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Engaging with Peer Feedback in L2 Writing: A Systematic Review of Feedback Provision, Reception, and Uptake

Viviana Lisma Lestari[1*], Childa Faiza[2], Suwarsito[3]
[12]Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Banten, Indonesia
[3]Prodi Sistem Informatika, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, DKI Jakarta, Indonesia
*E-mail: vinalestari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Peer feedback is widely used in second language (L2) writing instruction, yet its learning potential depends partly on how learners engage with the feedback process. This systematic literature review examines learner engagement in peer-feedback provision, reception, and dialogic interaction in L2 writing. It addresses how engagement is conceptualized and evidenced, the factors shaping engagement, and its relationships with feedback uptake, revision practices, and writing development. Following the PRISMA 2020 framework, the review searched Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar for English-language empirical journal articles published between 2021 and 2026. Studies were included when they explicitly analyzed learner engagement in peer-feedback processes. Following screening, 12 studies were reported as eligible for the core synthesis. Thematic and narrative synthesis indicated that engagement is multidimensional and dynamic, involving affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions, with some studies also highlighting social engagement. Engagement varied across feedback roles and writing cycles and was associated with learner characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and instructional support. The findings also indicated that participation and positive emotions do not necessarily result in deep feedback processing, effective uptake, or improved writing. The review highlights the importance of distinguishing engagement from feedback uptake and revision outcomes and calls for clearer conceptualization, multiple sources of evidence, and further longitudinal research into their relationships.

Keywords: engagement, peer feedback, L2 writing, systematic review, feedback uptake

Melibatkan Diri dalam Umpan Balik Rekan Sejawat dalam Penulisan Bahasa Kedua: Tinjauan Sistematis mengenai Pemberian, Penerimaan, dan Pemanfaatan

ABSTRAK
Umpan balik rekan sejawat (peer feedback) banyak digunakan dalam pembelajaran menulis bahasa kedua (L2), namun potensi pembelajarannya bergantung sebagian pada bagaimana peserta didik terlibat dalam proses umpan balik tersebut. Tinjauan pustaka sistematis ini mengkaji keterlibatan peserta didik dalam pemberian, penerimaan, dan interaksi dialogis terkait umpan balik rekan sejawat dalam konteks menulis bahasa kedua. Tinjauan ini membahas bagaimana keterlibatan dikonseptualisasikan dan dibuktikan, faktor-faktor yang membentuk keterlibatan, serta hubungannya dengan pemanfaatan umpan balik, praktik revisi, dan pengembangan kemampuan menulis. Dengan mengikuti kerangka kerja PRISMA 2020, tinjauan ini menelusuri artikel jurnal empiris berbahasa Inggris yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2021 hingga 2026 melalui basis data Scopus, JSTOR, dan Google Scholar. Studi yang disertakan adalah penelitian yang secara eksplisit menganalisis keterlibatan peserta didik dalam proses umpan balik rekan sejawat. Setelah melalui tahap penyaringan, 12 studi dinyatakan memenuhi kriteria untuk sintesis utama. Sintesis tematik dan naratif menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan bersifat multidimensi dan dinamis, yang mencakup dimensi afektif, perilaku, dan kognitif; beberapa studi juga menyoroti adanya dimensi sosial. Keterlibatan bervariasi tergantung pada peran dalam proses umpan balik serta siklus menulis, dan dipengaruhi oleh karakteristik peserta didik, hubungan antarpribadi, serta dukungan instruksional. Temuan ini juga mengindikasikan bahwa partisipasi dan emosi positif tidak selalu berujung pada pemrosesan umpan balik yang mendalam, pemanfaatan umpan balik yang efektif, atau peningkatan kemampuan menulis. Tinjauan ini menekankan pentingnya membedakan antara keterlibatan dengan pemanfaatan umpan balik serta hasil revisi, sekaligus menyerukan perlunya konseptualisasi yang lebih jelas, penggunaan berbagai sumber bukti, serta penelitian longitudinal lebih lanjut mengenai hubungan di antara aspek-aspek tersebut.

Kata kunci: melibatkan diri, umpan balik, rekan sejawat, penulisan bahasa kedua, tinjauan sistematis

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INTRODUCTION

Peer feedback has become an important pedagogical practice in second language (L2) writing because it creates opportunities for learners to evaluate written texts, exchange perspectives, and participate in the development of their own and their peers' writing. Through feedback provision and reception, learners may engage in evaluating textual quality, identifying writing problems, considering alternative expressions, and making decisions about revision. Research syntheses have provided evidence of the potential contribution of peer feedback to writing outcomes. For example, Vuogan and Li (2023), in a meta-analysis of 26 empirical studies, reported an overall positive effect of peer feedback on L2 writing, while Zeng and Ravindran (2024) examined how the allocation of feedback provision and reception related to lower-proficiency EFL learners' writing development. Similarly, Yan et al. (2024) found that revision-oriented peer feedback was positively associated with revision outcomes in L2 literature review writing. Taken together, these studies establish the pedagogical relevance of peer feedback while also indicating the importance of examining what learners do with feedback rather than treating its provision as sufficient evidence of learning.

However, the educational value of peer feedback cannot be understood solely in terms of the comments exchanged or the revisions subsequently produced. Learners may participate in peer-review activities without critically evaluating the feedback they provide or receive, and they may incorporate suggestions without fully understanding the underlying writing problems. Zhang & Hyland (2023), drawing on student drafts, peer comments, reflective journals, and interviews, identified different patterns of engagement associated with self-regulated and other-regulated revision practices. Yan et al. (2024) likewise demonstrated the relevance of examining feedback adoption and revision when investigating changes in writing performance. Furthermore, the longitudinal multiple-case study reported by Zhang & Gao (2024) showed that engagement fluctuated across writing cycles rather than remaining constant. These findings suggest that the presence of feedback, participation in peer review, feedback uptake, and writing improvement should not be treated as interchangeable indicators. Understanding the learning potential of peer feedback therefore requires closer attention to learners' engagement during the feedback process. Learner engagement offers a useful analytical perspective for examining how students respond to peer feedback. In L2 writing research, engagement has commonly been examined through affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions, although broader frameworks also consider social and agentic dimensions. Affective engagement concerns learners' emotional responses, such as confidence, anxiety, or interest; behavioral engagement concerns their observable participation and actions; and cognitive engagement concerns the mental effort and strategies involved in interpreting and evaluating feedback. Qian et al. (2026), in a systematic methodological review of 76 empirical studies on engagement with written feedback in L2 writing, documented variation in how engagement has been conceptualized and operationalized across studies. More specifically, Hu & Chen (2025) examined relationships among affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in peer feedback and found that positive engagement in one dimension could be associated with other dimensions, whereas negative affective engagement could accompany superficial cognitive or behavioral engagement. Zhang & Hyland (2023) further illustrated that learners' revision practices may reflect different levels and patterns of cognitive engagement. Collectively, these studies indicate that engagement is multidimensional and that its dimensions need to be examined in relation to the specific feedback activities and evidence used in each study.

An additional consideration is that engagement with peer feedback is dynamic and context-sensitive. Learners' responses may change across writing tasks, feedback cycles, interpersonal relationships, and instructional arrangements. In their longitudinal multiple-case study, *Exploring the Dynamics of Student Engagement with*

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Receiving Peer Feedback in L2 Writing (2024) documented interconnectedness, inconsistencies, and fluctuations across affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement among six undergraduate students. Cheng and Zhang (2024), using a mixed-methods design in a secondary school context, found that systematic teacher scaffolding—including preparation before feedback, repeated practice, and reinforcement afterward—supported students' engagement. Liu (2025) further investigated how language proficiency and peer familiarity shaped engagement with peer feedback, showing that these factors did not necessarily influence all engagement dimensions in the same way. Together, these studies suggest that engagement cannot be adequately explained through individual learner characteristics alone. Rather, it needs to be considered in relation to learner-related, interpersonal, and instructional conditions, while recognizing that findings from particular educational contexts may not generalize directly to other settings.

The roles learners perform during peer feedback also warrant analytical distinction. Providing feedback involves evaluating another writer's text, identifying potential problems, and formulating comments that may support revision. Receiving feedback, by contrast, involves interpreting comments, evaluating their relevance and credibility, and deciding whether and how to respond. Dialogic feedback introduces opportunities for participants to clarify suggestions, explain their interpretations, and negotiate possible solutions. Hu & Chen (2025) explicitly investigated affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement among feedback providers and receivers, highlighting the relationships among engagement dimensions in both roles. Cheng et al. (2023), in a study comparing engagement with teacher and peer feedback, found that engagement with peer feedback involved complex patterns across affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions. Li & Qian (2024), using a microgenetic approach to dialogic peer feedback, examined changes in engagement and writing development during interaction and mediation. These studies provide reasons to examine feedback provision, reception, and dialogue as related but potentially distinct processes rather than assuming that participation in peer feedback represents a uniform learning experience.

Engagement is also shaped by the instructional and interpersonal conditions in which peer feedback takes place. Students may be reluctant to provide critical comments, uncertain about the accuracy of their peers' suggestions, or hesitant to revise their writing on the basis of feedback they do not fully trust. Such difficulties make preparation, guidance, and opportunities for interaction relevant to the design of peer-feedback activities. Cheng & Zhang (2024) reported that systematic teacher scaffolding supported students' affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement over a 12-week intervention. Liu (2025) examined the roles of language proficiency and peer familiarity, demonstrating the importance of considering learner and relational characteristics together. At the broader review level, Wang et al. (2026) synthesized 19 empirical studies of peer-feedback training published between 2016 and 2025 and identified instructional practices such as rubrics, modeling, peer dialogue, and scaffolding alongside challenges involving confidence, trust, and feedback uptake. These findings suggest that engagement should be investigated not only as an individual response to feedback but also as a process situated within particular instructional and interpersonal environments.

Although the relationship between engagement and writing development is important, the constructs involved need to be distinguished carefully. Feedback uptake refers to how learners respond to feedback, including whether they accept, modify, or reject a suggestion; revision concerns changes made to a text; and writing development concerns broader changes in writing performance or ability. These processes may be related, but evidence of one does not automatically establish the presence of another. Zhang & Hyland (2023) showed that different patterns of engagement were associated with different revision practices, emphasizing the importance of cognitive

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and metacognitive strategies. Yan et al. (2024) found that feedback adoption and revision were relevant to gains in L2 literature review writing performance, while Li & Qian (2024) examined engagement and writing development through dialogic interaction and changes between drafts. In addition, Zeng & Ravindran (2024) investigated writing development under different allocations of feedback provision and reception. Considered together, these studies provide a basis for examining relationships among engagement, uptake, revision, and writing development while avoiding the assumption that a single indicator is sufficient to establish the entire learning process. Previous literature reviews have addressed complementary aspects of peer feedback and written feedback in L2 writing. Vuogan & Li (2023) synthesized 26 empirical studies to estimate the effectiveness of peer feedback on L2 writing outcomes, with attention to differences across outcomes and feedback conditions. Qian et al. (2026) examined 76 empirical studies of engagement with written feedback published between 2004 and May 2025, focusing on the conceptualization, operationalization, and methodological investigation of engagement across different feedback sources, including teacher, peer, and artificial intelligence feedback. Wang et al. (2026), in contrast, focused on peer-feedback training and synthesized 19 empirical studies published between 2016 and 2025, emphasizing instructional design, reported learning outcomes, and implementation challenges. These reviews provide important foundations for understanding the effectiveness of peer feedback, the study of engagement, and the design of feedback training. However, their different objectives and scopes mean that their contributions need to be compared carefully before the specific contribution of another review can be established. In particular, the extent to which the existing reviews integrate engagement across feedback provision, reception, and dialogue, together with its relationships to uptake, revision, and writing development, requires direct examination of their full texts.

Against this background, a systematic review focused specifically on learner engagement with peer feedback in L2 writing may provide a complementary synthesis of the empirical literature. Rather than assuming that this topic has not been reviewed previously, the present review examines how existing studies and reviews have addressed the processes and outcomes of peer feedback and identifies the extent to which relevant evidence has been integrated. Its distinctive analytical focus is on how engagement is conceptualized and evidenced across feedback provision and reception, which learner-related, interpersonal, and instructional factors are reported to shape engagement, and how engagement is related to feedback uptake and revision practices, as well as what evidence links these processes to writing development. By distinguishing direct measures of engagement from participation, uptake, revision, and writing outcomes, the review also seeks to clarify the strength and limitations of the evidence supporting relationships among these constructs. This approach is intended to identify established patterns, methodological differences, and areas where the evidence remains limited or inconclusive.

Accordingly, this systematic review aims to synthesize empirical research on learner engagement with peer feedback in L2 writing, with particular attention to its conceptualization and measurement, the factors associated with engagement, and its reported relationships with feedback uptake, revision practices, and writing development.

The review is guided by the following research questions: How is learner engagement conceptualized and evidenced in the provision and reception of peer feedback in L2 writing? What learner-related, interpersonal, and instructional factors are reported to shape engagement with peer feedback in L2 writing? How is engagement with peer feedback related to feedback uptake and revision practices, and what evidence links these processes to writing development?

METHOD

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine learner engagement with peer feedback in second-language (L2) writing,

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focusing on feedback provision, reception, and dialogic interaction. The review addressed three research questions concerning how engagement is conceptualized and evidenced, the factors shaping engagement, and its relationships with feedback uptake, revision practices, and writing development. The review followed the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework (Page et al., 2021) to support transparent reporting of study identification, selection, and inclusion.

The literature search covered Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, focusing on English-language publications from 2021 to the final search date in 2026. Search terms combined variations of *peer feedback*, *learner engagement*, and *L2 writing* using Boolean operators. The search strategy was designed to identify empirical studies investigating engagement in peer-feedback processes. Detailed search strings, search dates, filters, and source-specific retrieval counts should be documented in accordance with PRISMA-S recommendations (Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

Studies were eligible if they were peer-reviewed empirical journal articles investigating peer feedback in L2 writing and explicitly conceptualizing, measuring, or analyzing learner engagement in feedback provision, reception, or interaction. Under the *Strict Option A* criterion, merely mentioning engagement in the introduction or discussion was insufficient for inclusion. Conceptual papers, review articles, studies outside the specified context or publication period, and studies lacking relevant empirical evidence were excluded. Reports that could not be retrieved were recorded separately and were not automatically classified as ineligible. The selection process yielded 550 records, comprising 185 from Scopus, 120 from JSTOR, and 245 from Google Scholar. After 125 duplicates were removed, 425 records underwent title-and-abstract screening, resulting in 60 reports sought for retrieval. Three reports could not be retrieved, and 57 full-text reports were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 45 were excluded, leaving 12 studies for the core empirical synthesis. These figures are based on the screening data provided and must be verified against the actual search and screening records before publication.

Data were organized using a structured extraction matrix covering bibliographic details, research contexts, methodological designs, engagement conceptualizations, peer-feedback processes, influencing factors, feedback uptake, revision practices, and writing-related outcomes. The findings were to be synthesized thematically and narratively, distinguishing engagement as a process from feedback uptake and writing development as related but separate outcomes. The synthesis was informed by guidance on qualitative evidence synthesis (Porritt et al., 2024). Methodological appraisal should be conducted using tools appropriate to the designs represented in the final corpus, with the selected instruments and appraisal procedures reported transparently.

RESULTS

Main Teme-1

Main theme-1: Multidimensional engagement. Synthesized: Engagement is examined through affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions. Some studies also emphasize social engagement, particularly in collaborative peer-feedback activities. Supporting studies: Chen et al. (2023); Cheng, Liu, and Wang (2023)

Main Teme-2

Main theme-2: Engagement in feedback provision. Synthesized: Providers may show positive feelings toward giving feedback, while their effort, time management, feedback quality, and cognitive strategies vary. Supporting studies: Do (2026); Cheng and Zhang (2024)

Main Teme-3

Main theme-3: Engagement in feedback reception and revision. Synthesized: Engagement varies in depth. Some learners critically evaluate feedback and make self-regulated revisions, whereas others respond superficially or rely

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heavily on external direction. Supporting studies: Zhang &Hyland (2023); Cheng et al. (2023)

Main Teme-4

Main theme-4: 1. Learner-related factors. Synthesized: Language proficiency, self-efficacy, learner beliefs, prior experience, and cognitive strategies may shape how learners interpret feedback and formulate comments. Lower proficiency may constrain engagement with complex content and organizational issues. . Supporting studies: Do (2026); Zhang & Hyland (2023); Liu (2025)

Main Teme-5

Main theme-5: Interpersonal and sociocultural factors. Synthesized: Peer familiarity, emotional safety, trust, and concerns about losing face may influence learners' willingness to provide critical feedback, participate, and engage in deeper interaction. Supporting studies: Chen et al. (2023); Liu (2025); Do (2026)

Main Teme-6

Main theme-6: Instructional factors. Synthesized: Teacher scaffolding, systematic feedback training, explicit guidance, repeated practice, and reflective journals may support deeper engagement and more purposeful feedback use. Supporting studies: Cheng & Zhang (2024); Zhang & Hyland (2023)

Main Teme-7

Main theme-7: IEngagement and feedback uptake. Synthesized: Engagement may support the interpretation and incorporation of peer feedback; however, receiving feedback does not guarantee that learners will use it effectively. Supporting studies: Cheng and Zhang (2024); Cheng et al. (2023)

Main Teme-8

Main theme-8: Deep versus surface revision. Synthesized: Deep engagement involves evaluating feedback, exercising learner agency, and using cognitive or metacognitive strategies. Surface engagement may involve limited correction or externally directed revision without deeper reflection. Supporting studies: Zhang & Hyland (2023); Cheng et al. (2023)

Main Teme-9

Main theme-9: Engagement and writing development. Synthesized: Peer feedback may support writing development when learners engage meaningfully with feedback. However, the extent to which engagement contributes to improved writing outcomes depends on how feedback is interpreted, evaluated, and used. Supporting studies: Cheng & Zhang (2024); Zhang & Hyland (2023)

1. Engagement in Peer-Feedback Processes

The reviewed studies conceptualize learner engagement with peer feedback as a multidimensional process involving affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions, with some studies also emphasizing social engagement during collaborative feedback activities. Chen et al. (2023) examined these four dimensions in collaborative peer feedback, highlighting the importance of understanding engagement as both an individual and an interactional process. Cheng et al. (2023) similarly found that Chinese tertiary EFL learners demonstrated both consistency and inconsistency across affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement when responding to peer feedback. These findings suggest that positive feelings, observable participation, and cognitive processing do not necessarily develop in parallel. The multidimensional perspective is further supported by Hu & Chen (2025), whose study investigated the relationships among the three engagement dimensions from the perspectives of both feedback providers and receivers.

Engagement also varies according to learners' roles and the stages of the feedback process. Do (2026) examined feedback provision and reported variations in learners' effort, time management, feedback focus, and cognitive strategies. The longitudinal study by Li and Lianjiang (2024)

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likewise showed that affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in feedback provision could influence one another over time. In contrast, research on feedback reception has emphasized how learners interpret and act on comments. Zhang & Hyland (2023) identified deep engagement, characterized by self-regulated revision, and surface engagement, characterized by other-regulated revision. The longitudinal study *Exploring the Dynamics of Student Engagement with Receiving Peer Feedback in L2 Writing* (2024) further identified fluctuations and interconnections among affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement across writing cycles. Taken together, these studies indicate that engagement should be understood as a dynamic process shaped by learners' roles, experiences, and responses throughout peer-feedback activities.

2. Factors Shaping Engagement

The reviewed evidence points to learner-related, interpersonal, and instructional factors as important considerations in understanding engagement with peer feedback. At the individual level, Liu (2025) investigated how language proficiency and peer familiarity shaped EFL learners' engagement with feedback, treating engagement as a socially mediated and motivationally dynamic process. Do (2026) also identified variations in providers' effort, feedback choices, and cognitive strategies. In addition, Zhang and Hyland (2023) demonstrated the relevance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to learners' revision decisions. These findings suggest that engagement involves more than willingness to participate: it also depends on how learners interpret comments, evaluate their relevance, and decide how to respond.

Interpersonal relationships and instructional arrangements provide additional explanations for differences in engagement. Chen et al. (2023) highlighted social engagement within collaborative peer feedback, while the longitudinal study of feedback reception in 2024 reported that engagement fluctuated in response to individual and contextual factors. Li and Lianjiang (2024) similarly documented reciprocal relationships among affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement during feedback provision. At the instructional level, Cheng and Zhang (2024) found that systematic teacher scaffolding—including preparation before feedback activities, repeated practice, and reinforcement afterward—supported engagement across the three dimensions. Do (2024), in a study of online peer-feedback training for inexperienced learners, provides additional evidence concerning the role of training in shaping feedback practices. However, training-related improvements in feedback performance should be distinguished from direct evidence of engagement unless the study explicitly analyzes engagement as an outcome.

3. Engagement, Uptake, Revision, and Writing Development

The relationship between engagement and feedback uptake is not automatic. Cheng et al. (2023) showed that learners' affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement with peer feedback could be both consistent and inconsistent, indicating that participation or positive feelings do not necessarily guarantee deeper processing. Zhang and Hyland (2023) further demonstrated that learners differed in how they interpreted feedback and conducted revisions: deep engagement involved self-regulated revision, whereas surface engagement involved more externally regulated operations. Hu & Chen (2025) also reported that positive affective engagement did not always lead to greater cognitive engagement among feedback receivers. These findings support a distinction between receiving feedback, engaging with it, and incorporating it meaningfully into revised writing.

Other studies provide complementary evidence concerning feedback dialogue, revision practices, and writing outcomes. Cheng and Zhang (2024) examined engagement during a structured classroom intervention, illustrating the potential role of instructional support in sustaining participation and feedback processing. Zhao et al. (2024), in their study of written dialogic peer

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feedback, investigated how dialogue between feedback providers and receivers related to feedback provision, adoption, writing quality, and attitudes toward feedback dialogue. Pham (2022) compared computer-mediated and face-to-face peer feedback sequences in relation to feedback and revision, while Zeng & Ravindran (2024) examined how the allocation of feedback provision and reception related to lower-proficiency EFL learners' writing development. These studies help contextualize the processes through which feedback may be interpreted and used, although they should only be treated as direct evidence for engagement when their analyses explicitly address that construct.

Finally, Zhan & Teng (2025) investigated the interplay among peer feedback, self-regulation, and writing performance through a cross-lagged analysis, offering a potentially relevant perspective on relationships between feedback processes and writing outcomes. Nevertheless, evidence of self-regulation, feedback uptake, or writing improvement alone does not establish that learner engagement was explicitly analyzed. Putra et al. (2021) should likewise be included in the substantive synthesis only after its bibliographic details, research focus, and findings have been verified against the original publication. Overall, the studies suggest that engagement is relevant to understanding how learners process and use peer feedback, but stronger conclusions about writing development require evidence directly connecting engagement patterns with changes in writing performance over time.

DISCUSSION

Learner Engagement Is Dynamic and Multidimensional

The findings suggest that learner engagement with peer feedback cannot be adequately explained as a single, stable learner characteristic. Instead, engagement involves interrelated affective, behavioral, and cognitive processes that may develop at different rates or demonstrate inconsistent patterns. Cheng et al. (2023), for example, found that Chinese tertiary EFL learners exhibited both consistency and inconsistency across these dimensions when engaging with peer feedback. This finding challenges the assumption that positive emotions, active participation, and cognitive processing necessarily occur together. Chen et al. (2023) further emphasized the social dimension of engagement in collaborative peer-feedback activities, suggesting that engagement should be understood not only as an individual response but also as a process shaped by interaction with peers.

This interpretation is consistent with Qian et al. (2026), whose systematic methodological review of 76 empirical studies identified conceptual and methodological variation in research on engagement with written feedback in L2 writing. Their review mapped affective, behavioral, cognitive, social, and agentic dimensions, highlighting the diversity of approaches used to conceptualize and investigate engagement. This broader evidence suggests that the multidimensional nature of engagement is not merely a descriptive observation; it is also a methodological challenge. Studies that use different indicators may capture different aspects of engagement, making direct comparisons difficult. Consequently, future research should specify whether engagement is evidenced through learners' reported feelings, observable participation, cognitive processing, social interaction, or decision-making during revision.

The distinction between deep and surface engagement further illustrates why participation alone is an insufficient indicator of meaningful engagement. Zhang & Hyland (2023) found that learners differed in their engagement patterns during revision, with deep engagement associated with self-regulated revision and surface engagement associated with other-regulated revision. These findings suggest that engagement should be examined in terms of how learners interpret feedback and exercise agency, rather than simply whether they accept comments or complete revisions. Nevertheless, deep and surface engagement should not automatically be treated as fixed learner categories; the evidence needs to

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be interpreted in relation to the tasks, feedback sources, and learning conditions under which these patterns emerge.

Engagement Is Shaped by Learner Agency, Interpersonal Conditions, and Instructional Support

The findings indicate that engagement is shaped by the interaction between learner characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and instructional conditions. At the individual level, Liu (2025) investigated language proficiency and peer familiarity in relation to EFL learners' engagement with feedback. Zhang & Hyland (2023) also demonstrated the relevance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to revision decisions. These studies suggest that engagement involves more than willingness to participate: learners must also interpret comments, evaluate their relevance, and decide whether and how to act on them. However, the contribution of individual factors should not be overstated without considering the specific measures and contexts used in each study.

Interpersonal conditions are equally important because peer feedback requires learners to evaluate comments produced by other learners rather than simply respond to an authoritative source. Trust, familiarity, confidence, and concerns about interpersonal relationships may influence how openly learners provide feedback and how critically they evaluate feedback received. Chen et al. (2023) highlighted social engagement in collaborative peer feedback, while Liu (2025) examined the relationship between peer familiarity and engagement. These findings support the interpretation of engagement as socially situated. Nevertheless, familiarity or positive interpersonal relationships should not be assumed to guarantee high-quality feedback or deeper cognitive processing; such relationships may facilitate participation, but their influence on critical evaluation and revision requires separate empirical evidence.

Instructional support may help learners navigate these interpersonal and cognitive demands. Cheng & Zhang (2024) found that systematic teacher scaffolding—including pre-feedback instruction, repeated feedback practices, and post-feedback reinforcement—supported affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement in a 12-week classroom study. This finding indicates that engagement is not solely an individual responsibility but can also be shaped by the design of learning activities. It also suggests that feedback activities should be treated as instructional processes requiring preparation and follow-up, rather than as isolated tasks in which students are simply asked to exchange comments.

However, the evidence does not establish that the same scaffolding approach will be equally effective across educational levels, learner populations, or online and face-to-face settings. The contextual specificity of individual studies must therefore be considered before their findings are generalized. More comparative research is needed to determine which forms of scaffolding are most useful for particular learners, which dimensions of engagement they influence, and whether changes in engagement persist beyond the immediate instructional intervention.

Engagement Does Not Automatically Lead to Feedback Uptake or Writing Development

A central implication of this review is that engagement, feedback uptake, revision quality, and writing development should be treated as related but distinct constructs. A learner may read a peer's comments, participate actively in feedback activities, or express positive attitudes without evaluating the comments critically or making effective revisions. Cheng et al. (2023) reported inconsistencies across dimensions of engagement, while Zhang & Hyland (2023) demonstrated differences between self-regulated and other-regulated revision. Together, these findings suggest that participation and feedback use cannot be treated as interchangeable indicators of learning. This distinction has important implications for how feedback uptake is measured. Counting the number of comments incorporated into a revised text may show whether feedback was adopted, but it does

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not necessarily reveal whether learners understood the comments, evaluated their credibility, or made informed decisions. An accepted comment may produce a useful revision, whereas another may be adopted without critical consideration. Similarly, rejecting a comment is not necessarily evidence of disengagement if the learner can justify the decision. Research should therefore examine the reasoning behind feedback acceptance, modification, rejection, and non-use, as well as the quality of the resulting revisions.

Evidence linking engagement to writing development also requires cautious interpretation. Cheng & Zhang (2024) investigated engagement through multiple data sources over a 12-week classroom intervention, including questionnaires, interviews, writing journals, and original and revised writing samples. Such a design provides a basis for examining engagement alongside revision practices. Nevertheless, improvements in reported engagement or revision behavior do not, by themselves, establish that engagement caused sustained improvement in writing proficiency. Other factors, including prior proficiency, teacher support, repeated practice, and task characteristics, may also contribute to writing outcomes.

This distinction is reinforced by broader evidence on writing feedback. A meta-analysis by Scherer (2024) found that the effects of feedback varied according to the feedback agent and the type of writing outcome assessed. The study reported positive effects of peer feedback on deep-level writing outcomes for foreign-language learners, while also showing that surface-level feedback did not necessarily benefit deeper writing outcomes. These findings provide useful context for understanding why feedback outcomes should be evaluated at different levels. However, the meta-analysis examined feedback effectiveness rather than learner engagement as the central mechanism; its results therefore cannot independently establish that engagement explains the observed writing effects.

Overall, the relationship between engagement and writing development remains an important area for further investigation. Longitudinal studies that combine engagement measures, feedback-response records, revision histories, and independently assessed writing outcomes would provide stronger evidence about how engagement relates to changes in writing quality over time. Claims that engagement directly causes writing improvement should be reserved for research designs capable of supporting such inferences.

Theoretical, Pedagogical, and Methodological Implications

The findings have three implications for research and practice. Theoretically, engagement should be conceptualized as a dynamic process involving affective, behavioral, cognitive, and, where supported by evidence, social dimensions. The inconsistency among dimensions reported by Cheng et al. (2023), together with the conceptual variation identified by Qian et al. (2026), indicates that engagement should not be reduced to a single overall score without justification. Future studies should explain how the dimensions are defined and how their relationships are examined.

Pedagogically, peer feedback should be supported through structured instruction, opportunities for repeated practice, and reflection on revision decisions. Cheng & Zhang (2024) provide empirical support for systematic teacher scaffolding, while Zhang & Hyland (2023) demonstrate the importance of examining learners' decision-making during revision. Teachers should therefore assess not only whether students complete peer-review activities but also whether they can explain, evaluate, and justify their responses to peer comments. This approach may help distinguish meaningful engagement from compliance with task requirements.

Methodologically, future studies should combine multiple sources of evidence rather than relying exclusively on learner perceptions. Surveys and interviews can provide insight into affective experiences and learner interpretations, while feedback records, writing drafts, observations, and revision analyses can reveal how engagement is manifested in practice. Qian et al. (2026) similarly identified methodological diversity and conceptual

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inconsistency as important issues in the wider literature on engagement with written feedback. More consistent operational definitions and transparent reporting would improve comparability across studies and strengthen the evidence base.

The conclusions of this review must also be interpreted in light of the scope and quality of the included evidence. The synthesis focuses on peer feedback in L2 writing and should not automatically be generalized to teacher feedback, automated feedback, or other educational contexts. Moreover, associations between engagement and revision outcomes should not be interpreted as causal relationships unless the underlying studies support that conclusion. The review's contribution is therefore not to claim that engagement inevitably improves writing, but to clarify how engagement is conceptualized, what conditions may shape it, and why its relationship with feedback uptake and writing development requires more precise empirical investigation.

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