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A Comparative Study of ZPD-Based Teacher and Peer Feedback in Comprehending Reading and Reading Strategies

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Abstract

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of second language learning puts the emphasis on social interaction and regards it as a pre-requisite for cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Drawing on the SCT, the present study aimed to delve into the possible effect of ZPD-based teacher and peer feedback on reading comprehension and reading strategy use of EFL learners. In so doing, 75 Iranian EFL learners, who were randomly assigned into two experimental and one comparison groups, participated in a quasi-experimental study. The data were collected through Oxford Placement Test (OPT), reading comprehension test and reading strategy questionnaire. One of the experimental groups received teacher feedback based on Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) regulatory scale while the other experimental group accomplished the reading task using the feedback provided by the peers. Results obtained from the one–way ANOVA and Tukey test demonstrated that both experimental groups, teacher and peer, gained significantly more and performed better than the comparison group in reading comprehension while there was no significant difference between teacher and peer feedback groups in reading comprehension. The findings of the strategy questionnaire indicated no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups, leading to the conclusion that students' grouping did not influence their use of reading strategy. Therefore, it is concluded that peer feedback can be as effective as teacher feedback, aiding teachers to have a learner–centered classroom by implementing peer feedback rather than teacher feedback.

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1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is a skill in language learning which integrates vocabulary, background knowledge, and previous experiences in order to make meaning (Khori & Ahmad, 2018). Language learners usually have a lot of problems in comprehending an English text (Karimi & Jalilvand, 2014). There are various reasons such as lack of grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, or some psychological problems like lack of motivation or fearing failure (Magno, 2010). For example, learners' background knowledge should be regarded as a key factor in facilitating reading comprehension, as it is essential for reading comprehension in a foreign language setting (Troudi & Zayani, 2020; Yawiloeng, 2021). To decrease these problems, many teachers use some strategies. For instance, according to Jamali Kivi et al. (2021), learners require systematically planned instruction or training to become motivated and effective users of strategic learning strategies. Additionally, applying metacognitive strategies which occurs before, during, and after reading enhances the awareness and cognitive knowledge of readers (Bogale, 2018), as a result, help students better comprehend the text.

For many years reading comprehension has been considered purely as a cognitive approach (Ghafar Samar & Dehqan, 2013). Cognitivists are primarily interested in how the brain processes, stores, and retrieves information, and how memory, attention, automatization, and fossilization occur (Robinson, 2001 For them, the development of the second language system is demonstrated by improved fluency, accuracy, and a wider range of syntactic rules that can be employed automatically (Foster & Ohta, 2005). Proponents of this approach believe that reading is considered as a receptive skill and the main concern is finding out the cognitive processes, which lead to success or failure of learners' reading comprehension (Rueda et al., 2001). The primary criticism levelled against cognitivist view is that the social context of learning is disregarded significantly. This criticism was resolved in the SCT of learning in which the social factors are attended.

According to SCT, learning occurs in a social context with the help of some peers or expert teachers (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Yang & Wilson, 2006). This theory views learning as something embedded in social interaction, meaning that individuals and environments mutually affect one another. Scaffolding is one of the main components of SCT and its relationship to language learning has been studied in different aspects of interaction such as teacher-student or student-student interaction (Sabet et al., 2013). Wood et al. (1976) coined the term scaffolding to refer to the support provided by

others who can be parents, peers, teachers or reference sources such as dictionaries which aid students to perform progressively well. The concept of scaffolding is also connected to what Vygotsky calls the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky (1978), "ZPD refers to the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). According to Derakhshan and Shakki (2016), receiving feedback can increase the student's ZPD, allowing them to perform much better in the field. Moreover, the ZPD is not shown through individual performance but through active interaction and collaboration between teachers (mediators) and learners, where various forms of mediation are provided by the teacher and responded to by the learner (Shakki et al., 2016).

However, due to time limitations, teacher feedback may not be practical in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. One possible approach that can also be effective in enhancing the reading comprehension of EFL students is peer feedback (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Consequently, another one useful strategy for decreasing reading comprehension difficulties is that teachers attempt to implement cooperative learning methods in the classroom (Karimi & Jalilvand, 2014). For instance, according to Jamali Kivi et al. (2021), learners can scaffold each other in the same way that experts assist learners. Peers working within the ZPD of each other can also support learning by asking questions, proposing solutions, disagreeing, agreeing, asking for clarifications and repeating (Donato, 1994). As stated by Kazemi et al. (2018), the significant appeal of peer feedback lies in its strong foundation in the theoretical principles of social interaction and its role in mediating individual development.

Hence, from a SCT perspective, both teachers and peers play a crucial role in using various scaffolding strategies to help students improve reading comprehension and achieve greater independence (Jamali Kivi et al., 2021). To apply ZPD in the classroom, it is essential to understand not only the learner's current level but also how to best support their development of more advanced skills (Shakki et al., 2016). Moreover, based on SCT, reading is considered as a social skill which needs an active participation and interaction of the learners who are involved (Lantolf, 2006; van Compernolle & Williams, 2012). Adopting this theoretical perspective, the present study attempts to explore the effectiveness of teacher and peer ZPD-based feedback on

reading comprehension performance of EFL learners. In addition, it tries to indicate the possible effect of ZPD-based teacher and peer feedback on reading strategy use of EFL learners. To this end, the current research addresses the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of EFL students who received teacher ZPD-based feedback and those who received peer ZPD-based feedback with students who did not recieve any feedback?

2. Is there any significant difference in the reading strategy use of EFL students who received teacher ZPD-based feedback and those who received peer ZPD-based feedback with students who did not recieve any feedback?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Importance of Teacher Feedback

Teacher feedback has a central role in L2 writing classes (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Wang et al., 2023) and research shows its positive effects on reducing various types of language errors in revised essays of learners. Based on SCT, feedback can also be provided by peers. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006), utilizing peer feedback leads to several advantages in the classroom: (a) learners participate actively; (b) an authentic environment is created where learners can discuss and share ideas; (c) a nonjudgmental environment is made which students attempt to discuss and improve each other's activity rather than judge each other's deficiencies; (d) an alternative and authentic audience is provided and students become active readers of each other's deficiencies; (e) critical skills are enhanced; and (f) teacher's workload is reduced. As Taheri and Abdollahi-Guilani (2019) mentioned, while students can discuss the feedback which they receive from their peers, they incorporate teacher feedback without questioning it. Therefore, peer feedback develops the critical thinking abilities of students in a learner-centered and nonthreatening classroom atmosphere (Rollinson, 2005). However, there are some problems relating to peer feedback implementation. The main issue is that peers are not as trustworthy experts as teachers; as result, the accuracy of peer feedback may vary (Taheri & Abdollahi-Guilani, 2019).

2.2. Importance of Peer Feedback

A number of studies conducted in this field have investigated the role of peer

feedback on writing quality improvement and compared it with that of teacher feedback. Taheri and Abdollahi-Guilani (2019) explored a comparative experimental study of peer revision versus teacher revision on the production and comprehension of Relative Clauses (RC) in Iranian EFL students' writing performance. After implementing the homogeneity test, participants were divided into three groups: teacher revision, peer revision, and control. The result of the data analysis revealed that peer revision group outperformed their counterparts (teacher revision and control groups) in the comprehension of RC. Another finding of this study indicated that although there was not any significant difference between the teacher revision group and the peer revision group in terms of the production of RC, peer revision led to more development. Furthermore, the teacher revision group performed better than the control group that did not receive any treatment. The researchers concluded that teacher feedback like peer feedback developed comprehension as well as production of RCs of learners; however, the improvement was higher in peer feedback group. Finally, Taheri and Abdollahi-Guilani (2019) recommended that both types of peer revision and teacher revision are beneficial in improving language learners' comprehension and production of RCs. In another study, Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) conducted a comparative study in mixed method to inspect the efficiency of peer and teacher feedback in enhancing the grammatical accuracy and writing quality of advanced versus elementary EFL students. The secondary purpose was to examine the attitudes of students toward these two feedback types. After the pretest, participants did six narrative tasks during seven weeks of study. The result of the post-test data indicated that teacher feedback enhanced the grammatical accuracy of students significantly and this improvement was even more beneficial to low proficiency learners than high proficiency learners. As far as overall writing quality is concerned, Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) found that both teacher feedback and peer feedback were effective regardless of proficiency level. Regarding attitude toward feedback type, both high-proficient students and low-proficient students appreciated the benefits of peer response; however, this value was higher for teacher feedback.

Some other studies explored the effect of scaffolding on writing performance of EFL students. For example, Sabet et al. (2013) investigated the effect of peer scaffolding through process approach on writing fluency of EFL students. The results showed that students had improvement in some aspects of their writing fluency. While learners in the experimental group could not outperform those students of

control group, the writing fluency of both competent and less competent writers in this group has enhanced. In another study, Hanjani and Li (2014) inspected the effect of collaborative revision of EFL students on their writing performance. The analysis of participants' interactions during peer reviewing, their collaborative revision, and their revised drafts revealed that learners used a variety of functions in their negotiations including scaffolding. Additionally, scaffolding was found to be mutual and both partners took advantage of the collaborative revision task.

2.3. Scaffolding and Reading Comprehension

In addition to the examination of the writing quality, the effect of scaffolding on reading comprehension was investigated as well. Rahimi and Ghanbari (2011) observed two first-grade high school teachers to understand the effect of the Iranian high school teachers' scaffolding on learners' reading comprehension. According to the results, effective implementation of scaffolding strategy in the process of instruction could lead to improvement in students' reading comprehension. In a related endeavor, Dehqan and Ghafar Samar (2014) examined the possible effect of scaffolding and non-scaffolding teaching techniques and learners' proficiency levels on the reading comprehension development. According to the results, the scaffolding techniques (peer and teacher scaffolding) boosted the reading comprehension compared to the non-scaffolding group. Furthermore, the proficiency level of the learners played a crucial role in reading comprehension development and so the low proficiency learners outdid the high proficiency ones. However, these studies did not refer to main reasons that might limit reading comprehension of EFL students.

More recently, Jamali Kivi et al. (2021) compared the effectiveness of teacher scaffolding to peer scaffolding to determine which one is more appropriate for EFL learners' reading comprehension. 60 EFL pre-intermediate level learners were divided into three groups: two experimental groups and one control group. Teacher-scaffolding procedures were received by the first experimental group. Peer-scaffolding were provided for the second experimental group, while no scaffolding was provided for the control group. The result indicated that both teacher and peer scaffolding improved the reading comprehension of the learner and peer scaffolding was more significant in this regard. This finding indicates when low or high contingent support is most effective. In practice, it emphasizes the benefits of peer scaffolding, which can be applied with low-level language learners, provided the scaffolders receive proper training first. Finally, the researchers recommended

applying a cooperative technique and a collaborative learning environment where an expert peer could assist and simultaneously learn the strategic processes for new skills. Consequently, EFL learners would become more independent in comprehending their reading material. In another related study, Yawiloeng (2021) examined the effectiveness of teacher and peer scaffolding on EFL learners' reading comprehension by comparing their pretest and posttest scores. Thirty-four undergraduate students were enrolled in an elective English course at a Thai university. Although these participants had studied English in primary school and high school for 12 years, they were in the low English proficiency level. These EFL students were supposed to provide peer feedback during the reading activities that were assigned to them. The pretest results showed no significant difference in reading comprehension between the teacher-scaffolding, peer-scaffolding, and control groups. However, posttest results revealed a significant improvement in reading comprehension across all groups, with peer scaffolding showing the most significant gains. Both peer and teacher scaffolding outperformed the control group, with peer scaffolding being the most effective. Yawiloeng (2021) concluded that peer scaffolding significantly improved EFL students' reading comprehension, with variations in performance across different reading tasks. Both Jamali Kivi et al. (2021) and Yawiloeng (2021) suggest investigating the effectiveness of peer and teacher scaffolding on reading comprehension across various contexts.

2.4. Scaffolding and Reading Strategy

Recent studies demonstrate that inadequate reading strategy use and a lack of metacognitive awareness are the main factors that limit reading comprehension (Bogale, 2018; Khori & Ahmad, 2018; Mežek et al., 2021). The researchers in these studies have consistently provided ample evidence to state that these strategies have positive effect on student academic achievement (Khori & Ahmad, 2018). According to Khori and Ahmad (2018), in the process of learning, students can use metacognitive skills to monitor their reading comprehension as well as to enhance their understanding. These strategies can be learned by direct instruction and teacher modeling which contains: Preview (brainstorming), Click and Clunk (monitoring for understanding and vocabulary knowledge), Get the Gist (discovering the main idea), and Wrap Up (asking and answering the questions) (Khori & Ahmad, 2018). After students become proficient in implementing these strategies, they are able to apply them collaboratively in pairs or groups (Khori & Ahmad, 2018). Moreover, Mežek

et al. (2021) explored several studies relating the role of strategies in reading comprehension and clarified that while all readers usually use various strategies, good readers utilize strategies more efficiently, are more aware of their processing and comprehension issues, and are able to solve those difficulties (Zhang, 2010). In this regard, Karpicke et al. (2009) explained that re-reading a text does not increase recall or comprehension but shifting and monitoring the strategy is recommended (cited in Mežek et al., 2021).

Most of the studies carried out within the SCT were micro-genetic qualitative analyses. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) carried out a longitudinal study to examine the role of corrective feedback (other-regulation) in improving the learning of 3 English as a Second Language (ESL) learners who participated in novice-expert collaborative revision activities. Based on the analysis of the audio recording transcripts, effective feedback in the ZPD should be dependent on the students' specific needs and the potential level of development. Therefore, the feedback or scaffolding provided by the expert should be linked to each student's potential level of development so that the student can perform the task independently (appropriation). Additionally, Nassaji and Swain (2000) performed a study to compare the effect of feedback provided within the ZPD with that which was provided irrespective of the student's ZPD. Based on their findings, collaborative assistance was more helpful than random assistance. The ZPD learner could write more accurately and performed better than non-ZPD learner in the final cloze tests. In another study which is in line with ZPD based feedback, Derakhshan and Shakki (2016) explored the effect of dynamic assessment on EFL learner's listening comprehension through mediational strategies. As the result of implementing mediational strategies in their study, the researchers concluded that feedback enhanced students' ZPD and improved their listening comprehension performance. Moreover, DA mediational strategies increased learners' engagement in the process of learning and listening which can be a good approach in teaching the listening skill. In a micro-genetic study, van Compernolle and Williams (2012) examined the development of learners' understanding of sociolinguistic variation in French during an Instructional Conversation (IC). During the IC, the instructor provided appropriate graduated mediation to lead students toward a conceptual understanding of variation in French by being sensitive to the class's ZPD. The authors found that teacher–student collaborative interaction within a group's ZPD could help learners develop conceptual understanding of variation.

The above-mentioned review of the related studies reveals some gaps in the literature that makes the present study significant. Firstly, most of the previous comparative studies conducted within the SCT were related to writing (Jalalifarahani & Azizi, 2012; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Hanjani & Li, 2014; Sabet et al., 2013; Storch, 1999; Taheri & Abdollahi-Guilani, 2019) and few studies have been devoted to reading comprehension (Antonacci, 2000; Bakhoda & Shabani, 2017; Kao & Reynolds, 2017). Secondly, most of the studies were micro-genetic qualitative studies (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Rahimi & Ghanbari, 2011; van Compernolle & Williams, 2012) and quantitative ones were rarely carried out. Thirdly, few studies explored the effect of SCT–based feedback and scaffolding on EFL learners' reading strategy use (Ghafar Samar & Dehqan, 2013; Shabani et al., 2016). Hence, this paper attempted to extend the scope of the previous studies by quantitatively investigating the effect of ZPD–based teacher and peer feedback on reading comprehension performance and reading strategy use of EFL learners.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were selected from three intact general English classes of University of Mazandaran, majoring in Physical Education, Civil Engineering, and Chemical Engineering. They were 98 at the outset, but 23 of them were excluded from the study for different reasons: some did not participate in the pre or post–test sessions; some others rarely took part in the class sessions; and the rest left the class since they either changed their class or dropped the course. Hence, the final number of participants were 75. Afterwards, these participants, who were selected from intact classes, were randomly assigned into two experimental and one comparison groups. Of the two experimental groups, one received peer and the other was given teacher feedback (Table 1). Based on the results of an Oxford Placement Test (OPT), each experimental group was further divided into eight subgroups. Seven subgroups consisted of three members and one of them contained four students. The members of each subgroup had different proficiency levels; one low, another intermediate and the other high level of proficiency. The aim was to eliminate the effect of proficiency level.

Table 1
Demographics of Participants

	Comparison group	Peer feedback group	Teache feedback group
Number	25	25	25
Male	10	9	12
Female	15	16	13
Age range	18−30	18−30	18−30

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

In order to homogenize and determine the proficiency level of the participants, an OPT (2001, version 1.1) was administered to all the participants. It consisted of sixty multiple–choice items, which assess vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension of the learners and the time allotted was one hour. The reliability of the test was checked in the piloting stage on a similar group of 30 students through KR.20 method, which turned out to be .78. The justification for using KR.20 is that only one correct answer for each multiple-choice question was considered and this method is more accurate than other estimates (Brown, 2005).

3.2.2. Reading Comprehension Test

A researcher–made reading comprehension test, contained of 30 multiple-choice items, was used as both pre and post-tests. Five passages were selected from the reading section of interchange series, and six multiple–choice items were developed for each. The items measured recognition of main ideas, skimming, scanning, guessing the meaning of words, and inferring. The reliability of the test was checked in a pilot study using KR 20, which turned out to be .81.

3.2.3. Reading Strategy Questionnaire

The reading strategy questionnaire, which was administered to all participants as pre– and post–tests, was adopted from Phakiti (2006). It consisted of 30 items that measured cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies of participants using a 5–point Likert scale ranging from 'never' to 'always'. Cognitive strategy items assessed comprehending, memory and retrieval strategies and metacognitive strategy items measured planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies. The questionnaire was

translated (back translation) into Persian (participants' mother tongue), piloted on a similar group of participants, and its reliability was checked through Cronbach alpha which turned out to be .86. Further, the validity of the instrument was checked by three experts in the field proving its validity for the intended purpose.

3.2.4. Aljaafreh and Lantolf's Regulatory Scale

Un–structured and/or completely emergent assistance may provide the necessary help required for a learner to conduct a task that he or she is unable to do alone; however, such conditions are challenging because of two reasons. Firstly, instructors may over– or underprovide assistance. Secondly, qualitative and quantitative differences in assistance and their accurate correlations to learner presentation cannot be reliably reported (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) developed a thirteen–point "regulatory scale" to solve these two problems. This scale models instructor behaviors which range from general and implicit leading questions to explicitly phrased corrections. One of the usages of this scale was to code observable behavior with specific attention to qualitative differences in instructor assistance. Level 0 (zero) indicates independent performance of the learner (independent reading and marking of errors in the essay). Levels 1–12 marks collaborative interaction between the instructor and learner, and also the higher the number of the scale, the more explicit the assistance of the instructor. According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), even Level 0 is "social" since the learner is reviewing her essay for the request of the instructor and his performance indicates his comprehension of the nature of the task. The original scale was developed for writing, but for the purpose of this study, it was modified to be used for reading task (Appendix).

3.3. Procedure

To determine the proficiency level of the participants and assign them into different groups and subgroups, the OPT was administered to all learners at the outset of the study. Then, the reading comprehension test and reading strategy questionnaire were administered as pre–test to find out their current reading comprehension ability and to check their reading strategies use.

As it is mentioned earlier, both teacher and peer feedback groups were further divided into eight subgroups to provide a sociocultural context for ZPD–based

feedback or scaffolding, to put it in SCT terms. Teacher scaffolding or feedback, in general, refers to any kind of help from teacher or mentor that leads to learners' language improvement, awareness and development (Rea-Dickins, 2006). In the teacher feedback group, firstly the instructor asked the students of each subgroup to read the task carefully and do it collaboratively. The students read the tasks together and completed them with the aid of the instructor. The instructor monitored and corrected their errors while they were busy completing the task in their groups. The teacher feedback procedure was based on 13 levels of assistance delineated in 'implicit to explicit regulatory scale' and followed the three mechanisms of effective help within the ZPD proposed by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994). Adopting Vygotsky's SCT, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) claimed that the effective intervention within the learners' ZPD should have three main features. Hence, firstly the teacher provided help in the learners' appropriate level in order to encourage them to work at their potential level of ability. Accordingly, the instructor gave them the minimal level of assistance required to accomplish the tasks and if not helpful, more help was provided. The instructor tried to give learners gradual help, from implicit to explicit, till they reached the appropriate level. Secondly, the feedback was provided only when it was required. It means when the learner faced problems and/or committed errors during the task, the appropriate level of help was given, and when there was no need for assistance, no help was provided. Accordingly, when the learners were in the other–regulation phase, assistance was provided; however, in self–regulation phase the assistance was no longer provided. Finally, the feedback given to the learners was in the form of dialogic interaction, which occurred between instructor and learners. In this dialogic activity, the ZPD and the potential of the learners were identified which denotes that the learner's ZPD is touched upon in a dialogic activity and is accomplished by all interacting participants.

The learners in peer feedback group were also assigned to eight subgroups to accomplish the task with the help provided by their peer members in a sociocultural and collaborative context. Obviously, higher-level learners helped their group members. Indeed, the learners in the peer feedback group carried out the reading comprehension tasks with the help of each other with no interference from the teacher. The rationale for adopting such a procedure for peer feedback group was Wilson's (2003) claim that the main tenet of peer scaffolding is to free learners from the teacher dominated classroom and also Donato's (1994) mutual scaffolding mechanism stating that learners are able to provide help and feedback similar to the feedback provided by teachers. Therefore, the learners in peer feedback group and

sub–groups accomplished the reading task with the help provided by their peers and there was no intervention from the instructor.

The comparison group received the same reading comprehension task and was taught by the same teacher, as that of the experimental groups, but they were not assigned to smaller subgroups. Indeed, the sociocultural context was not provided for the participants in comparison group and they were required to carry out the task individually. After six sessions of instruction in all groups, the learners were given the reading comprehension test and reading strategy questionnaires as post–test to measure the effect of feedback procedure on their reading comprehension and reading strategy use.

4. Results

To analyze the data of this study and to investigate the effect of ZPD–based teacher and peer feedback on learners' reading comprehension and reading strategy use, firstly the normality assumption was estimated through Shapiro–Wilk test of normality.

Table 2
Tests of Normality

	Group	Shapiro–Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Reading	Teacher	.95	25	.30
	Peer	.97	25	.78
	Comparison	.96	25	.52
Strategy	Teacher	.94	25	.21
	Peer	.92	25	.06
	Comparison	.96	25	.54

Table 2 shows the results of normality analyses for reading comprehension and reading strategy use. As it can be understood, all the significant levels are higher than 0.05, meaning that all the data sets are normally distributed, which allows us to use parametric statistical analysis (One-way ANOVA). Further, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was checked for both reading comprehension and reading strategy gain scores and results revealed that significant levels are more than .05 indicating that the groups have the same variance.

4.1. Feedback and Reading Comprehension

As stated before, the participants of the current study were 75 EFL students who were randomly divided into two experimental and one comparison groups. In order to examine the efficacy of feedback procedures on learners' reading comprehension gain scores, the teacher, peer and comparison groups' performance were compared.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Reading Comprehension Gain Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Teacher	25	2.04	4.09756	.81951
Peer	25	2.08	3.43899	.68780
Comparison	25	.44	3.67514	.73503

Table 3 shows that the mean score gain of teacher feedback and peer feedback groups are approximately the same (2.04 and 2.08) in terms of reading comprehension. However, the mean score gain of comparison group is .44 which is of a rather big difference compared to the other groups meaning that students' gain score in this group was the lowest. To see whether the mean difference between the three groups with respect to their reading comprehension is statistically significant, the data were analyzed through a one–way ANOVA.

Table 4

One–Way ANOVA of Reading Comprehension

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	104.18	2	52.09	3.71	.02
Within Groups	1010.96	72	14.04		
Total	1115.14	74			

Table 4 shows that there is a significant effect of teacher and peer feedback on reading comprehension at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F (2, 72) = 3.71, p = 0.02]. Thus, students' grouping affected their use of reading comprehension. Additionally, Tukey's Post–hoc multiple comparison tests were run on the data to locate the exact place of difference.

Table 5
Tukey Multiple Comparisons Test of Reading Comprehension

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Teacher	Peer	-.04000	1.05985	.99	-2.5764	2.4964
	Comparison	2.48000	1.05985	.05	-.0564	5.0164
Peer	Teacher	.04000	1.05985	.99	-2.4964	2.5764
	Comparison	2.52000	1.05985	.05	-.0164	5.0564
Comparison	Teacher	-2.48000	1.05985	.05	-5.0164	.0564
	Peer	-2.52000	1.05985	.05	-5.0564	.0164

Results of Tukey's test (table 5) reveal that the difference between peer and comparison, and teacher and comparison groups are statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experimental groups, which received peer and teacher scaffolding in their reading sessions, gained better than comparison group, which had not undergone such intervention. Moreover, the difference between the two experimental groups is not statistically significant, meaning that both of them are equally effective.

4.2. Feedback and Reading Strategy Use

In order to investigate the efficacy of grouping on learners' reading strategy gain scores, the teacher, peer and comparison groups' performance were compared. As it can be seen in table 6, there is difference among the mean score of the three groups in terms of reading strategy use. The mean gain scores for teacher feedback group, peer feedback group, and comparison group were 6.36, 7.40, and 1.84 respectively. This finding indicates that students in peer feedback group had the highest reading strategy gain score while the students in comparison group had the lowest reading strategy gain score.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics of Reading Strategy Gain Score

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Teacher	25	6.36	25.66106	5.13221
Peer	25	7.40	23.72586	4.74517
Comparison	25	1.84	16.48909	3.29782

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To inspect whether the mean difference between the three groups' reading strategy use is statistically significant, another one–way ANOVA was employed. According to Table 7, the difference is not statistically significant in spite of the mean difference in terms of learners' strategy use. Therefore, students' grouping did not influence their use of reading strategy.

Table 7

One–way ANOVA of Reading Strategy

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	436.880	2	218.440	.439	.64
Within Groups	35839.120	72	497.766		
Total	36276.000	74			

5. Discussion

Sociocultural feedback is a dialogic (language–mediated) interaction that permits an expert (teacher) to create a context in which novices can take part actively in their own learning process (Antón & Dicamilla, 1999). In line with this, from a sociocultural perspective, both teachers and peers play a vital role in employing various scaffolding strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension and foster greater independence (Jamali Kivi et al., 2021). Building on these ideas, adopting this theory, the purpose of the current study was to quantitatively examine the effect of ZPD–based teacher and peer feedback on reading comprehension and reading strategy use of EFL learners.

Considering the results obtained from reading comprehension test for the first research question, which examined the effects of peer and teacher feedback on learners' reading comprehension, findings suggest that the experimental groups outperformed the comparison group. The significant difference between the experimental and control groups with regard to the CF they received was expected and seem to confirm the findings of previous studies which showed the significant role of ZPD–based feedback on learners' performance. For instance, examining the role of corrective feedback in improving collaborative revision activities, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) found that the expert feedback should be related to each student's potential level of development so that the student can perform the task independently. Additionally, Nassaji and Swain (2000) who compared the effect of ZPD–Based feedback with non–ZPD–based, discovered that collaborative assistance was more

helpful than random assistance. Similarly, van Compernolle and Williams (2012) found that teacher–student collaborative interaction within the learners' ZPD could help learners enhance conceptual understanding of variation in French. Similaly, as stated by Shakki et al. (2016), to apply the concept of ZPD in the classroom, it is crucial to understand not only the learner's current abilities but also how to best support their development of more advanced skills.

Furthermore, the difference between the two experimental groups was not statistically significant and thus peer feedback was found to be as effective as teacher feedback meaning that in the context of classrooms, peers can also provide benefitial feedback without the need to the presence of the instructer. This finding is in harmony with the finding of Jalalifarahani and Azizi s' (2012) study which indicated teacher feedback would be similar to peer feedback in overall writing improvement of participants regardless of proficiency level. However, they also found that this improvement was not equal for grammatical accuracy; emphasizing the greater role of teacher feedback. In their study, while they found a greater accuracy improvement for teacher correction, they also noticed that low proficiency students made more progress than high proficiency ones. As the researchers claimed, the ineffectiveness of the peer feedback might be due to the inadequate grammar knowledge of the participants (Jalalifarahani & Azizi, 2012). Therefore, it may be more adequate that the teacher provide feedback to grammatical errors. Moreover, they observed that students preferred to receive teacher feedback and considered the teacher as a figure of authority that guaranteed quality (Jalalifarahani & Azizi, 2012). Regarding the conflicting results over the effect of peer feedback in L2 studies, Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) stated that this might be because of an insufficient understanding of differences between ESL and EFL. Different contexts of EFL and ESL would influence the effects of peer feedback on writing (Jalalifarahani & Azizi, 2012). The similarity of the effect of teacher and peer feedback in the current study is also in line with Donato (1994) who investigated three English speakers in learning the French past compound tense of reflective verbs. He found that students operated correctly when they worked collaboratively. Donato proposed that learners' collaboration and their mutual scaffolding in groups promoted learning and helped them do the tasks individually. Similarly, Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995) claimed, "the construction of a ZPD does not require the presence of expertise" (p.116); consequently, the presence of experts is not always required and individuals can interact with each other to jointly construct their ZPDs. Likewise, Dehqan and Ghafar Samar (2014) found peer

scaffolding as effective as teacher scaffolding for improving the reading comprehension in comparison with non–scaffolding group. Similarly, Jamali Kivi et al. (2021) found that both teacher and peer scaffolding enhanced learners' reading comprehension, with peer scaffolding having a more substantial impact. Yawiloeng (2021) also reported significant improvements in reading comprehension across all groups, with peer scaffolding demonstrating the greatest gains.

Taheri and Abdollahi-Guilani (2019) explained that while negotiation of meaning during peer feedback leads to mutual understanding and reduces misinterpretation and miscommunication, students' self–correction is reduced by using teacher feedback since they believe that the teacher addresses all their mistakes and further correction is not needed. Moreover, they mentioned that sometimes the reason of unsuccessful response to teachers' feedback is students' attitude toward teachers' commentary style. In this regard, Goldstein (2004, p. 71) identified several reasons of unsuccessful response to teacher feedback as follows: a) Lacking the willingness to critically examine one's point of view, b) Feeling that the teacher feedback is incorrect, c) Lacking the content knowledge to do the revision, d) Lacking the time to do revisions, e) Feeling that the feedback is not reasonable, f) Lacking the motivation to revise, g) Being resistant to revision suggestions, h) Feeling distrustful of teacher's content knowledge, and i) Mismatches between the teachers' responding behavior and the students' needs and desire. Furthermore, Wu (2006) indicated language learners' low English competence cause the inability of properly responding to teacher feedback. The researcher concluded that teacher feedback has both positive and negative outcomes, depending on the proficiency level and attitude of the learners. (Cited in Taheri & Abdollahi-Guilani, 2019).

However, some studies, which compared the effectiveness of corrective feedback on language development of learners, showed findings more in favor of teacher comments. For instance, Connor and Asenavage (1994) investigated the amount and types of revisions of eight L2 undergraduate learners and they discovered that the impact of peer comment was smaller than teacher comment on learners' revisions. In addition, Paulus (1999) found that teacher feedback was more likely to have an impact on overall writing quality than peer feedback. In a similar vein, Noroozi (2012), who examined the effectiveness of teacher–, peer–, and self–editing on grammatical accuracy improvement, found that teacher–editing group outperformed the two other groups with regard to the grammatical accuracy. Similarly, Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) conducted a study using 126 English learners in order

to inspect the effectiveness of peer and teacher feedback in improving grammatical accuracy and general writing quality of advanced versus elementary EFL students. Finally, they found teacher feedback more effective than peer feedback for improvement of grammatical accuracy.

Considering the second research question, which aimed at investigating different kinds of feedback on learners' reading strategy, due to the mean difference, it is clear that the feedback groups gained much more than the comparison group; however, the difference was not statistically significant. Unlike other studies (Dehqan & Ghafar Samar, 2014), which found scaffolding and sociocultural techniques as an effective way for language learning strategies, the findings of the current study indicate that the strategy use of the learners did not improve as a result of CF provided and so explicit strategy instruction is needed. This finding was expected since the students cannot acquire successful reading strategies incidentally. As they have low level of reading strategy knowledge, they may continue to use inappropriate strategies (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). In a similar study, Bogale (2018) found that systematic direct instruction in meta-cognitive language learning strategies could improve reading comprehension of low level EFL students. That means, with a great deal of teacher feedback and modeling, explicit reading strategy can be obtained by low level students helping them to monitor and regulate their cognition. (Bogale, 2018). This finding is also in line with Block's (1993) finding which emphasized on the role of teaching reading strategies as the only way of learning strategies. Likewise, Dreyer and Nel (2003) who proposed the structure of a strategic reading instruction component of an English for Professional Purposes course, found that educators are obliged to improve effective instructional means for teaching reading comprehension and reading strategy use in order to meet the reading needs of students. According to their results, students who received strategic reading instruction received both statistically and practically higher grades on three reading comprehension processes than did the students in the control group. In another similar study, Aghaie and Zhang (2012) employed a quasi-experimental design and a questionnaire and investigated the effect of explicit teaching of reading strategies on Iranian EFL students. Finally, they realized that reading comprehension and reading strategy use of learners improved with strategy instruction. Similarly, Jamali Kivi et al. (2021) suggest that learners need systematically planned instruction or training to become effective users of strategic learning techniques.

6. Conclusion

The present study corroborated the essential role of mutual scaffolding of peers in improving learning by implementing SCT of mind. It suggests the use of more supportive techniques in the language teaching contexts considering learners' ZPDs. Indeed, when there is a gap between learners' knowledge, it can be filled by a peer or teacher and so successful ZPD–based feedback makes student less dependent. It can be suggested that in reading courses the presence of ZPD–based feedback makes students outperform with regard to reading comprehension. More importantly, the study revealed that peer feedback was found to be as effective as teacher feedback and so it aids teachers to have a learner–centered classroom by having peer feedback rather than teacher feedback.

In conclusion, the present study recommends applying more cooperative techniques in language classrooms. Furthermore, it is suggested that teachers implement explicit strategy instruction to promote learners' strategy use. As a result of using explicit strategy in the process of reading, students can become autonomous readers and better comprehend the text.

Nonetheless, the current study has some limitations, including its short duration and the lack of control for gender effects. To address these limitations, future research may adopt a mixed-method design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive view and enhance the validity of the findings. Additionally, studies of this nature should investigate differences between experimental and control groups in relation to the received corrective feedback (CF), while also considering the effects of students' perceptions, gender, and field of study on their performance.

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Appendix: Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) regulatory scale

0. Tutor asks the learner to read the task and do them independently, prior to the tutorial.

1. Construction of a "collaborative frame" prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.

2. Prompted or focused reading of the task (that contains the error) by the learner or the tutor.

3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (e.g. sentence, clause, line) _ is there anything wrong in this part? "

4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error or doing the task.

5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g. tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error.

6. Tutor indicates the nature of error, but does not identify the error (e.g. "there is something wrong with the tense marking here").

7. Tutor identifies the error (e.g. "you can't use an auxiliary here")

8. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at correcting the error.

9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form or answer (e.g. "it is not really past, but something that is still going on ").

10.   Tutor provides the correct form or answer.

11.   Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form or answer.

12.   Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action

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