition and emotional resistance (Zhan, 2021). The variations across the discrete SFL features of the focal students accredit the inference that feedback literacy development in the context of L2 writing is dynamic, complex and non-linear with respect to the individual development of the four dimensions of the construct. These results were supported by previous work. Han and Xu (2021) similarly identified different student profiles with different *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* levels of SFL features changing over a period of time.

Another significant implication is the mediating role of SFL in students' engagement with peer feedback, which is manifest in the comparison of the students with strong and weak SFL profiles in the study. Demet, the strong-profile student who displayed high capacity in all dimensions of SFL was one of the most actively engaged students both as a reviewer and a writer during the peer feedback processes. On the other hand, Sibel, the low-profile student, was only active as a reviewer, yet her judgmental capability was inadequate for her to provide accurate feedback. As a writer, her capacity of managing affect and taking action was so limited that her engagement with feedback was subsequently superficial and unsophisticated. For the other two students with

more complex profiles with both strong and weak features of SFL, it was clearly seen that their engagement with feedback increased in accordance with the areas of feedback literacy they had higher capability. Mehmet, for instance, displayed a highly strong profile of making judgments, and he wrote lines of detailed and highly sensitive feedback comments, whereas he was inattentive to critical feedback and disengaged in the uptake process. It may therefore be interpreted that the features of student feedback literacy mediate students' engagement with feedback distinctly, and the strength of these features determines the direction of student engagement. These results receive support from earlier findings empirically establishing SFL as the mediator of students' engagement with feedback (Han & Xu, 2021; Li & Han, 2022).

Another intriguing finding was that the students' self-reports on surveys did not correspond their actual performances. For instance, one of the focal students, Sibel, refused to revise and edit her essay drafts after peer feedback despite the fact that she reported to have seen her mistakes as an outcome of the activity in the after-task survey. For many other students, an evident under-engagement was noticed at the stage of taking action on feedback even in the case of receiving refined and sensitive feedback even though they alleged to act on the feedback they received. The common sense of appreciation for the contribution of feedback in their L2 writing progress remained unattended when behavioral engagement was expected. These findings accorded with those obtained from earlier research (Zhan, 2022b).

In the cases where feedback content and the attitude of the feedback giver were not problematic, the disregard of students towards the feedback might have stemmed from the feedback receiver's presuppositions. As Sutton (2012) argues, some students fail to approach learning with a deep perspective, but adopt a rather surface or strategic perspective, without acculturating to what is indeed valuable in academic culture. If the students had a deeper perspective on learning, that could accordingly enable them to have a deeper and more meaningful approach to feedback. The linguistic and metalinguistic capacities of the students are equally critical. Considering the fact that the students in the present subject group had limited (intermediate) L2 competence, metalinguistic knowledge and peer feedback experience, their SFL perceptions were superficial and insubstantial. Yielding similar results, Han and Xu (2021) maintain that the disengagement of the students with feedback despite possessing a certain degree of SFL may be explained with the possibility of several factors including the students' beliefs, motivation, self-perceptions, metalinguistic knowledge and insufficient metacognitive strategy use. Other possible reasons also evidenced in prior research include distrust in peers, receiving too general and past-oriented feedback, insufficient communication on feedback content, lack of volition, lack of self-regulation skills, and emotional resistance (Zhan, 2021).

The defensive reactions of students to peer feedback should be interpreted with caution, though. Attributing student defensiveness and indifference towards critical comments totally to insufficient managing affect and taking action

skills might be misleading. As suggested in earlier research with ecological and sociocultural perspectives (Chong, 2021; Gravett, 2022), feedback literacy development and feedback uptake tendency is subject to the influence of contextual, individual, and social factors. Sutton (2012) advocates that feedback cannot be decontextualized from social relations, and the feeling of not being cared about by the feedback source may be too discouraging for the students to engage with feedback. Furthermore, first-year university students potentially experience greater distress while receiving feedback as it is usually a novel experience for them and they may find it face-threatening to be judged by others in a new learning environment (Shields, 2015). As To (2016, p. 461) contends, one possible way to alleviate such emotional challenges is students' developing feedback resilience, the "ability to tackle negative emotions in feedback processes and to produce insights from feedback for improvement" in order to control their negative emotions emerging during feedback. Another important aspect of managing affect is maintaining the motivation to learn from others and strive for ongoing progress (Carless & Boud, 2018). Chong (2021) suggests that students' motivation for feedback engagement will be heightened when the students acknowledge that feedback is meaningful and valuable and that they have responsibilities to bear in the process.

A possible implication that may be drawn from the present results is that the students could benefit more from the peer feedback project with greater teacher instruction and training before the activity and monitoring and guidance during the tasks. In the current research, the instructor avoided to be actively involved in the peer feedback interactions on Peergrade and to provide immediate feedback on given feedback during the activity in order to observe the natural development of the students' SFL capabilities through peer feedback. The eventual portrait showed that the students lacked the necessary cognitive, emotional and behavioral capabilities that could have been enhanced with prior and immediate teacher guidance and mediation. The constructive influence of teachers in SFL development is already evidenced in previous research (Zhang & Mao, 2023). Xu and Carless (2017) revealed that with teachers' cognitive scaffolding and social and emotional support, students' acceptance of critical peer feedback could be facilitated. Integrating self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessment into the curriculum, demonstrating effective coaching and modelling, introducing and discussing the positive outcomes of feedback activities and motivating the students (through meta-dialogues) to be more pro-actively engaged in such activities are among the practices through which a teacher may support students' feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018).

The findings of the current study are significant in several major aspects. First, they provided empirical evidence for the complex, subjective and multifaceted nature of student feedback literacy in L2 writing context. Second, increased engagement with feedback practices for the student profile with well-developed SFL corroborates earlier findings on the mediating effect of SFL in learner engagement in L2 writing.

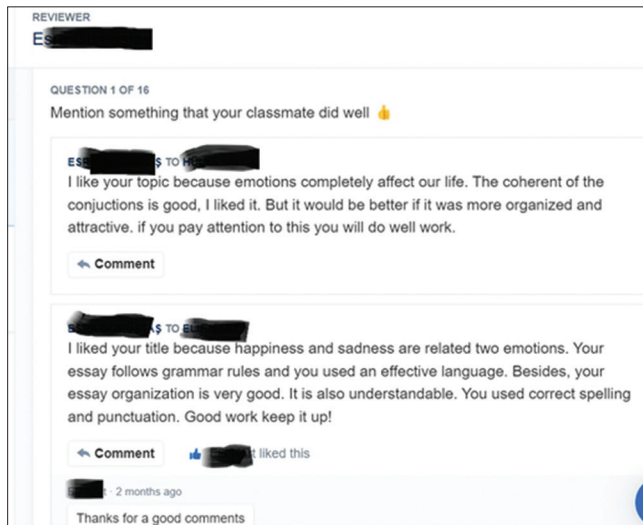
Third, the negative tendency of the change in students' SFL perceptions after the activity lends support to the discussion over the cognitive, affective and social factors undermining the effectiveness of peer feedback. There are still a few limitations of the study that should be noted. The results of the present study apply to its specific context and may not be generalized to other teaching and learning conditions. Another limitation derives from the data collection tool of the study. Some students provided short, superficial and in a few cases, irrelevant responses to the online open-ended survey questions and it was not possible to elicit detailed responses from these students afterwards. Structured or semi-structured interviews (as planned in the initial design of the study, but later eliminated as a choice since very few students volunteered to participate) could have provided more elaborate responses. Another source of weakness for the study lies in the duration of the activity, which lasted for four weeks in total. Further research continuing for longer periods such as one or two academic semesters may provide a better illustration of the processes the students' SFL development goes through and the factors involved. In addition, a greater focus on teacher feedback on peer feedback through dialogic interactions in online platforms could shed more light on the active role of teachers or instructors in minimizing the unfavorable aspects of peer feedback and developing student feedback literacy in online learning environments.

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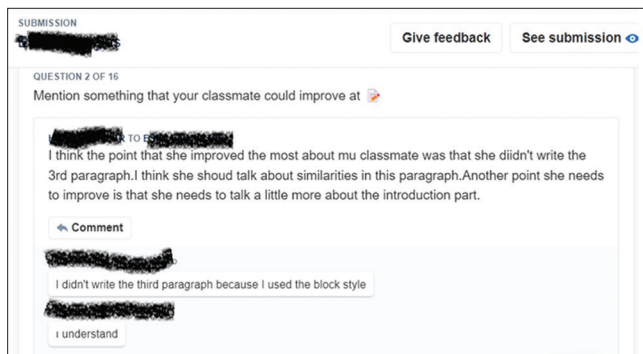
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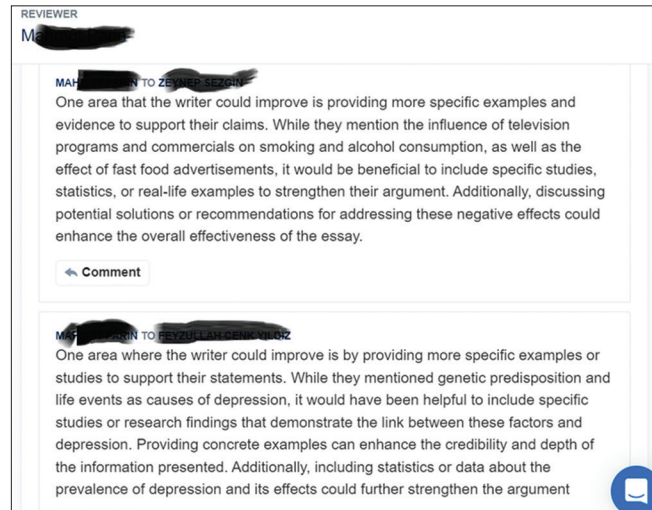
APPENDIXES



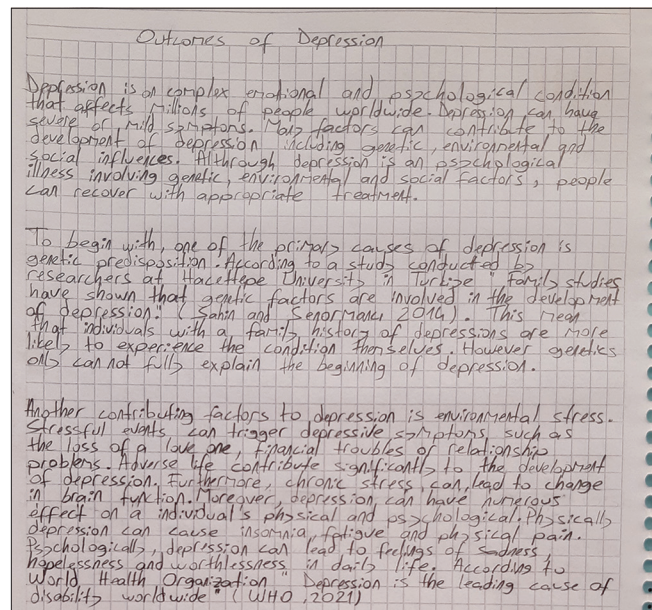
Appendix 1. A sample screenshot of demet's comments as a reviewer



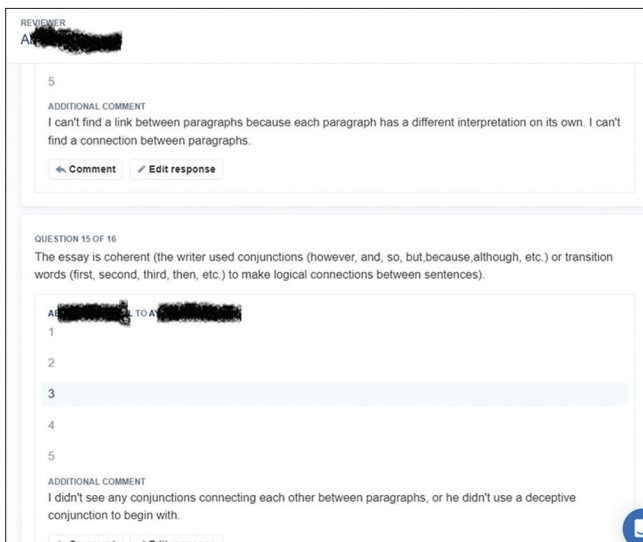
Appendix 2. Sample screenshot of demet's reaction to peer feedback



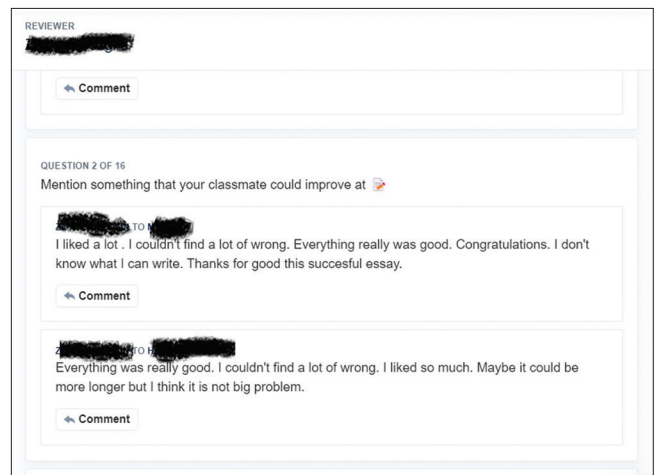
Appendix 3. Sample screenshot of mehmet's comments as a reviewer



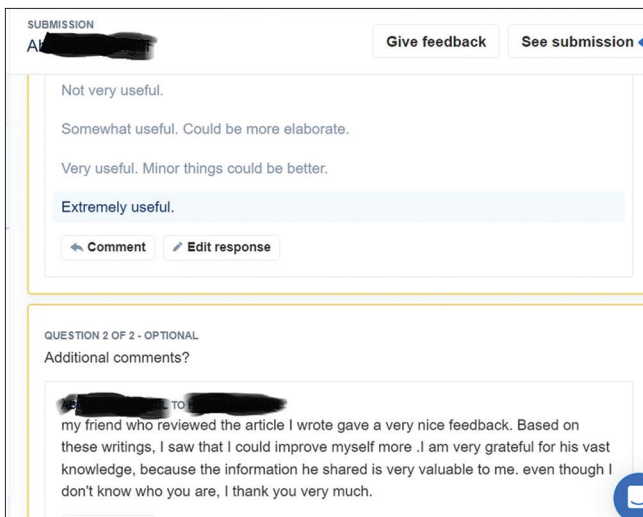
Appendix 4. Mehmet's first-round essay paper



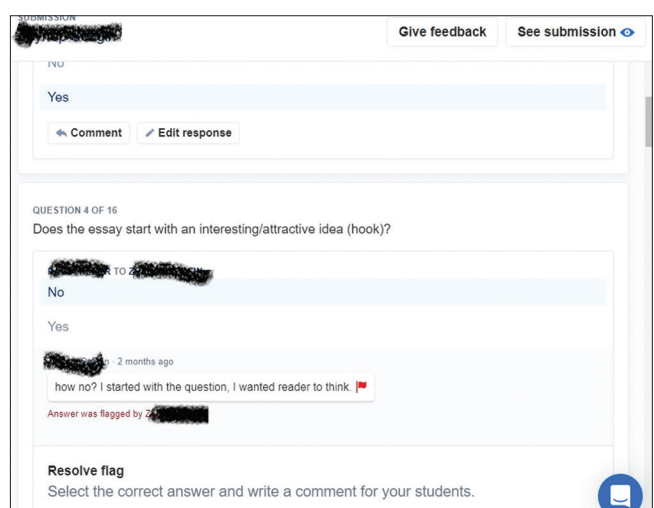
Appendix 5. Sample screenshot of ali's comments as a reviewer



Appendix 7. Sample screenshot of sibel's comments as a reviewer



Appendix 6. Sample screenshot of ali's reaction to peer feedback



Appendix 8. Sample screenshot of sibel's reaction to peer feedback