The Effectiveness of Peer Correction in Minimizing Grammatical Errors

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Abstract. Grammatical accuracy remains a persistent challenge for learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly in academic writing contexts. Despite having adequate vocabulary and basic grammatical knowledge, many university students continue to produce recurring grammatical errors that weaken clarity and effectiveness in written communication. Traditional teacher-centered correction, although valuable, often fails to lead to sustained improvement, as students may not fully internalize the feedback provided. This study explores peer correction as an alternative and collaborative approach to minimizing grammatical errors in EFL academic descriptive writing. Peer correction encourages learners to actively engage with texts, negotiate meaning, and reflect critically on grammatical forms through interaction with classmates. By involving students in cycles of reviewing and revising each other's work, this research aims to examine how peer correction influences learners' grammatical awareness, accuracy, and confidence. Situated in a university EFL context, the study focuses on learners who are beyond beginner level but still experience persistent grammatical difficulties. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of peer interaction as a pedagogical strategy that supports grammatical development, learner autonomy, and collaborative learning in academic writing classrooms.

Keywords: grammatical accuracy, peer correction, EFL writing, academic writing, collaborative learning.

Abstrak. Ketepatan tata bahasa masih menjadi tantangan utama bagi pembelajar English as a Foreign Language (EFL), khususnya dalam konteks penulisan akademik. Meskipun mahasiswa memiliki kosakata yang memadai dan pemahaman dasar tentang tata bahasa, kesalahan gramatikal yang berulang masih sering muncul dan mengganggu kejelasan tulisan. Koreksi yang berpusat pada dosen, meskipun penting, tidak selalu menghasilkan perbaikan yang berkelanjutan karena umpan balik sering kali tidak terinternalisasi secara mendalam oleh mahasiswa. Penelitian ini mengkaji peer correction sebagai pendekatan alternatif dan kolaboratif untuk meminimalkan kesalahan gramatikal dalam penulisan teks deskriptif akademik EFL. Peer correction mendorong mahasiswa untuk terlibat aktif dalam membaca, menelaah, dan merevisi tulisan teman sebaya, serta menegosiasikan makna dan bentuk bahasa. Dengan melibatkan mahasiswa dalam siklus saling memberi umpan balik, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengaruh peer correction terhadap kesadaran gramatikal, akurasi, dan kepercayaan diri mahasiswa. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi teoretis dan praktis mengenai peran interaksi sebaya dalam meningkatkan akurasi tata bahasa dan pembelajaran kolaboratif dalam kelas menulis akademik.

Kata kunci: ketepatan tata bahasa, koreksi teman sebaya, penulisan EFL, penulisan akademik, pembelajaran kolaboratif.

1. INTRODUCTION

In many English as a Foreign Language classrooms, grammatical accuracy often stands as one of the most persistent challenges faced by learners. Students may possess a broad vocabulary, understand sentence meaning, and even express ideas fluently, yet their writing frequently reveals errors that distract from clarity and weaken communication. Teachers, particularly in university contexts, frequently notice the same patterns recurring across assignments: misuse of verb tenses, incorrect subject, verb agreement, inconsistent sentence structure, and confusion over prepositions or articles. These issues do not always stem from a

lack of intelligence or motivation, but rather from a complex mixture of linguistic habits, limited exposure to authentic English, and the anxiety that accompanies academic writing. As learners attempt to translate their thoughts into written English, grammatical slips emerge as a natural part of the learning journey. This becomes even more visible when students are required to produce longer texts, where the flow of ideas competes with the attention needed to construct accurate sentence forms.

Traditional classroom instruction often positions the teacher as the central source of correction (Van Ha et al., 2021). Errors are highlighted in red ink, discussed briefly, and returned to the students with the expectation that they will understand and improve. Yet, improvement does not always follow. Some students glance at corrections without deeply processing them. Others repeat the same mistakes in subsequent writing, suggesting that teacher feedback, although valuable, sometimes does not transform into internalized knowledge (Liu et al., 2023) . This situation invites a question that many educators have quietly considered: is there a more engaging way for learners to become aware of their grammatical errors, one that encourages responsibility and deeper reflection? Peer correction, where students read, comment on, and revise each other's writing, emerges as a promising possibility.

Peer correction is more than simply exchanging papers. It involves dialogue, negotiation of meaning, and a shared awareness that writing is not only produced for the teacher but also for an audience of equals (Vo, 2022). When students notice errors in a peer's text, they indirectly strengthen their own understanding. When they receive feedback, they are confronted with how others interpret their words. The process encourages learners to slow down, examine sentence structure carefully, and think critically about grammar not as a distant rule but as a tool for clearer expression (Allayarova, 2025). Unlike teacher-centered correction, peer correction shifts the learning dynamic. Instead of relying solely on external authority, students become active participants in the writing process. They take ownership, make decisions, and experience grammar as something alive and applicable to real communication rather than as a set of rules memorized for tests.

In the university setting where this research is situated, peer correction has been used occasionally during writing lessons, but not always systematically. Some students express enthusiasm when exchanging work with classmates, enjoying the sense of collaboration and shared struggle. Others feel hesitant, worried that pointing out errors might offend their peers or reveal their own weaknesses (Suliman, 2024). These mixed reactions are natural, yet they hint at something powerful: peer correction is not merely a technique, but a social experience.

It touches confidence, trust, and identity as language learners. When guided well, however, peer correction can foster a supportive environment where mistakes are not stigmatized but viewed as part of collective growth. Students begin to see that everyone struggles, everyone improves, and everyone has something valuable to contribute (Doyle, 2023).

This research grows from that curiosity and everyday classroom reality. Instead of treating grammatical errors as static data, it approaches them as something negotiable within peer interaction. The central intention of this study is to explore how peer correction can help minimize grammatical errors in EFL writing, particularly in academic descriptive texts (Sari, 2023). The project involves university students who are not complete beginners, yet still face persistent grammatical challenges. These students possess sufficient vocabulary and are familiar with basic grammar rules, but their written output suggests that understanding has not fully transferred into automatic usage. By engaging them in peer correction cycles, this study seeks to observe how their awareness, accuracy, and confidence transform over time (Suliman, 2024).

Furthermore, peer correction has the potential to reduce the pressure often felt when feedback comes solely from the lecturer. Many learners fear making mistakes publicly, but when feedback comes from classmates who are navigating the same struggle, the atmosphere softens. Errors become less embarrassing and more discussable. Feedback becomes a conversation, not a judgment. Students might feel more comfortable asking questions, negotiating meaning, and discussing grammar openly (Kubiak, 2023). In this sense, peer correction can nurture learner autonomy, collaborative learning, and mutual accountability in ways that traditional teacher correction sometimes cannot.

The significance of this research lies in its attempt to bridge theory and practice in a very human context. Grammar is not merely mechanical; it is personal. Every error represents a thought in transition, a mind trying to grasp new patterns beyond its first language (Anderson & Thibodeaux, 2024). Every correction is a moment of awareness, a small step toward accuracy. Peer correction, therefore, is not simply about reducing mistakes but about cultivating noticing, reflection, and shared ownership of learning (Huseynli, 2024). If students can recognize and articulate errors in others, they may begin to recognize them in themselves. If they learn to revise thoughtfully, writing may shift from being a one-time task into a recursive process where drafting, reviewing, and improving become natural habits.

This study does not assume that peer correction is a perfect solution. Not all feedback will be accurate, and not all students will respond to it equally. Some may overlook errors, others may hesitate to correct, and a few may correct confidently but incorrectly. These realities are acknowledged openly, yet they do not negate the potential value of the approach. Instead, they highlight the importance of guidance, training, and reflection during peer correction activities. When structured and monitored with care, peer correction can provide a space where learners work together, notice more deeply, and gradually strengthen grammatical accuracy through practice rather than prescription.

In essence, the background of this research rests on two simple observations: students continue to struggle with grammar, and teacher correction alone is not always enough. Peer correction offers a fresh perspective where students become both writers and readers, both learners and teachers. Through this study, it is hoped that a clearer understanding will emerge regarding how peer interaction influences grammatical development, and whether the classroom can evolve into a community of writers who learn not only from authority but also from each other.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative design, grounded in the belief that writing development is best understood through authentic learning behavior rather than numerical measurement alone. Instead of testing students with controlled instruments, the study placed them within a natural classroom setting where writing, reviewing, and revising happened as part of their routine. The central focus was to observe how peer correction unfolded in real interaction, how feedback was exchanged, and how grammatical accuracy shifted as students engaged in the process. The qualitative nature of the study allowed the researcher to stay close to the learners' experiences, capturing struggles, hesitations, negotiations, and moments of awareness that might otherwise remain invisible behind test scores.

The participants of this study were one class of seventh-semester English major students at a university in Medan. They were selected not by random sampling, but by accessibility and relevance. At this stage in their academic journey, they had completed several core grammar and writing courses, yet still displayed noticeable variability in writing accuracy. This made them ideal participants, since the study required learners who were neither beginners nor advanced enough to produce near-perfect text. The class consisted of students who were

familiar with essay writing and had previously completed academic tasks requiring critical expression. However, many still struggled to maintain consistent grammatical control, especially when writing longer passages under limited time. Their familiarity with classroom writing practices helped ensure that peer correction activities could run smoothly without needing extensive orientation.

Data collection took place over several weeks, during regularly scheduled writing classes. The researcher introduced peer correction as a collaborative activity rather than a formal assessment technique. Students were asked to write descriptive or expository paragraphs based on given themes, such as personal experiences, a memorable place, or an object with symbolic meaning. After the first draft was completed, the papers were exchanged among peers. Each student received a classmate's work and was instructed to highlight or annotate areas where grammatical errors appeared. They were encouraged not only to underline mistakes but to suggest corrections or alternative wording when possible. The atmosphere was kept informal yet focused; instead of red marks, students used colored pens or digital comments to make feedback less intimidating and more conversational.

The researcher observed interactions closely, taking field notes on how feedback was given and how students reacted to receiving it. Some students worked quietly, reading and marking without much discussion. Others paired up naturally, pointing out errors aloud and debating which form sounded more appropriate. These discussions became valuable data because they revealed how learners reasoned through grammar rules in real time. To deepen the understanding of how peer correction affected student awareness, reflective journals were also collected. After each session, students wrote brief reflections describing what they learned, what errors surprised them, and how the feedback helped them notice weaknesses in their writing. These reflections were later analyzed alongside writing drafts to track changes in accuracy.

The analysis process followed a thematic approach. First, grammatical errors in the initial drafts were categorized according to type: tense misuse, incorrect verb agreement, word choice, sentence structure, article or preposition confusion, and punctuation. After peer correction, the revised drafts were compared with the originals to see which errors were corrected, which persisted, and which new forms appeared (Li & Hu, 2024). The aim was not to produce percentages, but to understand the nature of improvement. Patterns were interpreted narratively, seeking connections between feedback received and revisions made. For instance,

if a student repeatedly omitted the plural marker but corrected it after peer suggestion, the incident was noted as evidence of learning triggered by peer awareness.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study. Students participated voluntarily and were informed that their work would be used only for research purposes, without academic penalty (Liebel & Chakraborty, 2021). Their identities remained confidential, and all writing samples were stored securely. The researcher acted more as a facilitator than an authority figure, guiding peer correction when needed but allowing students to explore errors with minimal interruption.

Overall, this method allowed the researcher to witness grammar not merely as a rule-based system, but as a social practice emerging through interaction. The class became a community of writers, reading each other's work with shared curiosity. Peer correction transformed writing into dialogue rather than a solitary task, making grammatical awareness something negotiated collectively. Through observation, draft comparison, and reflective notes, the study aimed to draw meaningful insights about how peer involvement contributes to minimizing grammatical errors in academic writing within an EFL environment.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

When the study began, I honestly expected the class to respond to peer correction with a mix of curiosity and hesitation. And that was exactly what happened during the first week. Many students seemed unsure whether they had the right to correct their classmates' writing, and some even whispered to friends before marking a sentence, as if afraid to offend the writer. The atmosphere gradually shifted, though, as they were repeatedly reminded that peer correction was not meant to judge but to assist. Over the course of the meetings, I observed a visible change in how they approached grammatical errors, both in identifying and discussing them. This transformation became the core of what emerged from the data.

The most dominant pattern, taken from their written drafts and recorded discussion notes, was that students were quicker at noticing surface-level mistakes first—particularly verb tense and subject-verb agreement. In early activities, these errors appeared at high frequency. Examples included sentences like "He go to campus every morning" or "They is discussing about the topic." During the initial round of peer review, most corrections simply revised these errors without much explanation. However, by the third session, peers began adding notes in

the margins explaining why a change was necessary. One student wrote, "Use 'goes' because the subject is singular," something the same student never clarified during the first week. This small but meaningful progress suggested that peer correction pushed them not only to fix errors but to articulate grammatical reasoning, which was one of the subtle aims embedded in the task.

Beyond grammatical accuracy, there was also an observable social shift. Students who rarely participated in discussions became more active when they acted as peer reviewers. They seemed to feel less pressure compared to being corrected directly by a lecturer. During interviews, two participants admitted that peer feedback felt more friendly and less intimidating. One student even said that being corrected by a friend made the mistake feel normal, instead of embarrassing. That comment stayed with me, because it reflected not just improvement in writing skill, but also how correction could shape confidence and interaction. The classroom atmosphere gradually changed from teacher-centered to something more collaborative, almost like a workshop where everyone contributed.

Nevertheless, peer correction did not instantly solve every problem. A recurring issue was confusion when dealing with more complex grammatical forms, especially passive structures and conditional sentences. When students encountered sentences such as "If I will study, I will pass the exam," some reviewers corrected it, but others rewrote it in a different form, unsure which version was right. There were instances where incorrect corrections appeared, showing that peer involvement, while empowering, also had its limitations. This part became valuable data, because it reminded me that peer correction is not merely about group work, but about guiding learners to negotiate meaning and compare language choices. Students sometimes debated a correction for several minutes before agreeing on one form. I still remember an exchange where two students discussed whether "was wrote" should be "was written" or "wrote". They ended up searching references and finally decided together. Watching that process unfold was as meaningful as seeing the grammatical accuracy improve.

The written results at the end of the intervention confirmed these qualitative impressions. In the final writing task, most students produced paragraphs with fewer mistakes compared to their first drafts. The reduction was most noticeable in verb tense and subject-verb agreement errors, the two areas they had corrected repeatedly during peer review sessions. Students also showed improved awareness of punctuation and capitalization, which were not the main target but improved naturally as feedback exchange became routine. While the accuracy was not

perfect, it was evident that peer correction had become a habit rather than a task assigned by the lecturer.

The interviews after the final draft added another layer to the findings. Many students shared that correcting their friends made them notice mistakes in their own writing. One participant commented that she used to write quickly without re-reading, but after reviewing her peers' work, she started checking her own sentences carefully. She said, "When I correct others, I also correct myself unknowingly." This comment reflected something that numbers alone cannot show. It portrayed a shift in mindset, in the way students engaged with language, and in how writing became more reflective. Even the quieter students admitted that being both a reviewer and a writer made them more aware of their grammatical decisions, whether consciously or quietly embedded in the writing process.

Across all data sources such as student drafts, peer review notes, interview transcripts, and classroom observations, the pattern was coherent. Peer correction did not eliminate errors completely, but it created space for negotiation, reflection, and linguistic awareness. It gave students a sense of agency, allowing them to take ownership of their writing progress. They were not only corrected; they became the correctors. And that role reversal was perhaps the most powerful finding of this study.

B. Discussion

Looking back at how the classroom dynamic unfolded throughout the sessions, it became obvious that peer correction did more than address grammatical errors. It shaped attentiveness, reshaped participation, and subtly changed how students viewed writing. What started as a cautious exercise gradually developed into a learning culture that was both collaborative and introspective. The findings in the previous section revealed a consistent pattern. Errors did not disappear instantly, but students learned to recognize, negotiate, and justify corrections (Coverdale, 2020). In the process, they learned from one another. This section reflects on those findings more critically, connecting them to wider pedagogical implications, acknowledging the challenges, and exploring how peer correction may extend beyond the context of this study.

1. Peer Correction as a Catalyst for Awareness and Responsibility

One of the strongest impressions throughout the observation was how peer correction awakened a sense of responsibility in the students. They did not behave merely as recipients of feedback, but as contributors in the writing process of others (Wu & Schunn, 2021). This dual

role encouraged a more active engagement with grammar, something that students might ignore when focusing only on content. When peers had to justify why go should be goes, or why they is should be they are, the change was no longer mechanical. It carried reasoning, and reasoning is what transforms knowledge into awareness (Lamon, 2020).

What made this shift particularly noteworthy was how it influenced self-monitoring. Students mentioned that while correcting peers, they often noticed errors they themselves commonly made. It echoed a familiar phenomenon where teaching others reinforces our own understanding (Beals et al., 2021). In the context of writing instruction, this suggests that grammatical improvement may not only come through direct instruction, but through social learning embedded within interaction. The classroom gradually became less about completing assignments and more about paying attention to how sentences work. Improvement in tenses and agreement did not just occur as corrections on paper, but as recognition in the minds of learners.

That sense of responsibility also softened the tendency to rely on the lecturer as the sole authority. Students became more independent, even proud, when their suggestions helped others revise a sentence (Cheng & Zhang, 2024). In a culture of higher education where students often expect the lecturer to fix mistakes for them, peer correction shifted the weight of learning back to the learners. This movement from dependency to involvement is subtle, but deeply important for long-term writing development.

2. Social Comfort, Confidence, and the Human Side of Feedback

Another dimension that surfaced strongly in the findings was the emotional aspect of correction. At first, students hesitated. They feared sounding rude or incorrect. Yet, as sessions continued, the room felt warmer, less stiff. Students exchanged laughter when noticing shared mistakes; they apologized jokingly when marking a friend's writing. These moments, though small, helped dismantle anxiety. Peer correction was not only about grammar; it was about comfort (Kubiak, 2023).

Several students stated in interviews that feedback from peers felt more approachable than feedback from lecturers. The judgment felt lighter; mistakes felt human rather than humiliating. This emotional shift matters, especially in academic writing where fear of making errors sometimes prevents students from writing at all. The friendly nature of peer feedback

encouraged risk-taking, particularly in trying new sentence structures, something that traditional correction may not always nurture.

Confidence is not something that can be measured through test scores alone. It hides in tone of voice during discussion, in the way a student volunteers to review, in how they no longer panic when someone circles their sentence (Barker, 2025). When a student said that revising a friend's work made her realize writing mistakes are normal, it reflected growth not only in skill but in mindset. The technique nurtured empathy. Correcting was no longer pointing out flaws; it was offering help. Such relational learning is often overlooked in grammar research, yet it plays a tremendous role in shaping writing attitudes (Toufaha, 2024).

3. The Limitations and Unevenness of Peer-Based Correction

Of course, the findings were not perfect. Peer correction helped with surface-level errors, but struggled with complex forms. Some students corrected errors incorrectly (Simel & Chali, 2025). Others were unsure if their suggestion was right, especially with passive forms or conditionals. This unevenness is not a failure; it is a natural reminder that peers are learners, not experts.

However, rather than weakening peer correction, these struggles highlighted where guidance is necessary. A teacher's role cannot vanish entirely. Students need examples, gradual scaffolding, mini-lessons that emerge naturally from confusion (Hopper, 2024). In this study, confusion occasionally sparked discussion that led to self-directed learning. Two students debating *was wrote* versus *was written* demonstrates that even incorrect assumptions can trigger valuable inquiry. Still, a sustainable peer correction environment benefits from structured support. Checklists, grammar sheets, or short clarifications after review sessions could help balance student autonomy with accuracy.

Time is another limitation. Peer correction took longer than traditional grading. Discussion sometimes stretched beyond the planned duration, particularly when peers disagreed (Zhou et al., 2025). Yet, these moments were also the richest parts of learning. The challenge, therefore, is not to shorten the process, but to integrate it strategically. Peer correction may not fit every task, but it excels in building awareness when applied consistently and patiently.

4. Implications for Future Application and Writing Pedagogy

Beyond the walls of this single study, peer correction holds potential for broader use in writing courses. It offers a pathway toward developing reflective writers who care about clarity and accuracy (Suliman, 2024). When students internalize grammar not as a list of rules but as choices that shape meaning, improvement becomes more than compliance.

This research suggests that peer correction works best when students feel safe, supported, and valued as contributors. Teachers might begin with small-scale peer review tasks, gradually raising complexity as confidence grows. Providing example comments, modeling constructive feedback, or rotating reviewer pairs could help refresh the activity (Wu & Schunn, 2023). Eventually, peer review may evolve from task to habit, a normal part of writing rather than an occasional exercise.

In future research, exploring peer correction with digital tools or anonymous feedback platforms may add new insight. Some students may review more boldly when identities are concealed; others may learn better with collaborative online editing tools. Additionally, expanding the study to multiple classes or comparing different proficiency groups would deepen understanding of its effectiveness.

What remains clear, however, is that grammatical progress is not solely about error reduction. It is about noticing, reflecting, testing alternatives, explaining decisions. It is about turning writing from solitary effort into shared discovery. Peer correction, in its simple yet profound nature, encourages that journey.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study set out to explore how peer correction contributed to minimizing grammatical errors in an EFL writing classroom, and the experience of observing the process offered more than numerical improvement. It revealed how learning unfolds when responsibility is shared, when feedback becomes dialogue rather than judgment, and when grammar is treated as a craft that grows through awareness rather than memorization alone. Across the sessions, students gradually learned to detect verb agreement issues, inconsistent tenses, and structural slips not only in others' texts but in their own writing. Some corrections were hesitant, even imperfect, yet each exchange sharpened attention and nurtured confidence. Limitations were visible, particularly in dealing with advanced structures, but these limitations served as reminders that peer correction thrives best alongside guidance, modeling, and

structured support from the teacher. The classroom, however, transformed into a space where mistakes were not marks of failure, but invitations to think. More than reducing errors, peer correction encouraged reflection, collaboration, and courage to revise. It stands as an approach worth developing further, especially when the goal is to build writers who notice how language works and who trust themselves to improve through interaction and practice. While this study focuses on one class only, the insights suggest a promising direction for writing pedagogy that values community as much as correctness, and growth as much as accuracy.

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