

The Impact of CEFR-Aligned Writing Assessments on Enhancing ESL/EFL Learners' Writing Competence: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstrak: Tinjauan literatur sistematis (SLR) ini menyelidiki dampak penilaian menulis yang selaras dengan CEFR terhadap kompetensi menulis pelajar ESL/EFL dari tahun 2019 hingga 2024. Dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja PRISMA, tinjauan ini mengevaluasi penelitian yang membandingkan intervensi menulis berbasis CEFR dengan metode penilaian tradisional, dengan fokus pada keakuratan tata bahasa, koherensi, dan kemahiran menulis secara keseluruhan. Data bersumber dari Scopus menggunakan kriteria inklusi yang jelas. Tema utamanya mencakup mekanisme umpan balik (rekan, guru, dan alat otomatis seperti Grammarly), peran platform digital, dan keterlibatan siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penilaian yang selaras dengan CEFR memberikan perbaikan penulisan yang terstruktur dan berorientasi pada hasil, terutama bila didukung oleh umpan balik dan pengajaran yang ditingkatkan teknologi. Namun, masih ada keterbatasan terkait efek jangka panjang dan penerapan alat pembelajaran gamified untuk pelajar tingkat lanjut. Tinjauan ini menggarisbawahi perlunya penelitian di masa depan mengenai skalabilitas penilaian penulisan, rubrik berbasis tugas, dan integrasi alat evaluasi berbasis AI dalam instruksi menulis berbasis CEFR.

Kata Kunci : CEFR; kompetensi menulis; Pelajar ESL/EFL; umpan balik teman; alat menulis otomatis; tinjauan literatur sistematis.

Abstract: *This systematic literature review (SLR) investigates the impact of CEFR-aligned writing assessments on ESL/EFL learners' writing competence from 2019 to 2024. Using the PRISMA framework, the review evaluates studies comparing CEFR-based writing interventions with traditional assessment methods, focusing on grammatical accuracy, coherence, and overall writing proficiency. Data were sourced from Scopus using well-defined inclusion criteria. Key themes include feedback mechanisms (peer, teacher, and automated tools like Grammarly), the role of digital platforms, and learner engagement. Findings suggest that CEFR-aligned assessments provide structured, outcome-driven writing improvement, especially when supported by feedback and technology-enhanced instruction. However, limitations remain concerning long-term effects and the applicability of gamified learning tools for advanced learners. This review underscores the need for future research into writing assessment scalability, task-based rubrics, and the integration of AI-driven evaluation tools in CEFR-based writing instruction.*

Keywords: CEFR; writing competence; ESL/EFL learners; peer feedback; automated writing tools; systematic literature review.

1. Introduction

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has become a foundational tool in language teaching and assessment globally (Council of

Europe, 2001). By providing detailed proficiency descriptors from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient), CEFR helps educators and learners alike to clearly understand language competencies at each stage of acquisition (Piccardo, E., North, B., & Goodier, T, 2019). This framework is increasingly being adopted in ESL/EFL writing assessments, where it offers a structured approach to evaluating learners' grammar, coherence, and communication effectiveness (Sudaryanto, S., & Widodo, P. 2020). However, while widely used, there remain questions about how CEFR-aligned writing assessments compare to traditional methods, particularly in terms of their impact on writing competence in real-world academic and professional settings (Little, D., 2007).

This study seeks to explore these questions by comparing CEFR-aligned assessments with traditional, non-CEFR-aligned methods in ESL/EFL education. Traditional assessments often focus on grammar and error correction, potentially overlooking broader communicative goals (Weigle, S. C., 2002). In contrast, CEFR-based assessments aim to assess linguistic accuracy and the learner's ability to organize and communicate ideas effectively (Harsch, C., & Rupp, A. A., 2011). The research will focus on ESL/EFL learners at the B1-C1 proficiency levels, analyzing their writing performance in areas like grammatical accuracy, coherence, and lexical variety and their engagement with the assessment process (Green, A., 2012).

The primary objective of this study is to determine which assessment approach—CEFR-based or traditional—more effectively improves learners' writing skills. The research will also investigate how learners perceive the feedback they receive from each method and how this influences their learning process (Hyland, K., & Hyland, F., 2006). Key research questions include how CEFR-based assessments enhance writing competence, their specific impact on elements like grammar and coherence, and learners' perceptions of the feedback provided.

The findings from this study will have significant implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policy-makers (Little, D., 2011). By providing a detailed comparison of assessment methods, the research will inform best practices in ESL/EFL writing instruction, offering practical recommendations for integrating CEFR standards into curricula. The ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of writing education and support learners in achieving higher levels of communicative competence, aligned with global standards (Walters, F. S., 2010).

1.1. Research Questions

This systematic literature review (SLR) seeks to address the following research questions related to CEFR-aligned writing assessments and their impact on ESL/EFL learners' writing competence:

1. How do CEFR-aligned writing assessments impact ESL/EFL learners' writing competence compared to traditional assessment methods?
2. What are the effects of different types of feedback (peer, teacher, automated) when using CEFR-aligned writing assessments?
3. How effective are automated writing evaluation tools like Grammarly when integrated into CEFR-aligned writing instruction?
4. What gaps exist in the current literature regarding the long-term effectiveness of CEFR-aligned writing assessments?

5. How can digital tools and gamified platforms be further developed for writing instruction at advanced CEFR proficiency levels (C1 and C2)?

2. Literature Review Methodology

2.1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Articles

To ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies, this review adheres to clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). The inclusion criteria require that studies be published between 2019 and 2024, ensuring the recency and relevance of the research in the context of the latest educational developments, particularly in CEFR-aligned writing assessments. Only peer-reviewed journal articles in English, available through Scopus, and covering topics related to CEFR, writing competence, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are considered. Moreover, the studies must specifically focus on the application or implementation of CEFR in EFL settings to explore its impact on writing proficiency.

Exclusion criteria include articles published before 2019, non-peer-reviewed papers, studies focusing on non-CEFR-based frameworks, or those addressing general language teaching without specific reference to writing skills or EFL contexts. Articles that do not explicitly assess the outcomes of CEFR-aligned assessments or offer empirical evidence on writing competence are also excluded. Conference proceedings, book chapters, and grey literature are omitted to maintain consistency with peer-reviewed journal standards. To ensure clarity and transparency in the selection process, a summary table of inclusion and exclusion criteria was created. This table highlights the key parameters used to filter relevant studies, emphasizing research quality, topical relevance, and methodological rigor. The criteria ensure that only empirical, peer-reviewed articles directly addressing CEFR-aligned writing assessments were considered for the review.

Table 1. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>	<i>Exclusion</i>
Publication Year	2019-2024	Before 2019
Language	English	Non-English
Source Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, book chapters
Topic Relevance	CEFR, writing competence, EFL/ESL writing	General language teaching studies
Availability	Open-access, full-text available	Restricted access
Research Focus	Empirical studies on CEFR writing assessments	Theoretical or conceptual papers only

2.2. Data Sources

The primary data source for this systematic review is the Scopus database, known for its comprehensive coverage of high-impact journals. Scopus offers an extensive collection of peer-reviewed articles relevant to linguistics, language education, and the application of CEFR in teaching English as a foreign or second language. Journals that frequently publish in this area, such as *Language Testing*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, and *System*, are anticipated sources of relevant literature.

In addition to journal articles, Scopus' advanced filtering options allow for limiting the results to final-stage publications, ensuring the integrity of the reviewed articles. This selection process prioritizes quality research from reputable sources, providing a strong foundation for understanding the application of CEFR to EFL writing proficiency.

To ensure a comprehensive and focused search, a structured query was applied using Scopus's advanced filtering options, following recommended practices for systematic reviews (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2017). The search process involved specific keywords related to CEFR and writing proficiency, yielding initial search results that were further refined through inclusion criteria. The following table summarizes the search query, initial hits, and final selected articles.

Table 2. Detailed Search Strategy

<i>Database</i>	<i>Search Query Used</i>	<i>Initial Hits</i>	<i>Final Articles</i>
Scopus	("Common European Framework of Reference" OR cefr) AND ("writing skills" OR "writing competence" OR "writing ability" OR "writing proficiency") AND ("English as a Foreign Language" OR efl OR "English learners") AND ("implementation" OR "application" OR "use")	7	5
Filter Criteria	Publication Year: 2019-2024, Peer-reviewed, Final-stage publications, English-language only, Open access	6	5

2.3. Article Search and Selection Process

The article search was conducted using a structured query (SQ): ("Common European Framework of Reference" OR cefr) AND ("writing skills" OR "writing competence" OR "writing ability" OR "writing proficiency") AND ("English as a Foreign Language" OR efl OR "English learners") AND ("implementation" OR "application" OR "use"). This search yielded 7 documents initially. To refine the selection further, several filters were applied: (a) Publication Range: Limited to studies published between 2019 and 2024, resulting in 6 documents. (b) Document Type: Restricted to journal articles, reducing the number to 6 documents. (c) Publication Stage: Only final-stage publications were considered, ensuring all selected studies were fully peer-reviewed, leaving 6 documents. (d) Source Type: Limited to journal publications only, with no further reduction (6 documents). (e) Language: English-language studies only, maintaining the number at 6 documents. (f) Open Access: Limited to fully open access articles, resulting in 5 documents that were eligible for full-text review. This filtering process ensures that the selected studies meet the highest standards of peer review and relevance to the topic.

To ensure a transparent and replicable review process, this systematic literature review (SLR) followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, as recommended by Moher et al. (2009). The PRISMA framework outlines a standardized flow of records from identification to final inclusion, ensuring a clear, traceable article selection process (Page et al., 2021). The following flow diagram illustrates the four major stages of the article selection process: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion. This approach ensures that only relevant, high-quality studies were included in the review, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

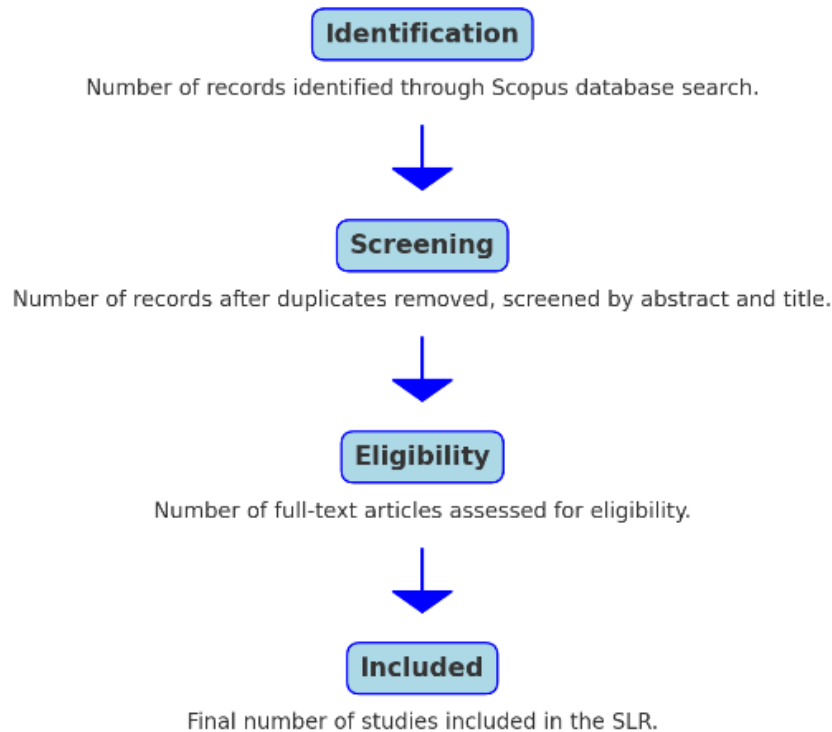


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram Description

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis for this systematic review involves both qualitative content analysis and thematic coding. First, the selected studies will undergo a content analysis to extract key findings related to the application of CEFR in developing writing competence among EFL learners. These findings will be organized into categories based on common themes such as improvement in grammatical accuracy, coherence, and lexical variety.

Secondly, thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurring patterns and insights across the studies. Themes such as learner engagement with CEFR-aligned assessments, the effectiveness of feedback, and the role of CEFR in curriculum design will be explored. Comparisons between CEFR-aligned assessments and traditional methods will be examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the framework's impact on writing proficiency in ESL/EFL contexts. Descriptive statistics may also be used to summarize the quantitative outcomes where relevant. By synthesizing these data, the review will offer critical insights into how CEFR-aligned assessments influence EFL learners' writing skills and provide recommendations for future research and practice.

3. Review Results

3.1 Overview of Writing Instruction

The articles reviewed highlight a wide range of approaches to teaching writing in ESL/EFL contexts, with a growing emphasis on integrating innovative and technology-enhanced methods to support learner engagement and improve outcomes. A common theme across the studies is the importance of scaffolding the writing process to enhance learners' ability to produce coherent and well-structured texts. Traditional teacher-led approaches, such as direct instruction on grammar and sentence structure, are complemented by more interactive methods like peer feedback (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024) and game-based learning (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022). These techniques aim to foster autonomous learning, engage learners actively, and encourage reflection on their writing skills. In addition, several studies stress the role of digital tools, such as Pixton and Grammarly, to support both formative and summative assessments of learners' writing (Cabrera-Solano, P., et al., 2021; Martínez-Carrasco, R., & Chabert, A., 2023).

The studies reveal that writing instruction is shifting towards a more learner-centered approach, where feedback, whether provided by peers, teachers, or automated systems, plays a crucial role in developing writing competence. There is a strong focus on creating an environment that allows learners to revise and improve their writing based on structured and timely feedback. The CEFR-aligned writing tasks studied across the reviewed articles demonstrate a move toward outcome-based teaching that aims to meet specific proficiency levels in writing (Sasayama et al., 2021).

3.2 Linguistic Contributions to Writing Instruction

A key linguistic contribution identified in the reviewed studies is the integration of communicative competence frameworks, such as the CEFR, which standardizes proficiency levels and provides clear descriptors for language skills, including writing. The studies by Sasayama et al. (2021) and Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert (2023) show that CEFR-aligned assessments not only guide writing instruction but also offer structured ways to evaluate complex aspects of writing, such as coherence, grammatical accuracy, and lexical range.

Moreover, the incorporation of peer feedback and automated corrective feedback tools (e.g., Grammarly) has linguistically enriched the writing instruction process. These tools help learners recognize and address grammatical errors, while also promoting a more holistic understanding of how language is used to communicate ideas effectively. Additionally, digital games and interactive platforms, like those studied by Castillo-Cuesta (2022), offer innovative linguistic input, engaging learners through task-based interactions that build both their vocabulary and writing proficiency in a meaningful context.

3.3 Research Trends Found

The studies reveal several emerging trends in ESL/EFL writing instruction: (a) Peer and Teacher Feedback: A significant trend in the studies is the comparison of peer and teacher feedback in writing instruction. Peer feedback, in particular, has been shown to have long-term positive effects on writing development, as demonstrated by Ghaneiarani et al. (2024). (b) Automated Writing Tools: The increasing use of Automated Writing Evaluation

(AWE) tools like Grammarly is a notable trend. These tools, while not without limitations, are gaining traction as supplementary aids to traditional instruction (Martínez-Carrasco, R., & Chabert, A., 2023). (c) Technology-Enhanced Learning: The integration of digital tools, such as Pixton and Genially games, is another growing trend. These tools are seen as effective in increasing learner motivation and engagement while simultaneously improving their writing skills (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022; Cabrera-Solano, P., et al., 2021) (d) CEFR Integration: Studies are increasingly adopting CEFR-aligned frameworks to guide both teaching and assessment practices, focusing on clearly defined language proficiency outcomes in writing (Sasayama et al., 2021).

To provide a clear and organized overview of the reviewed literature, a summary table has been created, highlighting key aspects of each study. This approach follows the recommendation by Petticrew and Roberts (2008), emphasizing transparency and systematic reporting in literature reviews. The table below summarizes the main findings, research methods, and contributions of relevant studies on CEFR-aligned writing assessments.

Table 3. Summary Table of Reviewed Articles

<i>Authors, Year, Title</i>	<i>Research Method</i>	<i>Key Findings and Conclusions</i>	<i>Contributions to SLR Themes</i>
Ghaneiarani et al., 2024 - Enhancing writing ability of Iranian EFL learners through learning-oriented assessment: peer and teacher feedback implementation	Mixed-method study using peer and teacher feedback implementation	Peer feedback enhances long-term writing development; teacher feedback is essential for complex tasks.	Feedback mechanisms in CEFR-aligned writing assessments
Sasayama et al., 2021 - Designing Efficient L2 Writing Assessment Tasks for Low-Proficiency Learners of English	Quantitative study on task-based writing assessment design	Task-based CEFR assessments enhance linguistic accuracy and learner engagement in structured writing tasks.	Assessment task design in CEFR-based writing courses
Castillo-Cuesta, 2022 - Using Genially Games for Enhancing EFL Reading and Writing Skills in Online Education	Mixed-method study with online learning experiment	Gamified tools increase learner motivation and writing skills through interactive tasks.	Gamification as a supportive strategy for CEFR writing tasks
Cabrera-Solano et al., 2021 - Using Pixton for Teaching EFL Writing in Higher Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Action research on digital tool use in writing instruction	Digital tools facilitate creative writing and engagement, supporting formative assessment.	Technological integration in writing instruction under CEFR
Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023 - Writing on steroids? Accuracy of automatic corrective feedback in L2 competence development	Experimental study on automatic corrective feedback tools	Automated tools improve grammatical accuracy but struggle with discourse-level feedback.	Automated writing evaluation in CEFR-based instruction

To provide a clearer understanding of the major research themes identified from the reviewed articles, a visual summary has been created. This follows the recommendation by Petticrew and Roberts (2008), emphasizing the importance of presenting systematic review findings through visual representations for better clarity and comprehension. The bar chart below highlights key research themes, their frequency, and relevant research gaps identified in CEFR-aligned writing assessments.

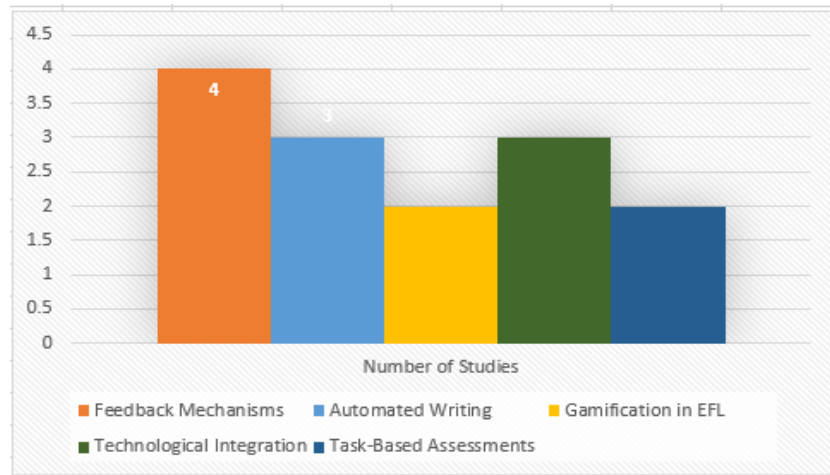


Figure 2. Research Themes in CEFR-Aligned Writing Assessments

3.4 Research Gaps and Opportunities for Further Studies

While the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into writing instruction, several gaps in the research were identified:

Longitudinal Effects of Feedback

Although peer feedback is beneficial, there is limited research on its long-term impact compared to traditional teacher feedback. Future studies should explore the sustainability of peer feedback's influence on writing proficiency over extended periods (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024).

Effectiveness of Automated Tools Across Proficiency Levels

While tools like Grammarly show promise, there is a gap in understanding how effective they are across different proficiency levels. Future research could examine how AWE tools perform for learners at varying stages of language development (A1 to C2) and how they contribute to writing development beyond grammar correction (Martínez-Carrasco, R., & Chabert, A., 2023).

Cultural and Contextual Factors

Most studies focus on specific educational contexts, but the role of cultural and contextual factors in the effectiveness of writing instruction, particularly with digital tools and peer feedback, remains underexplored. There is a need for cross-cultural studies that compare the effectiveness of these approaches across different educational settings (Cabrera-Solano, P., et al., 2021).

Gamified Learning for Advanced Learners

While digital games have shown efficacy for lower-proficiency learners, research on their impact on advanced learners (C1 and above) is scarce. Further studies could explore how gamification can be applied to more complex writing tasks for higher-level learners (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022).

By addressing these gaps, future research could contribute significantly to refining ESL/EFL writing instruction and optimizing the integration of technology and feedback mechanisms”

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Synthesis of Key Findings

The key findings from the reviewed studies highlight several advancements and challenges in ESL/EFL writing instruction, particularly concerning the integration of CEFR-aligned assessments, peer and teacher feedback, and the use of technology-enhanced tools such as Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) systems and gamification. First, the comparative analysis of peer feedback versus teacher feedback (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024) demonstrates that peer feedback often leads to better retention and long-term improvements in writing ability, particularly in areas like language structure and content organization. Second, the incorporation of CEFR frameworks into writing assessments is seen to provide clear proficiency targets and more structured learning outcomes, as evidenced by the studies on task-based writing assessments (Sasayama et al., 2021).

To better understand the differences between CEFR-aligned and traditional writing assessments, the following table highlights key distinctions in focus, feedback mechanisms, use of technology, learner autonomy, and skill integration, as identified in the reviewed studies (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024; Sasayama et al., 2021; Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023).

Table 4. Comparison of CEFR-Based vs. Traditional Assessments

<i>Assessment Criteria</i>	<i>CEFR-Based Assessments</i>	<i>Traditional Assessments</i>
Focus of Assessment	Competence-based, focuses on communicative performance and skill development	Knowledge-based, focuses on grammatical accuracy and linguistic knowledge
Feedback Mechanisms	Formative, includes peer and teacher feedback (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024)	Mostly summative, teacher-centered feedback only
Use of Technology	Integrates tools like Grammarly and Pixton for digital feedback (Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2021)	Minimal technology integration, mostly paper-based tests
Assessment Tasks	Task-based assessments linked to real-world contexts (Sasayama et al., 2021)	Standardized tests with limited contextual relevance
Learner Autonomy	Encourages learner reflection, peer interaction, and responsibility (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024)	Learners have little control over the assessment process
Skill Integration	Emphasizes writing, reading, and listening integration (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022)	Skills are tested separately with little integration

Another significant finding is the effectiveness of AWE tools such as Grammarly in supporting students' grammatical accuracy and self-directed learning (Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023). However, the limitations of these tools in providing comprehensive feedback on communicative competence remain a concern. Additionally, gamification and the use of digital tools (e.g., Pixton, Genially games) have proven effective in enhancing writing motivation and engagement, particularly for lower proficiency learners (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022; Cabrera-Solano, P., et al., 2021). This technological integration presents a shift towards more interactive and engaging learning environments for ESL/EFL learners.

4.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study reinforce key theoretical perspectives while offering actionable insights for classroom instruction, educational policy, and assessment design.

4.2.1. Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, these findings align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, emphasizing the role of social interaction and collaborative learning. The effectiveness of peer feedback in improving writing skills reflects the importance of social learning environments in scaffolding learner development. Additionally, the CEFR framework's integration supports constructivist learning theories by offering outcome-based instructional approaches where learners progressively build knowledge through interaction with clearly defined proficiency standards.

4.2.2. Practical Implications

Building on the practical insights discussed earlier, several specific implications for classroom instruction, educational policy, and assessment design emerge from the reviewed studies.

Classroom Instruction

Educators should integrate peer feedback systematically into writing curricula to promote learner autonomy and writing development. Studies show that combining peer and teacher feedback fosters sustained writing improvements (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024). Additionally, using digital tools such as Grammarly for grammar correction and interactive platforms like Pixton and Genially for gamified learning can increase learner motivation and engagement (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2021).

Educational Policy

Policymakers should consider adopting CEFR-aligned assessments in national curricula to ensure standardized benchmarks for language proficiency. This approach fosters consistent language learning goals and enables international comparability across institutions (Sasayama et al., 2021).

Assessment Design

Assessment developers should prioritize the development of task-based assessments that address both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence. Automated writing evaluation tools such as Grammarly should serve as complementary resources rather than

substitutes for human evaluation, particularly in complex writing tasks such as argumentation or discourse-level writing (Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023).

4.3 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations emerged from the synthesis of the reviewed studies. First, the effectiveness of peer feedback over long-term learning outcomes remains under-researched. While immediate improvements in writing competence were observed, the sustainability of these effects, particularly in comparison to teacher feedback, requires further longitudinal research (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024).

Second, the studies on AWE tools such as Grammarly often highlight their utility for grammatical correction but fail to address their limitations in assessing broader communicative aspects of writing, such as discourse, tone, and audience awareness. This limitation suggests that while these tools are useful for specific tasks, they cannot fully substitute the holistic judgment that a teacher or peer can provide (Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023). Moreover, cultural factors and context-specific variables are not adequately considered in the reviewed studies. Most research was conducted in specific educational settings, limiting the generalizability of findings across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

Finally, while gamification and the use of digital tools were found to be effective for lower proficiency learners, there is a gap in understanding their impact on advanced learners (C1 and above). The studies primarily focused on elementary and intermediate learners, leaving open questions about the utility of these methods for more complex writing tasks at higher proficiency levels (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022).

Based on the identified research gaps and study limitations, several potential research directions are proposed. These recommendations aim to address underexplored areas such as long-term impacts of peer feedback, AI-driven writing evaluation, and technology-enhanced learning tools in CEFR-aligned writing instruction (Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023; Castillo-Cuesta, 2022).

Table 5. Future Directions and Research Proposals

<i>Research Focus</i>	<i>Proposed Future Studies</i>
Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Writing Assessments	Investigate AI-powered feedback tools beyond Grammarly (Martínez-Carrasco & Chabert, 2023)
Exploring Peer Feedback in Online Learning Contexts	Examine the impact of peer feedback in diverse online environments (Ghaneiarani et al., 2024)
Assessing Writing with Gamified Learning Platforms	Evaluate the effectiveness of game-based platforms like Genially (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022)
Developing CEFR-Based Writing Rubrics for Multilingual Contexts	Design new assessment rubrics for multilingual classrooms (Sasayama et al., 2021)
Longitudinal Studies on CEFR-Aligned Writing Development	Conduct long-term research on learners' development in CEFR-based courses (Cabrera-Solano et al., 2021)

Addressing these limitations in future research could provide more comprehensive insights into optimizing ESL/EFL writing instruction across various learning contexts.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The review of recent literature reveals significant progress in the field of ESL/EFL writing instruction, particularly through the integration of CEFR-aligned assessments, peer feedback, and digital tools. The key findings suggest that peer feedback plays an essential role in enhancing long-term retention and improving writing skills, particularly in terms of language use and organizational structure. Furthermore, CEFR-aligned assessments offer a structured, outcome-driven approach to writing instruction, which provides clarity for both learners and teachers regarding proficiency targets.

Another important finding is the effectiveness of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools like Grammarly, which offer immediate grammatical corrections, fostering self-directed learning among students. However, these tools are limited in their capacity to assess the broader communicative aspects of writing. Additionally, the use of gamified learning environments and digital platforms has proven to increase learner motivation and engagement, particularly for beginner to intermediate EFL learners. However, there is still a need for more research on the application of these tools for advanced learners and their long-term effectiveness.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Building upon the insights from this review, future research should aim to address several gaps. First, longitudinal studies are needed to explore the long-term impact of peer feedback on writing proficiency. While short-term gains have been documented, further investigation into whether these improvements are sustained over time and how they compare to teacher feedback would provide more comprehensive insights into best practices for writing instruction.

Second, more research is required on the effectiveness of Automated Writing Evaluation tools across different proficiency levels, particularly for advanced learners. Given their limitations in addressing the communicative and higher-order aspects of writing, future studies could explore how AWE tools can be improved or integrated with human feedback to provide more holistic assessments of learner writing abilities.

Third, cross-cultural studies that examine the effectiveness of CEFR-aligned assessments and digital tools in diverse educational contexts would contribute to a better understanding of how cultural and contextual factors influence the success of these approaches. Such research would help educators tailor these tools and assessments to meet the specific needs of their learners more effectively.

Lastly, further research on gamification and digital platforms in writing instruction should expand to advanced-level learners. Investigating how these technologies can be adapted to support the development of more complex writing tasks, particularly at CEFR levels C1 and above, would help broaden the applicability of gamified learning beyond beginner and intermediate learners.

By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how best to implement CEFR-aligned assessments and technology-enhanced tools in ESL/EFL writing instruction, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for learners at all levels of proficiency.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: PRISMA Checklist

<i>Section</i>	<i>Checklist Item</i>	<i>Included (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Location in the Paper</i>
Title	Identify the report as a systematic review	Yes	Title Page
Abstract	Structured summary of key findings	Yes	Abstract Section
Introduction	Rationale and research objectives stated	Yes	Introduction Section
Methods	Search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria	Yes	Methods Section (2.1-2.3)
Study Selection	Selection process explained	Yes	Methods Section (2.3)
Data Collection Process	Data extraction method described	Yes	Methods Section (2.4)
Results	Key findings summarized	Yes	Findings and Discussion (4.1)
Discussion	Study implications discussed	Yes	Discussion and Implications (4.2)
Funding Statement	Funding sources disclosed	No	Not Applicable