Exploring the Relationship Between Iranian EFL learners' L2 Writing Self (Ideal and Ought-to L2 Writing Selves), Growth Mindset and Their Feedback-Seeking Behavior

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Abstract

In the existing literature, feedback is often viewed as a one-way transfer of information from teachers to learners, thereby treating the learners as passive recipients. Nevertheless, the introduction of the concept of feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) into L2 writing has changed the learners' role to proactive feedback seekers who solicit personally relevant information to improve their writing performance. Accordingly, the present study explored the status of feedback-seeking behavior, growth mindset and L2 writing selves among 40 BA Iranian students of TEFL. The necessary data were collected through a series of questionnaires related to the main variables and by conducting focus-group interviews. The collected data were analyzed using statistical procedures such as correlation, multiple regression and t-test and the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The results indicated statistically significant correlations between the learners' FSB and their growth mindset and L2 writing selves. The results of multiple regression also pointed to the superiority of the ought-to L2 writing self in predicting the FSB of the participants. In addition, the independent samples t-test showed statistically significant differences between more- and less-experienced student writers in their tendency towards seeking feedback from their instructors. Furthermore, the focus-group interview data analysis revealed the significant role of the nature and complexity of writing tasks, learners' personal characteristics such as their stress and confusion during the writing process and the nature of teacher-student relationship in influencing their feedback-seeking behavior. Therefore, it was suggested that by addressing task complexity, alleviating stress, nurturing positive relationships, and offering targeted feedback, instructors can enhance students' learning experiences from feedback and promote a more proactive approach to writing development.

Keywords: feedback-seeking behavior; growth mindset; ideal self, ought-to self, L2 writing self

Introduction

The provision of feedback on the students' linguistic performance is a significant concern for educators teaching second or foreign languages. Feedback plays a key role in learning by promoting self-regulation and reflection (Carless & Boud, 2018). From the students' perspectives, feedback identifies their strengths and weaknesses and offers guidance on how to revise their works and move forward in the learning process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Recent years have seen an increase in empirical investigations focusing on Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) within the domain of second language acquisition (see Chandler, 2003; Ferris et al., 2013; Shao, 2015; Winstone et al., 2021). In a comprehensive review, Nassaji (2016) examined the theoretical foundations of feedback, including its delivery, timing, and training. Some research emphasizes the perceptions of specific feedback and its effects on linguistic accuracy (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 2010). Hyland and Hyland (2006) observe that while feedback is considered a central element of the writing process in many educational contexts, the existing research highlights a lack of clarity and consensus about its role in L2 development and instructors often believe that its full potentials are not fully utilized.

While some scholars, such as Truscott and Hsu (2008), argue that WCF may not enhance L2 learners' writing capabilities and could potentially hinder their learning progress, recent findings indicate that WCF can positively influence L2 writing accuracy and content quality, and can help learners develop their cognitive abilities during the writing process (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Van Beuningen et al., 2012; Winstone et al., 2021). In fact, WCF is believed to offer various educational advantages within L2 writing classrooms, facilitating students' understanding of features of good writing and enabling them to produce accurate and refined passages (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Lee, 2017; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). The main reason for such inconsistencies in corrective feedback effects is a lack of attention to the contextual variations and individual differences among the learners which necessitates adopting appropriate feedback provision mechanisms and strategies (Ferris, 2010; Kormos, 2012).

From a socio-constructivist perspective, feedback research focuses on process-oriented learning, framing feedback as a collaborative meaning-making activity. This approach assumes that effective feedback fosters student self-assessment and teacher-student dialogue, prioritizing reciprocal interaction (Winstone & Carless, 2020; Zhang, 2024). Much of the current research on WCF has predominantly concentrated on feedback as a pedagogical tool, perceiving learners as passive recipients of information (Zhang & Jiang, 2025). This perspective neglects the agency of L2 learners, who actively regulate their own learning process and are capable of managing their feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) (Xu & Wang, 2023). By shifting focus from teacher-delivered WCF to learner-initiated FSB, we recognize students as autonomous agents who deliberately navigate feedback opportunities to advance their writing development.

Ashford and Cummings (1983) were the first to introduce the idea of FSB in organizational psychology, characterizing it as the deliberate allocation of effort

to assess the accuracy and sufficiency of actions in achieving desired outcomes. Recently, FSB has emerged as a significant construct in the realm of L2 writing. In fact, despite the various benefits teachers' corrective feedback might have for L2 writing, its effectiveness largely depends on how students actively seek, interpret, respond to and use such information for subsequent revision (Nassaji, 2021). Papi et al. (2020) characterized FSB as the adaptive, intentional, and strategic process through which L2 learners seek feedback regarding their writing performance. To emphasize the agency of L2 learners, it is essential to conceptualize feedback as a learning resource that facilitates their engagement to attain specific educational objectives (Papi et al., 2020). Moreover, Papi et al. (2019) identified two categories of strategies within L2 writing contexts: (1) feedback monitoring which refers to the extent of attention L2 learners devote to the WCF received on their writing and (2) feedback inquiry which involves the proactive efforts of learners to solicit WCF through communication with their instructors. Given the significant role of FSB in L2 writing performance, L2 researchers have attempted to identify the motivational antecedents of this construct (Gu, 2025; Lou & Noels, 2017).

Dörnyei (2009) noted that individuals may cease to engage in certain activities upon realizing that their efforts will not yield success. In the same vein, recent research has indicated that learners' individual differences and their beliefs, goals and motivation can influence their perceptions, preferences, engagement and responses regarding corrective feedback (Han & Xu, 2019; Sato & Csizér, 2021). Consequently, many L2 researchers have highlighted the importance of students' motivation in determining the effectiveness of WCF (e.g., Ferris et al., 2013; Hyland, 2013). Anseel et al. (2015) posited that understanding the motivational dynamics is essential for elucidating how learners' individual differences affect the utilization of various feedback-seeking strategies. Accordingly, the present study focuses on the significance of L2 writing selves and mindsets in accounting for the feedback-seeking behavior of a group of Iranian EFL learners.

The concept of writing selves forms part of the motivational self-system, which relates to an individual's envisioned future identity. This framework consists of two key components: the ideal self and the ought-to self. In L2 learning, the ideal L2 self refers to a learner's internal desires and goals to achieve high proficiency in the language, driven by personal ambition. In contrast, the ought-to L2 self stems from external pressures, reflecting the expectations of influential figures—such as parents or teachers—who push the learner to succeed in order to avoid failure or unfavorable outcomes (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). However, little research has examined how these ideal and ought-to L2 writing selves influence learning behaviors, particularly FSB. This oversight suggests that current understandings of L2 writing motivation have not fully incorporated these self-concepts to explain or predict FSB. As a result, there is a need for more focused studies to explore how these motivational dimensions shape learners' approaches to feedback in L2 writing.

Mindsets, which shape learners' attitudes, efforts, and strategies, are fundamental personal beliefs that play a key role in influencing learning behaviors (Molden & Dweck, 2006). At their core, mindsets revolve around the belief in the

malleability of intelligence—the idea that learners can enhance their abilities through sustained effort and persistence. Scholars have distinguished two types of mindsets—growth and fixed—both of which significantly affect students' learning approaches (Dweck, 2006). The research has indicated a positive association between growth mindset and language learning achievement supporting learners' resilience and effort in the learning process (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2024; Fathi et al., 2024; Sadoughi *&* Hejazi, 2023). This dynamic construct is under the influence of interactions among learning environments, instructional strategies and feedback mechanisms (Lou et al., 2022). Within the context of L2 writing feedback studies, researchers have explored how these mindset constructs relate to learners' engagement with feedback. For instance, Waller and Papi (2017) examined the role of L2 writing motivation in shaping feedback-seeking tendencies. Similarly, Papi et al. (2020) identified a strong link between a growth mindset—the belief that writing skills can improve through effort—and active feedback behaviors such as monitoring and seeking clarification. Further supporting this, Xu (2022) and Xu and Wang (2023) found that learners with a growth mindset tend to exhibit a more proactive orientation toward seeking feedback.

Although FSB can be beneficial in L2 writing, research on this topic is limited because it is still a relatively new area of study (Zhang & Jiang, 2025). Examining FSB within second language writing contexts offers valuable insights into how learners interact with feedback - a critical factor that can either facilitate or hinder their development of writing proficiency (Papi et al., 2020). For EFL learners, the dynamic relationship between learners' beliefs about their capabilities (mindset) and their self-conceptions (particularly their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self) likely serves as a powerful motivational force driving their participation in language learning activities (Xu & Wang, 2023). Nevertheless, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning how these constructs specifically interact and their collective impact on feedback-seeking behavior in writing tasks among Iranian EFL learners. The Iranian EFL context presents a distinctive case for study due to its teacher-dominated classrooms and restricted English immersion opportunities. Within this environment, feedback takes on heightened importance as a key, but frequently underused, learning tool. The prevalent teacher-centered approach typically results in a one-way transmission of WCF from teachers to learners rather than engagement in interactive dialogues, potentially influencing how students perceive and seek feedback in their writing process.

Thus, the present study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the nuanced relationships between Iranian EFL learners' L2 writing mindset, their Ideal and Ought-to L2 writing selves, and their propensity to seek feedback and engage deeply in writing activities. The selection of these variables in the present study is justified on the ground that a positive writing self and a growth mindset can reinforce each other, motivating learners to take active steps toward improving their writing. Both constructs can influence feedback-seeking behavior by shaping learners' attitudes toward feedback—viewing it as beneficial (growth mindset) and as a reflection of their writing identity (writing self). Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1.   Are there any statistically significant correlations among L2 writing selves, growth mindset, and feedback-seeking behavior of Iranian EFL learners?

2.   Which variable (namely, growth mindset, ideal and ought-to L2 writing selves) can best predict the feedback-seeking behavior of Iranian EFL learners?

3.   Are there any statistically significant differences between more- and less-experienced writers in their feedback-seeking behavior?

4.   What circumstances and factors can influence Iranian EFL learners' willingness to seek feedback from their writing instructors?

Literature Review

Feedback Seeking Behavior

Ashford and Cummings (1983), in organizational psychology, supported a shift in focus from performance appraisal and the feedback provided by employers to an understanding of the diverse ways in which employees actively seek and use feedback in their work environments. The manner in which individuals process feedback depends on the strategies employed in feedback-seeking, such as monitoring or inquiry (Ashford et al., 2003). Monitoring involves observing the environment and the behaviors of others to receive and track feedback, while feedback inquiry entails a proactive approach in which individuals directly seek comments or evaluations of their actions from their employers. This tripartite framework of feedback-seeking behavior (motivation, cognitive processing, and action) operates on the fundamental premise that by seeking feedback individuals can develop their abilities and improve their performance (Sun & Huang, 2023).

Papi (2018) emphasized that feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) is a critical area requiring examination of its underlying motivations; without such investigation, research on FSB risks becoming merely descriptive and lacking significant implications. Sung (2022) maintains that learners' FSB is under the influence of their personal goals and societal norms. Papi et al. (2020) argue that while instructional methodologies remain important, feedback should be reconceptualized as a dynamic learning resource that students strategically seek in alignment with their personal learning objectives. They define FSB in writing as "learners' intentional, calculated, and strategic attempts to gather feedback information on their L2 writing performance" (Papi et al., 2020, p. 486).

This concept has two parts: feedback monitoring (FM), which means implicitly paying attention to the feedback offered on L2 writing and feedback inquiry (FI) which involves directly asking for feedback (Xu & Wang, 2023). Asking for feedback (FI) helps learners understand the requirements of writing tasks better and reduces their uncertainties. On the other hand, monitoring feedback (FM) makes learners more aware of the differences between their writing and grading standards or model texts, as well as how their thinking differs from their peers' which can lead to higher quality texts in terms of organization, structure and

mechanics and more effective revisions and higher writing quality and scores (Papi et al., 2024; Zhang & Jiang, 2025; Zhou et al., 2023).

Existing L2 writing research has primarily examined how feedback's perceived value and cost affect FSB (Papi et al., 2020), while recent findings demonstrate that both performance and self-regulatory efficacy positively correlate with feedback monitoring and inquiry behaviors (Xu & Wang, 2024). Research on the factors that influence FSB in L2 writing remains in its preliminary stages. Current studies primarily focus on examining individual psychological and motivational factors, such as learners' mindsets, grit, goal orientations and self-efficacy (Luan & Quan, 2025; Xu & Wang, 2024; Yao & Zhu, 2022). These investigations aim to understand how these personal traits and beliefs shape students' willingness to seek feedback on their writing. Papi, et al. (2024) further emphasize that WCF only yields benefits when learners actively engage in seeking, processing, and implementing feedback, advocating for a learner-centered approach that positions students as autonomous agents in the feedback process. Their work underscores the need to investigate how broader L2 writing perceptions- particularly growth mindset and L2 writing self-concepts (ideal and ought-to selves)- might influence feedback monitoring and inquiry behaviors.

Mindsets and Feedback-Seeking Behavior

The concept of mindset, often referred to as the implicit theory of intelligence (Dweck, 1999), primarily concerns the malleability of human intellect (Lou & Noels, 2019). This theory, taken from the educational and social psychology discipline, has proven essential for understanding students' motivation and achievement within academic contexts that are filled with various challenges and setbacks (Molden & Dweck, 2006). Overcoming these challenges necessitates adopting a sense of perseverance and believing in their capabilities to resolve them, which depend on their mindsets (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). Given the more pronounced predictive role of a growth mindset as an important motivational belief in L2 learning, some researchers have examined its effects on and associations with various cognitive, behavioral and emotional variables such as motivation, achievement goals, self-regulation and strategy use (e.g., Bai et al., 2020; Xu, 2022; Yao et al., 2021). Lou and Noels (2020) pointed to the domain-specific nature of mind and called for conducting studies on the mindsets related to specific language skills such as writing. In the same regard, research suggests that when encountering difficulties in writing tasks, learners possessing a growth mindset demonstrate behavioral adaptability to attain desired performance outcomes. This adaptive tendency is further reinforced by positive affective states and an intrinsic motivation to enhance writing skills, which collectively increase learners' receptiveness to corrective feedback as a developmental opportunity (Xu, 2022).

The theoretical framework proposed by VandeWalle (2003) posits that individuals with strong growth mindset orientations tend to interpret feedback as diagnostically valuable information for acquiring task-relevant competencies. This theoretical proposition has received empirical support through studies examining

mindset-feedback relationships confirming that "growth mindsets can lead to positive perceptions of and active orientation toward feedback from different sources" (Yao et al., 2024, p. 2). Notably, Waller and Papi's (2017) investigation established a significant positive correlation between growth mindset and feedback-seeking orientation, particularly regarding learners' engagement with WCF. However, feedback-seeking orientation, as described in their study, emphasized interests and inclinations rather than the actual behaviors encompassed by feedback-seeking behavior (FSB). Cutumisu and Lou (2020) also pointed to a positive correlation between critical feedback-seeking and learning achievement, particularly among students demonstrating a strong growth mindset.

Regarding mindsets and FSB in L2 writing, studies have shown that a growth mindset strongly predicts how learners monitor and seek feedback (Papi et al., 2019, 2020; Xu, 2022). Similarly, Yao and Zhu (2022) observed that students with learning- or performance-oriented growth mindsets tended to use feedback monitoring and inquiry strategies more frequently in L2 writing. Furthermore, Sun and Huang (2023) revealed that learners with a growth mindset place higher value on the advantages of feedback over its drawbacks. They also actively pursue feedback from various sources—such as teachers, peers, native speakers, and advanced English users—using methods like direct and indirect inquiry, as well as monitoring. Finally, Apridayani and Waluyo (2025) maintain that provision of regular structured feedback, combined with active learning strategies, can help students develop their growth mindset which in turn can facilitate resilience and persistence required for improving their writing.

Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves and Feedback-Seeking Behavior

Recognizing the importance of learners' self-concept and sociocultural influences in L2 learning, Dörnyei (2009) proposed the L2 Motivational Self-System (L2MSS), which integrates three key components: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and actual learning experiences. The ideal L2 self reflects students' personal goals and aspirations in language learning, whereas the ought-to L2 self involves external pressures and expectations from parents, teachers, and peers regarding L2 proficiency (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Investigating these self-concepts can enhance the application of psychological theories in L2 learning and contribute to a framework that links future self-images to learner behavior (Dörnyei, 2009). The research has indicated that the ideal L2 self has a higher potential to influence the effort and perseverance invested in the learning process (Takahashi & Im, 2020), while the influence of ought-to L2 self depends on the learners' levels of internalization and dynamics of specific sociocultural contexts (Gong & Pang, 2025).

The ideal L2 writing self refers to how students envision themselves as competent L2 writers in the future (Han & Hiver, 2018). The ought-to L2 writing self is about feeling obligated to meet writing expectations and avoid failure (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Most studies applying the L2MSS to L2 writing have focused on how the ideal and ought-to L2 selves influence writing strategies (Jang & Lee, 2019; Wang et al., 2024), self-efficacy, and achievement (Csizér & Tankó,

2017; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021; Yu & Jiang, 2021). However, limited research has examined the connection between L2 motivation and learners' attitudes toward WCF from the perspective of future L2 selves. For instance, Papi et al. (2019) found that learners with development-approach goals used both monitoring and inquiry strategies to seek feedback, while those with demonstration-goals relied solely on inquiry strategies, with feedback sources varying based on goal orientation (approach vs. avoidance). Recent findings also suggest that the ideal L2 writing self positively predicts feedback-seeking behavior among Chinese students (Xu & Wang, 2023; Zhan et al., 2023), supporting the notion that "higher motivation leads to greater FSB" (Xu & Wang, 2024, p. 3).

Overall, research on FSB—its underlying factors, mechanisms, and development—remains nascent and warrants further investigation (Papi, et al., 2024). Additionally, while prior studies have explored L2 writing mindsets, self-concept, and feedback behavior separately, few have analyzed them together, particularly in Iran's educational setting. In addition, the factors influencing Iranian EFL learners' FSB have not been well explored. In fact, educational factors such as the teacher-centered education system and hierarchical classroom dynamics in Iran, cultural issues such as respect for authority or personal factors such as self-efficacy beliefs and shyness might mediate the role of key psychological variables (e.g., mindset and self-concept) in Iranian EFL learners' FSB and even discourage them to proactively ask for feedback. Thus, this study aims to examine the interplay between these constructs, offering insights to improve feedback practices in L2 writing instruction for Iranian EFL learners.

Method

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in the Department of TEFL at the University of Hormozgan in South of Iran. A convenient sample of 40 BA students (10 males and 30 females) served as the participants of the study. This small sample size, which influences the use of specific data analysis techniques and the generalizability of the findings, is because of the fact that half of the students in the department did not submit their responses to the online questionnaires. The imbalance in gender is also due to the higher tendency of female students in studying humanities in Iranian universities. All the participants were native speakers of Persian, albeit from various ethnic and educational backgrounds, and their ages range from 19 to 25. The results of Oxford Placement Test, conducted for a concurrent study in the department, indicated that the students were at an upper-intermediate language proficiency level though with variations in the quality of their language competence, which is natural in most EFL settings. At the time of conducting this study, the students had already passed English writing courses and had experienced written corrective feedback on their written texts. Based on the purpose of the study, freshmen and sophomore students who had only passed basic and advanced writing courses in the department were considered as less-experienced writers (N=18) and those who besides these courses have passed essay writing and writing technical passages in ELT courses (that is, Junior and senior students) were considered as the more experienced writers

(N=22). In fact, this classification has been done based on the quantity and quality of training these two groups of individuals have received in the department and the types of writing tasks they have accomplished. The less-experienced writers have received instruction on different techniques and methods of paragraph development and have written descriptive, process, narrative, comparison and contrast and cause and effect paragraphs. The more-experienced writers have completed essay writing course and are competent in writing expository, argumentative, problem-solution and summary-response essays. It is worth-mentioning that the purpose of study and the nature of tasks students were supposed to complete were expressed and they voluntarily participated in the study which was embedded in their required courses mandated by the BA level TEFL curriculum.

Instruments

Scale Measuring Growth Mindset in L2 Writing

The study utilized Waller and Papi's (2017) scale to assess learners' growth mindset in English writing. Adapted from Dweck's (2000) implicit theories of intelligence framework, the instrument included two items measuring the incremental theory of writing ability, rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 6= *strongly agree*). It is worth-mentioning that the questionnaire has three more items about the entity theory of writing intelligence that were not included in the present study. The content validity of the instrument was inspected by two instructors in the department. The reliability of the growth mindset scale in this study demonstrated satisfactory levels (α = .79).

Scale Measuring L2 Writing Selves

Learners' self-concepts in English writing were measured using Tahmouresi and Papi's (2021) scale, comprising two subscales: *ideal L2 writing self* (5 items) and ought-to L2 writing self (5 items). Responses were collected on a 6-point Likert scale, and content validity was confirmed by two instructors. The full scale demonstrated high reliability (α = .78), with subscales showing satisfactory levels of reliability (ideal self*: α = .87;* ought-to self*: α = .80*).

Scale Measuring FSB Strategies in L2 Writing

Papi et al.'s (2020) instrument was adopted to evaluate FSB in L2 writing, assessing two dimensions: *feedback monitoring* (7 items) and *feedback inquiry* (6 items). The reliability and validity of this instrument had been further established by Papi et al., (2024). The students were required to self-rate each statement on a 6-point Likert scale. Validity of the scale was evaluated by two instructors in the department. The scale exhibited good reliability (α = .74), which made it rather suitable for the purpose of the present study.

Focus-Group Interview

Ten students, among those who had already completed the questionnaires, volunteered to participate in a focus-group interview session and to present their personal feelings and experiences regarding their feedback-seeking preferences and behaviors. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, consisting of open-

ended questions that allowed participants to express their thoughts in depth. In fact, three main questions adapted from Xu and Wang's (2024) study were used as the guiding questions to elicit students' views on the circumstances and factors influencing their willingness to seek feedback from their writing instructors (e.g., Describe your general experience of receiving feedback in the writing courses. In which situations, did you ask for feedback form your instructors? What factors can influence your willingness to ask for feedback from your instructors?). These questions mainly asked the students to reflect upon their experience of receiving feedback during the semester and present their feelings, experiences, and behaviors while seeking and receiving feedback from their instructors. Some follow-up questions were also asked of the interviewees to get further insights about the comments raised. The interview session, which was conducted in Persian to facilitate the expression of ideas, lasted for one and a half hours, and the students' views were recorded, transcribed and subsequently translated into English for further analysis.

Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to completing the questionnaire, participants were briefed on the research objectives and the confidentiality of the data collected. After obtaining oral informed consent, the researcher shared a Google Form link of the questionnaires with the students via WhatsApp. After this stage, a focus group interview session was scheduled with 10 volunteer students to solicit their views on the factors influencing their feedback-seeking behavior. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical procedures such as correlation, multiple regression, and independent samples *t*-test; the students' transcribed views were scrutinized through thematic analyses. In fact, an inductive approach was adopted for analyzing the transcribed data. The researcher read the data several times and came up with the themes reflecting the factors and conditions influencing learners' FSB. In order to ensure the reliability of coding and validity of findings member checking technique with the participants was adopted. In addition, the identified themes were presented to a colleague in the department to pass a judgment on their quality.

Results

The first research question explored the possible relationships among the variables of the study. As it is indicated in Table 1, there is a medium-sized statistically significant and positive correlation between feedback-seeking behavior and L2 writing mindset (*r=.40 at 0.05 level*) and a stronger relationship between feedback-seeking behavior and L2 writing selves (*r=54 at 0.01 level*) which signify that Iranian EFL learners' positive predispositions about writing make them have a positive attitude towards written corrective feedback despite its critical and judgmental flavor. In addition, there was a strong positive relationship between L2 writing mindset and L2 writing selves (*r=.58 at 0.01 level*) among the learners, which confirms the positive association between learners' self-perception and their motivational aspirations. This rather strong relationship confirms that a learner's belief system about the nature of writing ability (mindset) is deeply interconnected with their capacity to consider themselves as a successful writer (self).

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients for the Variables of the Study

Variables	Mean	SD	Feedback-seeking behavior	Writing mindset	Writing selves
Feedback-seeking behavior	52.02	6.27	1	.400*	.545**
Writing mindset	8.82	2.07	.400*	1	.584**
Writing selves	45.27	12.22	.545**	.584*	1

The second research question examined which subscales (namely, growth mindset, ideal and ought-to L2 writing selves) can best predict the feedback seeking behavior of Iranian EFL learners. According to Table 2, the ought-to L2 writing self (*B=.444, Beta=.308, t=2.111, p=.04<.05*) could significantly account for the feedback-seeking behavior of the students. Ought-to L2 writing self is related to the students' need to fulfill external obligations such as teachers' expectations and evaluation criteria. In fact, in Iranian EFL context where feedback is perceived as a form of judgment from an authority figure, the motivation to seek it aligns perfectly with the ought-to Self, which is fundamentally about fulfilling obligations and avoiding negative outcomes.

Table 2

Coefficients of Multiple Regressions

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
(Constant)	28.076	6.118		4.589	.000
Ideal self	.472	.248	.323	1.904	.065
Out-to self	.444	.210	.308	2.111	.042
Growth mindset	.363	.535	.120	.680	.501

a. Dependent Variable: Feedback-seeking behavior

The third research question compared the less- and more-experienced student writers' willingness to seek feedback from their instructors in the writing courses. The mean differences indicated that less-experienced writers (*M=55.05, SD=5.06*) had a higher tendency for receiving feedback compared to their more-experienced counterparts (*M=49.54, SD=6.17*), which confirms that these learners are more dependent on their instructors for evaluative information on their writing performance. In addition, the difference between the mean scores of the two groups

reached a statistically significant difference (*F=.162, Sig. 2-tailed=.004, t=-3.039*). In fact, less-experienced writers are still mastering the basic aspects of writing and are less certain about the quality of their performance; therefore, they need more guidance and external validation from an expert.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Results of Independent Samples t-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig. (two-tailed)
				F	Sig.			
More-experienced	22	49.54	6.17	.162	.689	-3.039	38	.004
Less-experienced	18	55.05	5.06					

The final research question intended to qualitatively analyze the students' feedback-seeking propensities and the factors influencing their willingness to seek feedback from their writing instructors. As was stated the researcher followed thematic analysis to come up with the final themes. This procedure included steps such as reading the transcribed data for familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for the emerging themes, reviewing and refining them and producing the final report. According to the findings, almost all the learners participating in the focused group interview session believed that feedback provided in writing classes had been effective because they had become aware of their weaknesses and have attempted to resolve them:

> Student A: *I find the feedback useful, especially when it points out specific errors. It helps me understand my weaknesses*.

> Student E: *I have always benefited from my instructors' feedback since they have helped us understand features of good writing*.

As for the factors influencing the learners' willingness to seek feedback from their writing instructors, the analyses of their responses yield four main themes: (1) *nature and complexity of the task*, (2) *stress and confusion*, (3) *student-teacher relationship* and (4) *feedback focusing on specific needs*.

Since writing is a highly complex undertaking that the students must simultaneously pay attention to various aspects of writing, it is natural for them to encounter errors and demand feedback. When assignments are perceived as challenging or ambiguous, students may experience feelings of overwhelmed and uncertainty regarding how to proceed during the writing process.

> Student C: *When I was writing an argumentative text, I was overwhelmed and I couldn't even write the introduction, but my instructor's feedback and assistance helped me surpass this block*.

These challenging tasks might create stress and confusion for the learners and they need a reliable source of assistance to resolve these issues, viewing feedback as a constructive resource for enhancing their writing skills:

Student B: *Some writing tasks are highly confusing that teachers' guidance and support can put us in the right path and reduce our level of stress during writing*.

Students may fear criticism or perceive their writing as inadequate, leading to feelings of inferiority. Additionally, confusion regarding the feedback process—such as how to formulate questions, apprehension about misinterpreting guidance, or concerns about the time and effort needed to incorporate feedback—can exacerbate these feelings. Creating a supportive environment where students feel safe to express their confusion and seek clarification can mitigate stress and promote more open engagement with instructors. In fact, the quality of teacher-student relationship is also an important factor in the students' willingness to seek feedback from their instructors. Regardless of their choices, students tend to view teachers as central figures, akin to authorities, who are attentive to their feelings. A supportive relationship encourages students to seek help:

Student A: *My relationship with the teacher really matters. If I feel comfortable, I'm more likely to ask for help*.

A relationship characterized by openness, respect, and support fosters trust, making students more inclined to approach their instructors for help. When students perceive their teachers as approachable and empathetic, they are more likely to request feedback without fear of negative consequences. In contrast, a distant or authoritarian relationship may deter students from seeking feedback, as they may feel intimidated or believe their concerns will not be taken seriously. Establishing rapport and demonstrating a genuine interest in students' development can facilitate more effective communication regarding feedback.

The students also highlighted that in order to be effective, the feedback needs to be specific and personalized. In fact, students are more likely to seek feedback and act upon it when they have specific questions or uncertainties:

Student B: *I think feedback can be even more effective if it's more personalized. I mean instructors must provide examples of how to improve, otherwise it's hard to know what to do*.

Student D: *We need feedback that responds to our specific questions and problems…. General comments might not help that much*.

The extent to which feedback is tailored to the individual needs of students can significantly affect their willingness to seek it. Students are more likely to pursue feedback that is perceived as relevant, timely, and specifically addressing their areas of difficulty. If feedback is overly generic or vague, it may be regarded as less useful, leading to disengagement from the process.

On the whole, the responses of TEFL students in Iran illustrate the multifaceted nature of feedback-seeking behavior, highlighting the importance of specific, constructive, and personalized feedback. These findings also indicate the significance of enhancing feedback practices to align with student needs and perceptions, fostering a more effective learning environment.

Discussion

The present study provided some insights into the feedback-seeking behavior of Iranian EFL learners, particularly concerning their self-conceptions and motivational dynamics as writers. The first finding revealed a significant moderate correlation between learners' feedback-seeking behavior and their L2 writing growth mindset. This observation is consistent with Dweck's (2006) research on growth mindsets, which posits that students who perceive their abilities as improvable through effort are more inclined to seek feedback to facilitate their development. Previous research has also indicated that growth mindset is positively correlated with feedback monitoring and inquiry (Papi et al., 2020; Xu, 2022; Yao & Zhu, 2022). Sun and Huang (2023) maintain that learners adopting a growth mindset attribute greater significance to the benefits of feedback compared to its costs. In fact, when learners face challenges while performing on writing tasks, those with a growth mindset either attempt to adapt their behavior by adopting effective strategies or refer to their instructors to provide them with feedback to resolve the problems and reach satisfactory outcomes.

The results also indicated a positive association between writing selves and feedback-seeking behavior of the learners. The ideal self represents aspirational goals, whereas the ought-to self embodies perceived responsibilities. This duality indicates that when learners view feedback as a means to achieve their writing aspirations (ideal self) or to fulfill their obligations (ought-to self), they are more proactive in seeking feedback (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Previous research has also demonstrated that learners' motivational dynamics can influence their FSB (Kessler, 2023). To effectively benefit from WCF, students must establish learning goals, actively engage in environments where they receive feedback, allocate sufficient time and effort to study the feedback, and willingly apply their attentional and cognitive resources. Such strategic choices and commitments cannot be anticipated from learners who lack motivation to enhance their second language writing skills (Waller & Papi, 2017).

The study's second major finding reveals that the ought-to L2 writing self strongly predicts FSB. This construct, measured through items addressing writing competency for academic credentials, career advancement, and overcoming communication barriers, suggests learners are primarily driven by external obligations rather than intrinsic motivation (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). These obligations may include fulfilling teacher expectations or achieving assessment success, reflecting Turner and Patrick's (2004) observation that perceived

responsibility increases engagement with feedback—a pattern particularly evident in teacher-centered educational systems like Iran's, where students traditionally defer to instructor authority. Contrary to this finding, some scholars have indicated that ought-to L2 writing self did not predict learners' feedback monitoring and inquiry strategies (Bondarenko, 2020; Xu & Wang, 2023) which highlight the significance of contextual variations in FSB (Gong & Pang, 2025). In fact, teacher-centered nature of classrooms rendering the teachers as authority figures and source of knowledge, acceptance of hierarchical power relationships according to which students must respect and obey their teachers and the dominance of high-stake tests creating an environment where grades and external validation are important make the construct of ought-to L2 writing self a strong motivator in Iranian EFL classrooms. This finding corroborates earlier research demonstrating the positive influence of the ought-to L2 self on learning behaviors (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009). Furthermore, it aligns with established connections between FSB and learner engagement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Xu & Wang, 2023, 2024; Zhan et al., 2023), reinforcing writing selves as critical motivational factors that shape both writing performance and feedback-seeking strategies.

The third finding indicates that less-experienced learners exhibit higher feedback-seeking behavior. This may reflect the eagerness of novice learners to resolve the deficiencies in their performance and enhance their writing skills, as they are likely more aware of their limitations and thus more inclined to seek assistance. In other words, this uncertainty creates a heightened need for external validation and guidance from an expert (the instructor) to know if they are on the right track. This observation is supported by Papi et al. (2022) who noted that novice writers often demonstrate a stronger desire for constructive criticism while navigating the complexities of writing in a second language. In fact, they consider their instructors as the most efficient and authoritative resource that compensate for their uncertainties and enable them to accelerate their learning. It can also be hypothesized that more experienced learners may have developed confidence and metacognitive strategies that empower them to work independently and reduce their perceived need for feedback (Sherf & Morrison, 2020). This developed self-reliance or self-efficacy makes the learners trust their own judgement regarding the quality of various aspects of writing and reduces their immediate dependent need for an instructor's evaluation after every task.

The findings of focus group interview also confirmed Iranian EFL learners' positive attitude towards receiving feedback in order to resolve their specific problems. In fact, the circumstances that prompt feedback seeking often stem from a desire for improvement in performance contexts. In the same vein, Xu and Wang (2024) highlight that students' perceptions of feedback effectiveness hinge on clarity and relevance, aligning with the students' comments about needing specific guidance. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is most effective when it is detailed and actionable so that the students can understand the areas of difficulties, can refine their written outputs and perform better in the subsequent

tasks. In order for the feedback to be effective, it must be accessible to the learners so that they can engaged with it. In the same regard, Xu and Wang (2024) maintain that the deeper the students' engagement with feedback, the more likely they are to achieve meaningful learning outcomes.

The findings of this study highlight that several key factors shape students' inclination to seek feedback from their instructors. These include the nature of the writing task, which can affect the complexity and clarity of the feedback needed; the quality of the student-teacher relationship, where a supportive and trusting rapport encourages students to ask for guidance; and the effectiveness of the feedback itself—specifically, its ability to address students' individual needs and help resolve their confusion, stress, and academic problems. When feedback is targeted and constructive, students are more motivated to seek it, perceiving it as a valuable resource for improving their skills and understanding. In parallel, Xu and Wang (2024) emphasized that students' feedback-seeking behaviors are not solely determined by personal characteristics but are also heavily shaped by the contextual environment. Personal traits such as self-efficacy—the confidence in one's ability to succeed—and shyness can either facilitate or hinder students' willingness to ask for feedback. For example, more confident students may be more proactive, while shy students might hesitate. Additionally, factors like the specific goals of assessments, whether students view tests as opportunities for growth or as mere evaluations, play a significant role in their feedback-seeking tendencies.

Xu and Wang (2024) further argue that a multitude of contextual influences—such as interactions with authority figures (teachers, administrators), institutional policies, and the broader sociocultural norms—create an environment that either encourages or discourages active engagement in the social process of seeking feedback. For instance, a classroom culture that values open communication and supports student voices can foster greater willingness among students to seek feedback. Conversely, environments that emphasize hierarchy or discourage questioning may suppress such behaviors. Overall, the social climate within the classroom, including peer interactions and institutional norms, significantly impacts students' readiness and comfort to request feedback (Luan & Quan, 2025). When the classroom environment is positive, inclusive, and supportive, students are more likely to view seeking feedback as a natural and beneficial part of their learning process. Conversely, a tense or rigid atmosphere can inhibit this engagement, potentially limiting opportunities for growth and improvement.

The importance of a positive teacher-student relationship in facilitating feedback is also supported by research from Crimmins et al. (2016), which stresses the motivational role of perceived support from educators. Xu and Wang (2023) also observed that students often aim to establish rapport with their instructors, prompting them to seek feedback and ask questions. Zhang (2024) also maintains that teachers' academic support can influence students' feedback monitoring and inquiry and can enhance their writing motivation and self-regulatory behavior. Similarly, when a teacher dedicates considerable mental effort to providing students

with meaningful and constructive writing feedback and guidance, students are likely to develop a sense of gratitude and motivation, which encourages them to improve their writing skills and to avoid disappointing the teacher. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), students benefit from engaging in a dialogue about feedback, which enhances understanding. Previous research has also found that positive learning atmospheres, quality of students' relationship and their trust in teachers (i.e., competence-based and affect-based trust) can shape their perceptions about the costs and benefits of FSB, thus influencing the quality of their engagement with feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018; Mahbodi et al., 2025).

On the whole, the quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that FSB is a complex construct influenced by a multitude of personal, educational and sociocultural factors. Learners' cognitive and affective profiles like their mindset, self-concept and beliefs, instructors' personal and professional characteristics both as an authority and a supportive figure (that is, their credibility and approachability) in the dynamics of classroom environments and the nature and complexity of the tasks (as the potential value of guidance outweighs the perceived cost to their ego) might influence the learners' perception of WCF viewing it as a valuable tool for improvement versus a personal criticism and prompt them to request feedback or not. In fact, the findings of present study support a dynamic model of FSB that incorporates both stable motivational traits (e.g., mindset and future selves) and fluctuating situational factors (e.g., task complexity and dynamicity of classroom environments). Reaffirming the previous findings, the present study emphasized the central and proactive role of learners in the feedback process and their responsibility in seeking and learning from WCF (Papi & Hiver, 2025).

Conclusion

The present study, by integrating motivational constructs in FSB studies, confirmed the significance of students' self-perceptions about writing on their feedback-seeking behavior. Adoption of a growth mindset and a positive self concept can significantly impact learners' engagement in writing tasks, persistence in the face of challenges, and ultimately, their writing achievement. By understanding the significant role of learners' mindsets and motivational dynamics educators can create environments that promote effective feedback practices to make learners aware of their areas of difficulties and ultimately enhancing their writing abilities. Accordingly, EFL writing instructors are encouraged to integrate strategies to cultivate a growth mindset in the classroom. Emphasizing the role of feedback as a developmental tool rather than merely an evaluative measure can encourage students to actively seek guidance. They can also frame feedback sessions around students' ideal and ought-to selves to effectively motivate learners since customizing feedback to align with students' personal goals can enhance their engagement and responsiveness.

The study also contributed to the existing body of literature on feedback by indicating that developing proactive learners requires nurturing productive motivations, building positive teacher-student relationships that shape the ought-to

self positively and simultaneously creating supportive environments (e.g., by scaffolding complex tasks and mitigating cognitive and emotional barriers) that reduce the challenges of seeking feedback among EFL learners. In the same vein, teachers must be aware of the factors that influence the learners' feedback-seeking behavior and create a supportive atmosphere that can encourage students to seek feedback. They should explicitly emphasize the importance of feedback-seeking as an integral part of the writing process. Educators can increase students' willingness to seek feedback by providing targeted and constructive suggestions that directly address specific writing issues. Such tailored feedback helps students feel that their unique learning needs are recognized, encouraging them to view feedback as an essential component of their growth rather than merely a form of evaluation. Collaborative classroom activities can foster a culture where feedback is viewed positively and routinely. Encouraging peer feedback alongside instructor feedback offers additional opportunities for learners to engage with their writing process and reinforces the concept of continuous improvement.

Despite the insights provided, the present study has suffered from some limitations. The convenience sampling, small sample size and use of self-reported questionnaire data can limit the generalizability of the findings. The focus-group interview session also did not provide an opportunity to probe deeply into each individual's experiences which could have been compensated by conducting individualized and in-depth interview sessions. There is also a need for further explorations of the relationship between other variables related to learners' self-perceptions and their FSB in EFL contexts. The interplay between other personal factors (e.g., grit, emotion regulation, etc.) and broader contextual influences (e.g., teachers' support and classroom social climate) in L2 writing environments can also be explored. In fact, future research can expand by considering social, instructional, and cultural dimensions that may further explain FSB and engagement among L2 writers. Longitudinal studies can also examine changes in these constructs over time and their effects on feedback uptake and writing proficiency.

Acknowledgments

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