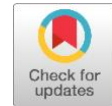


A thematic analysis of preservice teachers' peer feedback in teacher education

 Eunjeong Park

Department of English Language Education, Suncheon National University, [57922] 255, Jungang-ro, Suncheon-si, Jeollanam-do (Seokhyeondong), South Korea
parkej@scnu.ac.kr



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ABSTRACT

Peer feedback plays a key role as a way of encouraging reflective practice and professional learning in teacher education, but there is less understanding about how preservice teachers assess the instructional quality influenced by evaluative orientations. In this qualitative research, the researcher seeks to know the themes of peer feedback given by preservice English teachers after instructional activities. Thematic analysis was applied to the peers' evaluative comments to determine common criteria that were used to construct the teaching effectiveness. There were three themes: (1) the focus on the relevance of the topic to the learners, (2) the importance of interactions and discussion-based activities, and (3) the lack of interest in linguistic scaffolding and pedagogical rigor. These findings show that peer feedback primarily indicates adherence to the principles of communicative language teaching, particularly learner-centeredness and interaction but does not pay sufficient attention to linguistic rigor and learning outcomes. Through the lenses of second language acquisition and teacher education, the findings imply that even though preservice teachers show conceptual approval of communicative pedagogy, they need more assistance in the creation of evaluative literacy that relates the engagement-based practices to the process of language learning and teaching. This study adds to existing literature on peer feedback in teacher education by pointing out the necessity of systematic instructions in peer evaluation practices.



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1. Introduction

Peer feedback within language teacher education programs has gained a more significant role in the education of language teachers, as well as in the wider shift towards collaborative learning, reflective practice and formative assessment in higher education (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless & Boud, 2018; Nicol, 2010). Recent research in higher education further highlights the importance of both self- and peer feedback in promoting student engagement, responsibility, and evaluative capacity (Iglesias Pérez et al., 2022). In teacher education specifically, peer feedback has been recognized as a valuable tool for supporting professional development and performance evaluation (Cabello & Topping, 2020), and digital peer feedback practices are increasingly emphasized in teacher education contexts (Topping, 2023). In education of English language teachers, peer feedback has been extensively employed in microteaching and lesson demonstration and practicum-related tasks to prompt preservice teachers to critically note instruction and make pedagogical judgments (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2015). By participating in peer feedback, preservice teachers will not only gain reflective consciousness about the teaching practices, but

also the evaluative abilities that will help the teachers grow professionally (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Tai et al., 2018).

Empirical studies have also shown that peer feedback can positively influence learners' motivation and engagement, particularly in second language contexts (Weng et al., 2023). Although it is widely used, the studies have expressed some concern about the quality and the depth of the peer feedback given by the new teachers (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Past research indicates that preservice teachers are more likely to provide feedback that is constructive and descriptive and addresses surface level characteristics of instruction as opposed to critically engaging with the learning processes or instructional effectiveness (Carless & Boud, 2018; Nicol, 2010). This trend can be further promoted in communicative language teaching (CLT)-based curricula, where the focus on interaction, engagement, and affection of learners can seriously undermine the concern with linguistic growth and methodological soundness (Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2006; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999).

In terms of second language acquisition (SLA), it is more than the interest of the topic and interactive format that could make language teaching effective. The learners need to be given comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), a chance to give meaningful output (Swain, 1995), and pedagogically organized exchange that facilitates noticing and language development (Long, 1996; Schmidt, 1990). Whereas CLT evolves on the strengths of communication and learner-centeredness (Harmer, 2007; Richards, 2006), SLA studies focus on the relevance of communicative activity planning and support in facilitating acquisition (Ellis, 2012; VanPatten, 2015; Seedhouse, 2004; Walsh, 2011). It is also important to understand how these dimensions are perceived by preservice teachers in peer feedback so as to enhance the practice of teacher education (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2015).

Unlike previous studies that examine perceptions of peer feedback effectiveness, the current research fills this gap by analyzing peer feedback discourse as one of the places where pedagogical values and conceptions of language teaching are implemented. In particular, the research question to be answered in the study is how preservice English teachers can develop and assess effective teaching based on written peer feedback. With thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the study discovers the common themes in the comment of peers and provides their analysis with the literature on SLA, CLT, and teacher education. Through content and orientation analysis of peer feedback, this paper hopes to add to the overall understanding of the evaluative literacy of preservice teachers (Tai et al., 2018), as well as to inform the design of more effective peer feedback practices in language teacher education (Cabello & Topping, 2020; Iglesias Pérez et al., 2022; Topping, 2023; Weng et al., 2023). Accordingly, this study is structured around the following research question: What major themes emerge in preservice teachers' peer feedback regarding their microteaching practice.

2. Theoretical Peer Feedback as an Assessment

The use of peer feedback has been receiving growing popularity within teacher education as a pedagogical assessment practice offering reflective teaching, professional judgement, and collaborative learning. Based on sociocultural and constructivist views, peer feedback views learning as a socially mediated process whereby, preservice teachers gain professional competence through interaction, dialogue and evaluative engagement with peers. Cabello and Topping's (2020) study offered a systematic overview of the existing evidence on peer feedback in teacher education by conducting a review of fifteen peer-assessment-based studies that explore peer feedback of teaching performance. Their survey indicates that peer feedback is mostly done as the formative practice for the improvement of reflective capacity, metacognitive awareness, and the quality of instructions. In the research, peer feedback was demonstrated to prompt preservice teachers to describe what they viewed as effective pedagogical practices, practice analytic observation of teaching practices, and internalize professional norms.

Nevertheless, Cabello and Topping (2020) observed a lot of variances in methodology, such as the evaluation criteria, training processes, feedback mechanisms and research designs. Although most studies indicated positive perceptions and self-reported improvements, the authors warn of the claims of causality about performance improvement because of small sample size, control group absence, and use of subjective measures. With this more generalized synthesis, Akpınar (2019) provided a detailed qualitative case study of the impact of peer feedback on the teaching practices of preservice teachers in the field of social studies education. The research which employed interviews and observation in the classroom resulted in the finding that peer feedback was positively associated with a variety of aspects of teaching competence, such as lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, and

communication skills. The participants also said that participation in peer feedback increased their consciousness of pedagogic shortcomings and helped in professional development by attaining constructive feedback. Although the results support arguments concerning the pedagogical importance of peer feedback, the sample of the study is homogeneous, and it does not include a control group, which restrains the applicability of its results. Furthermore, the analysis is rather dependent on the perceptions of participants, and the questions of the implementation of observed improvements in the long-term instructional practice remain open.

Peer feedback can be compared to the modern views on a learner-centered education and social constructivism, in which the process of knowledge co-construction is achieved through contact (Topping, 2017; Nicol et al., 2014). Peer feedback can help form a reflective practice, which is one of the main competencies of teacher education. It has been demonstrated that practicing giving and receiving feedback prompts preservice teachers to critically reflect on the teaching practices, develop pedagogical reasoning, and rethink their own instructional choices (Putman et al., 2026; Hornstein et al., 2025). In particular, structured peer feedback exercises, like those incorporated in microteaching or video-based reflection, increase the capacity of preservice teachers to observe key events that occur in the classroom and relate theory and practice. It is a process that helps to develop what is commonly known as professional vision. Peer feedback has also been associated with self-regulated learning improvements. The skills that preservice teachers acquire when they are involved in evaluative judgment in peer feedback are goal setting, monitoring, and self-assessment (Panadero & Alqassab, 2019; Özturk et al., 2025). Nevertheless, another frequently observed commonality in the literature is that preservice teachers simply do not know how to offer high-quality feedback unless guided accordingly (Gielen & De Wever, 2015; Huisman et al., 2018).

To resolve this challenge, recent studies have highlighted the significance of scaffolding programs, including explicit criteria, feedback prompts, rubrics, and strategy instructions (Franke et al., 2024). These supports assist learners to concentrate on pertinent areas of performance and generate more narrowly defined, constructive and practical feedback. The other dimension of literature is that of social and emotional dimensions of peer feedback. Research has discovered that interpersonal dynamics may have a role in the quality and acceptance of feedback (Cañabate et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018). In much more recent times, the technological advances have broadened the application of peer feedback in the teaching profession. Peer feedback practices have been incorporated with digital tools, such as video-based platforms, online discussion systems, and virtual reality environments (Franke et al., 2024). It is possible to have more flexible, multimodal, and scalable feedback processes and the ability to repeat observation and reflection with these technologies. These technology-enhanced environments may enhance the quality of feedback and the engagement of learners.

Peer feedback is presented as a formative and learning-based practice, which helps to practice reflection, self-regulation, and professional awareness. Second, feedback is assumed to be the primary mediating factor by which learning is considered to take place as the concept of cognitive scaffolding (Cabello & Topping, 2020), developing of professional skills (Akpınar, 2019). Third, the methodological limitation of literature in proving the long-term effects of peer feedback on teaching practice is rife even though there are strong arguments about its pedagogical advantages. One of the major shortcomings of the studies is that they often assume that discourse represents the teaching instead of observing the teaching behavior in the course of a period of time.

Although reflective talk and evaluative writing can offer useful insights into the way professional thinking is manifested in the context of teaching, these are not always representative of how ideologies and beliefs are put into practice in the context of teaching. Besides, there is a lack of studies that explicitly theorize peer feedback in the context of larger systems of language ideology, teacher identity, or practice-based teacher education, which leads to discontinuous conceptualization. Altogether, the current literature confirms the pedagogical potential of peer feedback in teacher training and at the same time indicates gaps in the conceptual and methodological sphere. The qualitative study that will provide a systematic correspondence between evaluative discourse, ideological positioning and instructional enactment is needed. By filling this gap, it would not just be possible to enrich empirical arguments concerning peer feedback but also enhance theoretical insights about learning in preservice teachers to teach using peer-mediated evaluation.

3. Method

3.1. Context and Participants

This study was undertaken in a teacher education program in South Korea. The program teaches preservice teachers to be English language teachers on secondary level and incorporates coursework in the areas of pedagogy, lesson planning and classroom practice. Preservice teachers participate in microteaching sessions as part of their pedagogical training where they prepare mini-lessons and give peer feedback as part of the structured process. Such microteaching activities were conducted during the course of the Analysis of Materials and Methods, and the peer feedback was performed and observed in the course. This was done to make these sessions more realistic to real classroom practice besides facilitating reflective discussion among the preservice teachers. The participants would offer written feedback after every teaching demonstration that would relate to instructional design, classroom interaction, and perceived effectiveness. The feedback was formative and reflective in nature as it was intended to develop pedagogical awareness and professional growth. In this environment, preservice teachers are advised to make lessons relevant, interesting, and responsive to the needs of learners. The peer feedback discussed in this paper indicates the interpretation and implementation of these pedagogical values in teacher training and education.

The participants consisted of 16 preservice teachers who were juniors and seniors and were about to become certified English language teachers in a secondary school. Although the sample size may appear limited, it is consistent with qualitative research designs that prioritize depth of analysis over generalizability. Of them, six were males and ten females. Their age was between 21 and 27 years old. Prior to the sessions of microteaching, the participants had already undertaken the basic studies of English linguistics, language education and curriculum. Although they differed in the amount of informal tutoring or practicum experience, none of them were full-time in-service teachers during the time of data collection. The peer feedback activities were included in regular course work. To provide anonymization of all feedback data and guarantee the confidentiality and ethical standards followed, all data were anonymized before analysis in the framework of this study.

3.2. Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from two primary sources: (1) written peer feedback generated during microteaching presentation sessions, and (2) the researcher's observation of preservice teachers' peer feedback practices during these sessions.

a) *Written peer feedback*

Peer feedback during microteaching presentation sessions was primarily used in the current study.

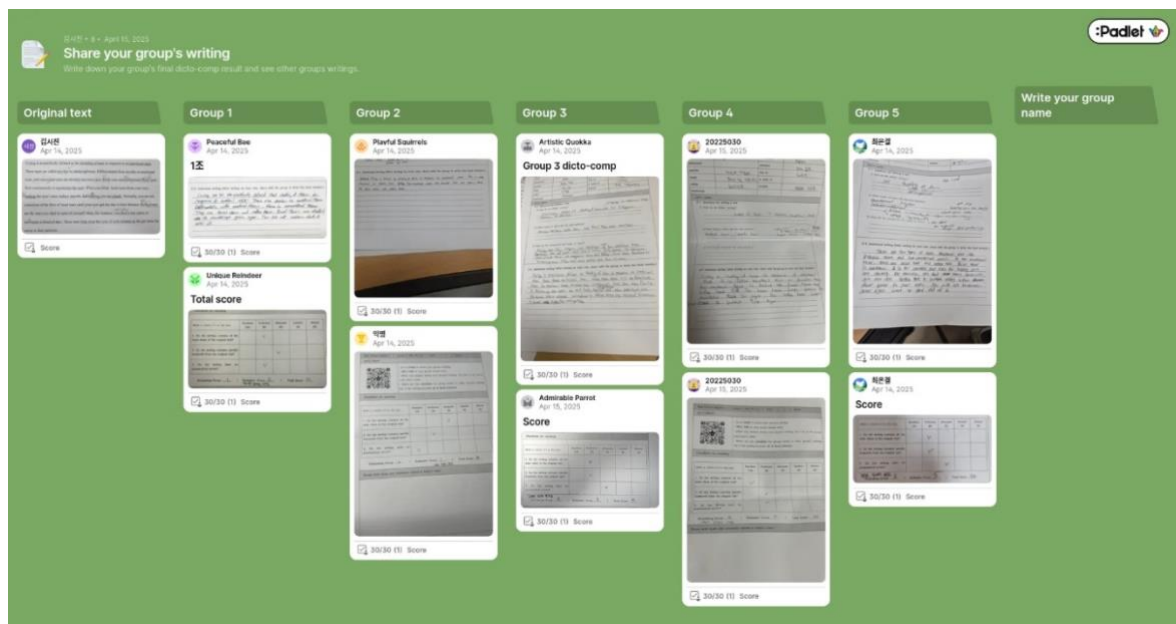


Fig. 1. Samples of written peer feedback

Preservice teachers designed and taught microteaching lessons as part of the course requirement, and then their peers offered them structured written feedback. The resulting data were written evaluations made by 16 preservice teachers in different microteaching presentations. All the remarks were gathered in form of routine teaching. The information was anonymized before being analyzed to safeguard the identity of the participants. The peer feedback corpus was subsequently gathered into one dataset in which they were to be analyzed qualitatively under thematic analysis with consideration of common recurring patterns and evaluative patterns within the evaluative domains. Several samples of written peer feedback were shown as [Figure 1](#).

b) Observation of peer feedback practices

The researcher made non-participant observations of the process of peer feedback in the microteaching sessions. Non-participant observation is a qualitative research method where the researcher collects data by observing subjects in their natural environment without actively engaging in their activities or interactions ([Mills et al., 2010](#)). These observations were directed toward the interaction between preservice teachers with each other's microteaching performance, the type of verbal feedback conversations, and the general dynamics of the feedback exchange. Special consideration was given to the areas of instruction, the words used in giving compliments or criticism, language scaffolding, and classroom management. During and after the sessions, field notes were made in order to record common patterns of peer interaction, tone and evaluative priorities. For instance, observations of enthusiastic group discussions and frequent use of affective language during feedback sessions supported the prominence of interaction and engagement identified in the written comments. In contrast, the relative absence of explicit discussion about language form in both observed interactions and written feedback reinforced the theme of limited attention to linguistic scaffolding. These observational data were employed to situate and triangulate written peer feedback in order to better comprehend how peer feedback was conceptualized and acted out by preservice teachers. All the data were gathered during routine course work. Anonymization of written feedback was done before analysis to guarantee confidentiality and ethical standards.

3.3. Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was adopted to analyze the peer feedback data in the systematic and flexible method suggested by Braun and Clarke ([2006](#)). Data was in the form of written peer comments that had been made after the instructional activities, and they were considered as qualitative textual data. The analysis had incorporated all the comments in the analysis, even those made in Korean and English to maintain the integrity of the evaluative perspective of the participants.

The data were analyzed in six iterative steps. First, the researcher became acquainted with the dataset by reading all peer comments repeatedly with a purpose to distinguish the similar patterns and evaluative preferences. The initial notes were devoted to instructional aspects that were the most frequently highlighted and evaluative terms that had been used repeatedly. Second, inductive coding was done on the dataset. The data used in creating codes was data-driven in which salient features of peer feedback could emerge naturally. Early codes were topic relevance, learner engagement, discussion activities, material difficulty and vocabulary use. Third, similar codes were put into preliminary themes according to similar meanings. As an example, the familiarity, interest, and empathy were placed in the learner relevance category, whereas the discussion, participation, and group work were grouped into an interaction theme. Fourth, themes were re-examined and perfected by comparing and contrasting them with the original data as a way of achieving internal consistency and separation between themes. There was some merging, reclassifying or elimination of some codes. Fifth, the final themes were defined and named, and the representative excerpts were chosen. Lastly, the themes were incorporated into a logical analytic story as was presented in the Findings section. Analytic transparency and consistency were given priority in the course and recurrent patterns were emphasized more whilst also considering rare but relevant observation. All participants were enrolled in the same course and engaged in the same peer feedback practices, which ensured contextual homogeneity and allowed for in-depth thematic exploration. The dataset consisted of multiple written feedback entries per participant, resulting in a sufficiently rich corpus for qualitative analysis. Data saturation was reached when no new themes emerged during the iterative coding process. [Figure 2](#) displays the preliminary emerging themes identified through the iterative process, along with the initial and similar codes uncovered through the inductive method of analysis.

The data collection process was brought to some form of consistency among the participants by organizing the feedback into the domains above and yet left open the possibility of the participants making qualitative comments in each of the domains.

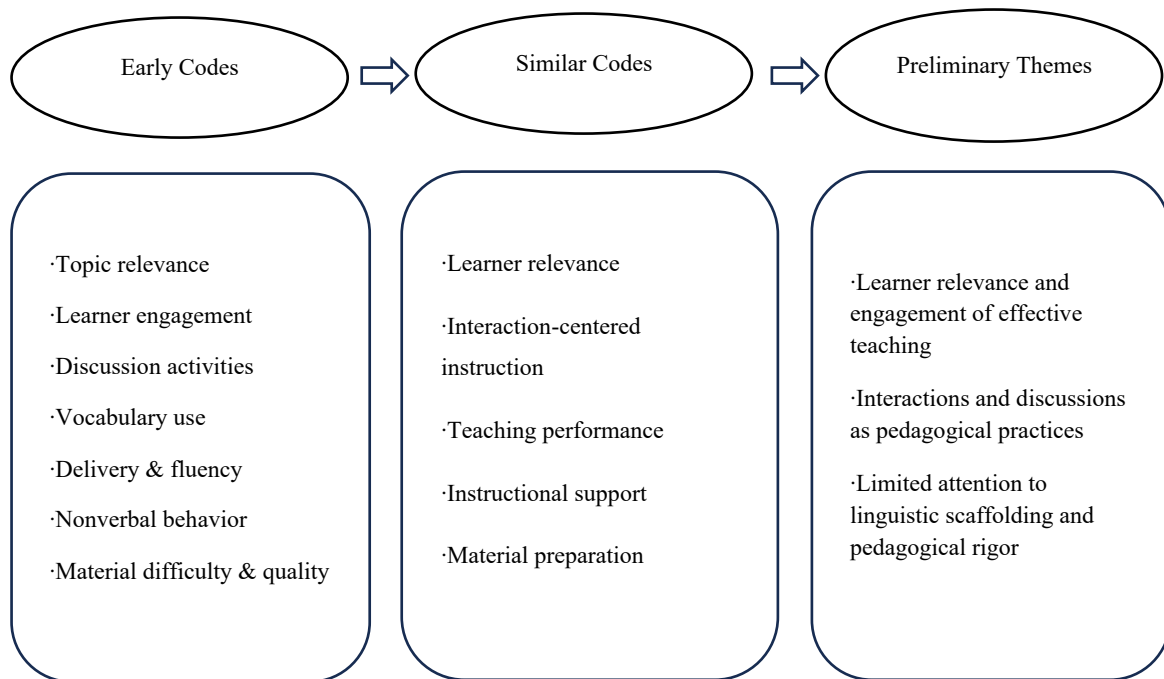


Fig. 2. The process of emerging themes

3.4. Trustworthiness

As the analysis was done by a single researcher, special attention was paid to provide analytic rigor and transparency. In order to increase credibility, analytic memoing and constant comparison were systematically applied during the coding process. To record emerging interpretations and develop category definitions and reflective thoughts regarding the potential assumptions that a researcher may have, analytic memos were written at every stage of coding. These memos served as an audit trail, which enabled the researcher to track the development of early codes into similar codes and ultimate themes. Moreover, the principle of constant comparison was also used, by constantly comparing new data fragments with previously coded passages to maintain consistency in the concepts, and refine category boundaries. This repetitive comparison served to avoid the possibility of closing down themes too soon and minimizing the opportunity to channel-cherry pick. By repeatedly processing the entire dataset and continuing with reflexive documentation, the study aimed to be able to sustain internal consistency, analytic clarity, and credibility of the single-coder design.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Learner Relevance as a Core Indicator of Effective Teaching

A dominant theme across peer feedback is the importance placed on selecting topics that are meaningful and relatable to students. Many preservice teachers evaluated lessons positively when they perceived the topic as closely connected to learners' real-life experiences and current social issues. Several comments explicitly highlight this orientation:

1. The selected topic was one that students could relate to.
2. It was a topic that learners could strongly empathize with.
3. The topic 'using smart devices in school' was relevant to students.
4. It was interesting to share opinions about smartphone use in schools, which is currently an issue of concern in education.

One clear theme felt throughout peer feedback is the emphasis on the relevance and usefulness of the chosen topics as they need to be interesting and relevant to the students. When the preservice teachers viewed the topic as something related closely to the real-life experiences of the learners and the present-day social problem, they rated the lessons favorably. This orientation is explicitly mentioned in the peer comments. The preservice teachers equate the quality of instruction and thematic relevance. Controversial phenomena (e.g., the use of smart devices in schools) were especially appreciated. The judgmental vocabulary (e.g., interesting, relevant) points to a high level of perceived engagement of learners being dependent on the familiarity and urgency of the topic. On this initial level, it can be seen that relevance does not remain one of the pedagogical factors, but it is a central concept to evaluate lesson performance.

The findings of the research also point to the fact that teaching effectiveness was considered by the peer reviewers mostly through the engagement-focused perspective, with the emphasis on the relevancy and interaction of the learners. This tendency can be viewed in the prism of both SLA and CLT since it indicates that preservice teachers have already absorbed the major communicative principles at a more abstract level. From the perspective of evaluative literacy, this pattern may also reflect developing capacities to make theoretically grounded pedagogical judgments (Iglesias Pérez et al., 2022; Tai et al., 2018). This heavy focus on learner-relevant issues fits communicative method of language instruction, which places emphasis on meaningful content and learner engagement in facilitating motivation and reducing affective inhibitions to participation (Krashen, 1982; Littlewood, 1981). In situations where the subject matter is familiar and socially pertinent, learners will be able to comprehend the input more effectively since they can make use of previously acquired knowledge, thus enhancing the comprehensibility of the input (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021; Nguyen & Doan, 2025). The fact that the preservice teachers most often use evaluative words like interesting and relatable is an indication of an instinctive understanding that emotionally involving information encourages engagement and lowers anxiety. In CLT orientations, William Littlewood (1981) highlights that communicative approaches would support genuine communication and communicative competence through the use of authentic and relevant topics. Relevance, therefore, seems to be addressed as a goal on its own, as opposed to being a means of helping to notice, process and remember language. Empirical research has further demonstrated that peer-oriented environments can positively influence learner motivation and engagement (Weng et al., 2023), which may explain why preservice teachers prioritize such dimensions in their evaluations.

In the research of SLA, meaningful and contextually oriented input is considered as a condition that is required to language development especially when learners are in a position to relate the instructions taught to their own experiences. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that relevance tended to be addressed as a goal in itself instead of a medium that could be used by pedagogical means to facilitate linguistic growth. This is in line with existing previous teacher education research showing that novice teachers often both focus on topics of interest and engagement rather than specifically on the language learning goals or outcome-based on language (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2015). Consequently, though pertinent issues can facilitate participation, they do not necessarily guarantee a chance to learn a language systematically.

4.2. Interactions and Discussions as Valued Pedagogical Practices

The second theme of prominence was the perceived value of interaction-oriented activities, especially discussions and group work. Lessons were often described by their peers as being learner-centered and giving students a chance to share their views. Feedback by the participants consisted of such remarks as:

1. The discussion activity was fun, interesting, and engaging.
2. Group discussion helped students apply what they learned.
3. The class encouraged active participation and interactions through discussion.
4. Through discussion activities, we were able to apply what we learned.

These reviews were mostly favorable and put the interaction and discussion as a positive natural outcome. Peer comments praised their use of group discussion, learner-centered activities, and opinion sharing. These remarks imply that preservice teachers equate the success of the pedagogical process to active engagement and communication. Interestingly, the evaluation of discussions was also done in affective ('fun', 'interesting') in terms of application (apply what we learned), indicating that knowledge of the learning transfer was present. Nevertheless, the majority of comments are devoted to enjoyable interaction instead of the profundity and intellectual challenge of the conversations. This can mean that interaction is highly prized as a participatory means and not as a regulated academic process.

The importance attached to discussion and interaction is also indicative of the effect of CLT and interactionist SLA positions. The interactionist perspective holds that the opportunities of negotiating meaning, feedback and pushed output are at the forefront of language development (Fu, 2022; Long, 1996; Nguyen & Doan, 2025; Swain, 1995). Likewise, learners would acquire linguistic accuracy where students are obliged to produce language and are made aware of knowledge gaps. The peer remarks about the discussion assisting the students to put into practice what they learned is a sign of the new awareness of this output role. In the CLT perspective, interaction is the main basis of the enhancement of communicative competence, especially fluency and strategic competence (Long, 2016). The aspect of participation and engagement by the preservice teachers can be seen as an internalization of CLT philosophy.

In the current investigation, discussion-based and group activities were continually commended as per review, and interaction was equated with learner-centered learning. Yet, reviewers seldom made remarks about the organization or quality of interaction including the tasks fostering prolonged output and interactional feedback or form-meaning links. This observation replicates previous studies that indicated preservice teachers tend to follow communicative formats without much knowledge about the mechanisms in which interaction brings about acquisition (Ellis, 2012; Walsh, 2011). Moreover, systematic reviews of peer feedback in teacher education suggest that without structured criteria and explicit training, peer evaluations tend to remain at a descriptive rather than analytic level (Cabello & Topping, 2020; Topping, 2023). Thus, interaction appears to have been conceptualized primarily as a pedagogical form rather than as a carefully orchestrated process designed to promote acquisition. Interaction was, therefore, found conceptualized as a pedagogical form but not as a process which must be carefully orchestrated in order to help with learning.

4.3. Weak Critical Reflection of Linguistic Scaffolding and Pedagogical Rigor

Although the general mood of the peer feedback was encouraging, one more theme stood out, including the issues with the lack of linguistic support. Several participants observed the challenges that learners could encounter because of the absence of scaffolding, especially on vocabulary and reading materials. The comments were examples such as:

1. Several words were hard to understand. Providing explanations of difficult vocabulary would be helpful.
2. The newspaper article (material) might be challenging for students without additional support.
3. A writing sample could help learners understand the task better.
4. It was such a pity that the presenter mispronounced some words while reading example sentences.

These comments suggest that there seems to be a relatively lower emphasis on linguistic scaffolding, especially the area of vocabulary, and pedagogical meticulousness. These remarks suggest that scaffolding (e.g. vocabulary explanation, writing samples) is understood as necessary, however, the scaffolding related concerns are relatively reserved in comparison to topic and discussion-related comments. Furthermore, little or no mention of lesson goals, correspondence between activities and results, testing standards or instruction in language form is made. Even with the mention of linguistic problems (e.g., mispronounced words when reading the example sentences), they are inclined to attend to the surface performance of instruction that does not imply the systematic design of instructions. This pattern could be an indication of a new teacher identity which highly appreciates engagement and communicative interaction but has not yet completely incorporated systematic language support and instructions alignment into its assessment system.

The third theme is less but repeated focus on linguistic scaffolding, which brings out a significant disparity between communicative intent and pedagogical rigor. Even though a few of the peer reviewers have admitted that vocabulary explanations, modeling, or simplification of material were necessary, these points were very uncommon and made in a speculative manner. In terms of SLA, inadequate scaffolding can result in a lack of access to comprehensible information and chances to notice and absorb (Schmidt, 1990; VanPatten, 2015). This trend has been associated with peer feedback cultures, whereby emotional support and collegiality are more highly regarded than critical evaluation in the teacher education setting (Carless & Boud, 2018). Research in higher education further suggests that without explicit development

of evaluative judgment, peer feedback may reinforce existing assumptions rather than challenge or deepen them (Iglesias Pérez et al., 2022; Tai et al., 2018).

Although supportive feedback conditions can help mitigate anxiety and encourage engagement, they can also limit the acquisition of evaluative knowledge and pedagogical judgment. To achieve good learning, learners should be aware of the linguistic features of the input they receive (Nguyen & Doan, 2025). Learners can neglect to pay attention to important forms of language unless explicitly supported through vocabulary explanations and modeling. Learners prefer meaning to form unless they are instructed. That is why complex texts, or difficult vocabulary may be a barrier to learning and understanding. The efficient CLT includes scaffolding methods including pre-teaching vocabulary, modeling, and giving structured input and output activities (VanPatten, 2004). The little focus on these factors implies that preservice teachers can conflate communicative teaching with little teacher intervention as opposed to communication that is supported by strategies. Moreover, the absence of alignment concerns demonstrates poor understanding of the pedagogical design, which is crucial to make sure that communicative activities can result in effective learning outcomes.

Overall, these findings indicate that preservice teachers can be characterized by a great deal of ideological adherence to CLT principles, especially learner-centeredness and interaction, but with a less advanced ability to critically assess instruction based on language learning processes. The peer feedback reviewed in the present study seems to support the non-linguistic teaching emphasis and focus on engagement but does not prioritize the learning outcomes and the language requirements. In case of teacher education programs, such results promote the necessity to explicitly guide peer feedback practices and build preservice teachers' analytic literacy so that they could relate engagement and interaction to the main SLA principles and the effectiveness of teaching. This aligns with broader findings in peer feedback research indicating that the effectiveness of peer evaluation depends heavily on structured guidance, analytic criteria, and training (Cabello & Topping, 2020; Topping, 2023). For teacher education programs, these findings underscore the need to explicitly scaffold peer feedback practices and cultivate preservice teachers' analytic and evaluative literacy so that they can connect engagement and interaction with core SLA principles and instructional effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

This research paper has reviewed peer feedback as given by preservice English teachers and has aimed at investigating the way instructional effectiveness is constructed and measured in a teacher education scenario. Thematic analysis of written peer comments identified three major themes: the focus on learner-related issues, high regard of interaction and discussion-based activities, and hardly any attention to linguistic scaffolding. Collectively, these themes indicate the presence of a feedback culture that places a greater emphasis on engagement and participation and has a relatively small amount of criticism of language-focused pedagogy.

Analyzed within the frameworks of SLA and CLT, the findings indicate that preservice teachers have high levels of ideological congruence with the principles of communicative but lower levels of developed abilities to analyze instruction through the prism of language learning processes. Although the elements of relevance and interaction with learners are fundamental aspects of communicative teaching, they can only be effective in the context of the pedagogical design, scaffolding, and focus on learning outcomes. The propensity of considering engagement as a surrogate measure of effectiveness might thus constrain the developmental capacity of peer feedback.

These findings have significant implications to the education of language teachers. In order that peer feedback should serve as a significant instrument in the professional learning process, preservice teachers must have direct assistance in building evaluative literacy. These involve instructions on how to follow the instruction in an informed SLA manner, on how to express positive criticism, and on how to strike the right balance between the affective support and pedagogical rigor. Future studies can be conducted to investigate the effect of targeted training in peer feedback practices on the quality of feedback in the long run and the effects of the practice on the decision-making of preservice teachers in instruction.

Some limitations of this study should be addressed. First, the data was mostly based on written peer feedback and classroom observations in cases of microteaching. Thus, the evaluation discourse was addressed and not the differences in teaching practices in the long-term. Second, since the peer feedback was incorporated in the coursework, the comments made by the participants might have been affected by the expectation of the assessment or interpersonal relationships, which might influence the thoroughness

of the critique. Lastly, the systematic processes used did not avoid researcher interpretation, as qualitative thematic analysis always does. Future studies involving a larger sample size, longitudinal research, and mixed methods would empirically enhance knowledge regarding peer feedback in teacher education. Through anticipating the evaluative orientations encompassed in peer feedback, this paper advances the current debates on the importance of peer feedback in teacher education and emphasizes the role of the disjuncture between the communicative ideals and principles of language learning.

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- Ethical declaration** : This research complies with ethical principles and relevant regulatory frameworks, having secured the necessary permissions for data collection. The author remains dedicated to ELTEJ's standards of professional conduct and integrity in all academic activities.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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