

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCAFFOLDED ANALYTIC RUBRIC-BASED PEER EVALUATION TO FOSTER COHESION AND COHERENCE IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a conceptual framework for scaffolded analytic rubric-based peer evaluation to address inherent challenges novice student-writers face when composing their argumentative essays, particularly in achieving cohesion and coherence. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in sociocultural theory, together with studies on cohesion and coherence, argumentative writing, empirical evidence on peer evaluation, scaffolded peer evaluation, and analytic rubric-based instruction, the framework conceptualises the synergy between two pedagogical constructs: scaffolding and peer evaluation to foster textual cohesion and coherence, utilising an analytic rubric as a mediating tool. The framework further incorporates three learner constructs: feedback literacy, reflective awareness and metacognitive awareness, which, alongside the mentioned pedagogical constructs and mediating tool, collectively support students' development of the knowledge and awareness required to function effectively both as writers and reviewers of argumentative essays. Through the internalisation and application of these interconnected framework components, students are expected to demonstrate improved cohesion and coherence in their argumentative essays while simultaneously developing greater confidence in generating and providing constructive, effective feedback on peers' essays of the same genre. The paper concludes by underscoring pedagogical implications for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) tertiary education writing classrooms and recommending avenues for future empirical validation.

Keywords: Cohesion and coherence; Argumentative essays; Scaffolding; Analytic rubric; Peer evaluation; ESL and EFL writing pedagogy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The communicative success of argumentative essay writing rests on the writers' ability to achieve cohesion and coherence as central textual elements (Resa Nadia et al., 2023). Cohesion, referred to as "intra-text connectivity" (Latipova, 2023, p. 52), glues sentences together through linguistic devices; that is, it assists in linking sentences, arguments and ideas with appropriate academic vocabulary and phrases (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), whereas coherence concerns the arrangement of these arguments and ideas in a logical order to ensure that the whole essay is clear, intelligible, thus understandable and readable (Ahmad et al., 2019; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Latipova, 2023). Their joint function is not merely superficial or stylistic; rather, both features serve to enable readers to follow arguments and

ideas smoothly without ambiguity. Misalignment in either dimension or both compromise the quality of an argumentative essay, ultimately rendering it less comprehensible (Hyland, 2006). For example, Pavavijarn (2022) outlines that weak thematic progression disjoins argument order. Similarly, Siekmann et al. (2022) report that fragmented argument progression; abrupt thematic transitions; and incomplete, unclear or missing conclusions overall weaken argumentative structure and coherence.

Despite their importance, many novice student-writers lack awareness of how cohesion and coherence devices operate locally and globally within academic texts. This underscores the need for a structured and systematic instructional intervention that can make these textual features explicit. In response to this need, scaffolding, and peer evaluation guided by an analytic rubric can jointly and potentially form as central constructs in writing pedagogy to tackle this challenge. When used in tandem, they provide strong mechanisms that enhance students' feedback literacy, reflective awareness, and metacognitive awareness, thereby contributing to meaningful engagement and facilitating the development of cohesive and coherent argumentative essays.

Scaffolding is generally defined as a classroom teaching technique denoting temporary, structured assistance by a more knowledgeable individual, either a teacher-instructor or peer, to assist students in accomplishing tasks beyond their unaided capability (Xiao, 2024). This support gradually reduces as the students gain better proficiency, where they can perform autonomously. Xiao (2024) further illustrates the concept with the phrase "I do, we do, you do", encapsulating the progressive release of responsibility. This definition aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in his sociocultural theory, which highlights the development of learning and competence through social and guided interaction. Wood et al. (1976) similarly reflect the description of scaffolding as follows:

a kind of "scaffolding" process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts. This scaffolding consists essentially of the adult "controlling" those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence. The task thus proceeds to a successful conclusion. (p. 90)

On the other hand, *peer evaluation*, as a formative practice in educational settings, emphasises a complete student integration with both their own and peers' work through written or oral feedback (Cui & Schunn, 2024; Double et al., 2019). In this process, students play a role in examining their peers' work and provide each other with structured feedback and critical reflection using relevant, provided criteria thereby developing their feedback literacy and evaluative skills (Ketonen et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2011). Building on this definition, the present paper adapts peer evaluation as such, positioning it as a structured and collaborative approach among students that involves a systematic assessment of their peers' work through critical evaluation and reciprocal exchanges of feedback aimed at fostering both their own and peers' argumentative essays.

To guide evaluation, *rubrics* are used. Panadero and Jonsson (2020) posit that they serve as an effective, real-world tool for evaluating students' work across all educational levels. The tool should be user-friendly as it articulates a set of specific criteria and grading scales that are transparent to support students in better evaluating a task, project or piece of work (Taylor et al., 2024). The selection criteria incorporated in the rubric aid students in developing a tangible grasp of "what counts" for them, thereby lessening their anxiety around assessments. Al-Ghazo and Ta'amneh (2021) report that analytic rubrics offer more precise and detailed information compared to their holistic counterparts, enabling more explicit guidance for both instructors and students. By contrast, a holistic rubric produces a single overall score based on an overall assessment of a student's performance. The additional details featured within an analytic rubric suggests that it is best not only as an assessment tool but also as an instrument that can help guide students to foster writing

proficiency and overall achieve intended writing objectives with the provision of high-quality feedback.

As Fadillah and Ha (2024) affirm, providing clear anchoring points, such as structured guidance and explicit criteria in the rubric during peer evaluation, offers significant advantages in formative settings compared to their absence. Such support is relevant in the case of argumentative essays as one of the key academic writing genres, where novice student-writers often struggle to connect arguments and ideas effectively, incorporate appropriate academic vocabulary and linguistic devices, to name a few, ultimately hindering the clarity, cohesion, coherence and overall readability of their essay writing.

Therefore, this conceptual paper operationalises scaffolding within an analytic rubric and peer evaluation where structured guidance and explicit evaluative criteria collaboratively support students to improve their argumentative essay. Specifically, this paper proposes a conceptual framework to fill the gap following the dearth of studies that explicitly target cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays by collectively embedding elements of scaffolding, peer evaluation, and key evaluative criteria or textual features within an analytic rubric.

1.1 Problem Statement

Cohesion and coherence are pivotal components in determining the quality of essays (Alqasham et al., 2021), with heightened importance on argumentative essays that demand clear cognitive reasoning, a well-defined stance, and structured logical progression. Yet, they remain a prevailing challenge. According to Mallahi (2024), majority of students' argumentative writing drafts typically demonstrate poor quality.

Notably, while traditional teacher-instructor guidance remains crucial, it alone may not be sufficient to fully address challenges students face in producing cohesive and coherent argumentative essays. Scholars highlight that university students, especially novice student-writers using English as a second language or foreign language, often struggle to express arguments logically, connect ideas cohesively and maintain overall coherence leading to loss of meaning, clarity and academic writing quality (Ariyanti&Fitriana, 2017; Le et al., 2025; RahmtAllah, 2020; SitiZawani&Liliate, 2021; Suwandi, 2016). Moreover, existing studies note that feedback received (whether from a peer or teacher-instructor) does not explicitly address cohesion and coherence, which consequently, compromise the aforementioned essential determinants of high-quality writing (Dong et al., 2023; Pavavijarn, 2022; RahmtAllah, 2020). Therefore, this points to the necessity of implementing an instructional approach that can potentially bridge this gap while providing explicit guidance to students. As Mallahi (2024) further emphasises, interventions should be designed to redress the underperforming components to improve the quality of students' argumentative writing.

In line with the preceding discussion, many scholars advocate scaffolding and peer evaluation, with peer feedback (Diep & Diep, 2024) supplemented with analytic rubrics as a complementary pedagogical practice in fostering better writing development (Allagui, 2024; Cui & Schunn, 2024; Fleckney et al., 2025; Wei & Liu, 2024). However, concerns also persist regarding whether students with limited L2 proficiency and academic writing skills can provide accurate and constructive feedback when reviewing and evaluating peers' work. In particular, the extent to which such feedback can accurately and meaningfully support peers' writing improvement continues to be questioned. As such, these concerns have prompted continuing debates surrounding the reliability of the feedback provided, particularly concerning the possibility that students' evaluations potentially mirror inconsistencies and limitations found within their own writing (Ciampa & Wolfe, 2023; Colombo & Rodas, 2021; Kostopoulou&O'Dwyer, 2021; Tong et al., 2023; Vuogan& Li, 2022; Wei & Liu, 2024).

To address the aforementioned multi-faceted limitations, this paper therefore primarily aims to first explore and subsequently propose scaffolded analytic rubric-based peer evaluation as a conceptual framework in the academic teaching and learning setting as a complementary pedagogical strategy to further empower and foster cohesion and coherence in students' argumentative essays. In particular, Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD) within sociocultural theory and the synthesis of recent scholarly work aim to inform and propose a framework that can strengthen students' confidence and competence in reviewing, evaluating, providing constructive feedback and ultimately refining their own argumentative essays that are both cohesive and coherent while also directing future empirical research.

Importantly, although existing studies have examined one or both key textual elements of cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays, most employ alternative pedagogical approaches or frameworks (Le et al., 2025; Priangan et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2025; Zhang & Zhang, 2025). This illuminates the overall potential added value and relevance of the combined key pedagogical constructs here proposed, which leverage their established, combined advantages and effectiveness to address persistent challenges among students in developing cohesive and coherent argumentative essays, as further presented later in this paper.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic writing differs significantly from other forms of writing in terms of its conventions around purpose, structure, tone, style and lexical choices-e.g., creative or personal writing (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). As an intellectual and scientific form of writing, it necessitates that writers present their assertions and arguments at a higher level of thinking (Musoeva, 2023), as well as cohesively and coherently to avoid loss of meaning and writing unintelligibility. Consequently, academic writing remains a significant challenge among university students (Azmar&Razali, 2024; Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007; Marzaban&Sarjani, 2014; SitiZawani&Liliate, 2021). Many of these students are capable of writing, but they find formal academic writing challenging, regardless of disciplines and subject areas (AlMarwani, 2020; Azmar& Razali, 2024). As a result, the attainment of textual cohesion and coherence - both of which, according to Hyland (2006), are crucial ingredients of academic writing, may be compromised. According to RahmtAllah (2020), the core difficulty mainly derives from the writers' inability to meet the expectations of such writing itself, specifically in properly forming and structuring ideas in a lucid and coherent manner, as well as in translating them into an understandable written discourse framework, which may result in difficulties. The author further argues that the predominant focus has been on sentence-level issues, which hinder students' ability to communicate effectively and coherently through writing.

These challenges make argumentative essays, particularly, demanding and challenging, as this genre requires clear reasoning and skilful use of cohesive devices and coherent organisation to convey claims, arguments, rebuttals, and overall meaning effectively, apart from the need to demonstrate the appropriate use of referencing skills. Addressing these hurdles calls for an instructional method of collaborative practices, such as scaffolding, supplemented with an analytic rubric within peer evaluation activities that can guide students to strengthen writing cohesion, coherence and, overall, their argumentative essay performance.

2.1 Cohesion and Coherence Challenges in Argumentative Essays

Argumentative essays as a genre of academic writing place substantial cognitive demands on writers, particularly in managing cohesion and coherence, which remain persistent obstacles. Cohesion involves the use of linguistic devices such as referencing, conjunctions, lexical ties, linking signals, or synonyms, among other devices operating at the sentence or clause level. Coherence, or global coherence, extends beyond the sentence level, requiring the logical sequencing of ideas, thematic development, the development and support of arguments, clarification of ideas, and the entire organisation of content from introduction to conclusion (Pavavijarn, 2022; RahmtAllah, 2020; Siekmann et al., 2022). Hyland (2006) reinforces the view of coherence simply as the extent to which a text is consistent, makes sense, and understandable.

The following outlines those empirical studies that delineate deficiencies and characteristics contributing to incohesion and incoherence in students' writing:

- Misuse or underuse of cohesive markers (Al Khotaba, 2022);
- Ineffective ordering or grouping of arguments (Dong et al., 2023);
- Weak thematic progression (Pavavijarn, 2022);
- Fragmented argument progression: incomplete, unclear or missing conclusion or abrupt transitions (Siekmann et al., 2022).

Due to the above and other deficiencies, argumentative essays, especially those produced by novice ESL/EFL student writers, often lack the cohesive flow and reader readability which influence overall academic credibility. Thus, peer evaluation, when effectively scaffolded and integrated with evaluative criteria of an analytic rubric targeting key local cohesion and global coherence features, can provide students with explicit guidance, awareness and control over these textual aspects to support substantive improvements in students' ability to craft effective argumentative essays.

The following section first reviews peer evaluation and empirical evidence on scaffolded peer evaluation as pedagogical approaches to address these recurrent challenges students face in achieving cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays before introducing the complementary role of an analytic rubric in the subsequent section.

2.2 Peer Evaluation and Empirical Evidence on Scaffolded Peer Evaluation

Numerous learning principles, including peer learning, collective learning, communication skills, collaborative learning, and problem-solving abilities, have been demonstrated to benefit from peer evaluation (Biton, 2025; Caux & Pretorius, 2024; Kollar & Fischer, 2010; Yang et al., 2022). Also, students' ability to make decisions can be much enhanced by getting them involved in the evaluation of their own learning. While students may initially be concerned about their competence in evaluating peers and the responsibility associated with affecting peers' final grading, these concerns ultimately drive them to maximise active learning and motivation to improve - a case commonly collected from novice writers (Stancic, 2020). For this, advocates of peer evaluation are in favour of integrating peer evaluation in educational settings for their belief that it can better support students in enhancing their learning process.

Further supporting the above, Aimah and Suhartoyo (2024) and Sutrisno and Martora (2024) advocate that peer feedback's contributions have been positive among students, specifically in terms of their ability to foster critical self-reflection and gain fresh and deeper understanding through receiving comments and suggestions from one another. Extending this notion, peer evaluation can be conceptualised as a systematic formative practice where students evaluate each other's work using a set of evaluative criteria and generate feedback in the form of structured suggestions or comments. Pham (2023) further highlights this by mentioning that students' ability to internalise peer feedback and engage in shared decision-making fosters their ability to produce logically structured and coherent writing.

Do (2023), in his empirical study on French-major Vietnamese college students, provides compelling evidence. He discovers that groups receiving scaffolded peer evaluation training improve their higher-quality revisions, fostering greater learner autonomy as well as enhanced critical thinking. He uses the term 'scaffolded peer review' to refer to structured guidance and support provided to students before and during the review process to ensure feedback is meaningful, accurate and constructive, an approach that is closely aligned with the present paper's conceptualisation of scaffolding and peer evaluation. Do (2023) emphasises that such structured scaffolding is particularly important for novice writers who lack prior experience in peer evaluation, as this process gradually affords them opportunities to improve their writing skills, both as writers and raters. Students' writing performance can also be strengthened and enhanced through deliberate feedback processing, which involves

re-examining their own writing based on the feedback, evaluating its validity and undertaking strategic actions to address it throughout the peer evaluation session.

The above findings align with Allagui (2024), who emphasises that structured guidance in peer scaffolding fosters organisational skills, self-efficacy and revision behaviours, which are all critical criteria to support students' proficiency in ensuring that their argumentative writing is cohesive and coherent. Samad et al. (2024) extend this evidence by reporting that through modelling genre conventions, guiding practice, and staging collaborative peer review, students showcase increased confidence and better awareness of argumentative structure that eventually contributes to a substantial development in the logical flow and clarity of their argumentative writing.

Supporting the peer evaluation process, Vuogan and Li (2022), in their meta-analysis of empirical evidence, confirm that peer feedback, being an integral phase within peer evaluation, exerts a significant positive effect on L2 writing performance. The same authors draw on scholars such as Donato's (2004) work on collective scaffolding, an approach that focuses more on peer collaboration where learners leverage one another's strength and expertise. They also cite Rouhi et al.'s (2020) work, who advocate that the mentioned approach simultaneously deepens learners' understanding of the target language and the ability to gain benefit from giving through their dual roles as both feedback providers and receivers compared to the traditional expert-novice model of scaffolding. Vuogan and Li (2022) also highlight that peer feedback is effective when students are allocated ample time to write and when feedback is applied to revising existing texts rather than generating entirely new compositions.

Aisarova and Amangazina (2025), drawing insights from 60 empirical studies, similarly affirm the efficacy of peer assessment practices to help students foster their academic writing while developing broader and essential self-competencies. They assert the numerous benefits of peer assessment (in this case, equal to the paper term of peer evaluation), which include students' deeper engagement with learning contents, improved communication and interpersonal skills, increased capacity to give, receive and interpret feedback, strengthened collaborative skills, and greater clarification. Building on this, Casinto (2023) notes that the act of negotiating or mediating processes inherent during collaborative feedback exchanges contributes to the development of sociolinguistic competence that includes clarifying, justifying and confirming.

Casinto's (2023) study further reveals that low-proficiency ESL/EFL student-writers in the experimental group gain significant textual gain through scaffolded peer feedback. He also adds that instructors should remain active in guiding, conducting periodic spot-checks and supervising especially low-proficiency students throughout the course of the review process and ensure they effectively incorporate review comments into their own revisions. Extra scaffolding support is equally crucial for improved text organisation, complex sentence construction and cohesion, and for addressing run-on sentences, which are often influenced by first language (L1) interference.

Taken together, the aforementioned positive findings affirm that scaffolding and peer evaluation (together with peer feedback) as well as analytic rubrics are beneficial pedagogical ecosystems for enabling writers to evaluate and deliver meaningful as well as constructive feedback. This simultaneously assists students in fostering cohesion and coherence in their argumentative essay. This is supported by the nature of peer evaluation itself. It helps facilitate idea exchanges, error detection and active and reflective learning between participants involved. Meanwhile, scaffolding and the analytic rubric provide necessary guidance and structure in making sure that feedback remains purposeful, targeted and sound.

Also, while the strengths of peer evaluation have been widely recognised, it is equally important to acknowledge the potential challenges that may arise from its implementation. For instance, Tuzcu-Eken's (2021) findings yield that students experience challenges in evaluating peers' work due to limited language ability, avoidant personality traits, lack of clarity concerning the evaluation purpose, or challenges in locating issues of content relevance within writing, among others (Tuzcu-Eken, 2021). In addressing these, scaffolding

is implicitly conveyed in Tuzcu-Eken's study as capable of modelling evaluative language. Explicit rater training is also identified among the appropriate strategies. This aligns with this paper's further advocacy on the integration of scaffolding within the peer evaluation process, alongside the analytic rubric, as an approach to mitigate the similar aforementioned or any other potential drawbacks students may encounter.

The next section entails brief accounts of the analytic rubric as a mediating tool, followed by its synergy with two other pedagogical constructs, namely scaffolding and peer evaluation, in fostering cohesion and coherence in students' argumentative essays.

2.3 Analytic Rubric as a Tool to Foster Cohesion and Coherence in Argumentative Essays

As both an assessment instrument and mediating tool, analytic rubrics enhance writing instruction through explicit and transparent evaluative criteria that hold considerable potential to enhance both teaching and learning (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2022). Additionally, assisting students to engage effectively in the writing process and helping them recognise the rubric as a mediating instructional tool apart from solely a grading instrument can significantly benefit their learning. For instance, by deconstructing writing into measurable and observable dimensions, analytic rubrics can render abstract textual qualities and essential features of cohesion and coherence more visible and attainable to students.

However, while acknowledging the potential of rubrics to facilitate students' development in writing argumentative essays, students' achievement in this genre still lies on the quality of rubric design. It must be carefully and thoughtfully designed to ensure its effectiveness in achieving targeted pedagogical goals while upholding its construct validity overall (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2022). An example of this principle is the exemplification of Tsuji's (2021) newly developed rubric, referred to as the Module-based Writing Rubric, for assessing argumentative essays, which demonstrates acceptable levels of validity and reliability. In developing the rubric, Tsuji draws on Fujishiro's (2009, 2011) modular writing technique framework and adopts Ono and Matsushita's (2016) tabular writing rubric as a model for rubric construction. The latter accentuates the alignment of required learning writing outcomes (among which cohesion and coherence are mentioned) as essential to be integrated as performance criteria to better facilitate both assessment and instruction. These perspectives overall imply that when a rubric is well designed and clearly articulated, it shapes how effectively students could use it for evaluation, which in turn may foster their ability to produce cohesive and coherent argumentative essays.

In this paper, the pedagogical value of the analytic rubric as a mediating tool directly supports the implementation of the two core constructs (scaffolding and peer evaluation). It helps students identify, internalise and apply criteria crucial in composing cohesive and coherent argumentative essays. The next section elaborates on how these core pedagogical constructs as well as the analytic rubric, can operate as an interconnected framework that synergistically fosters students' ability to achieve cohesive and coherent argumentative essays.

2.4 A Pedagogical Synergy: Scaffolding, Peer Evaluation and Analytic Rubric

The integration of scaffolding, peer evaluation and an analytic rubric provide a powerful, complementary pedagogical synergy in writing classrooms. Scaffolding assists students with the cognitive and step-by-step procedural support needed for students to enact evaluative judgments, whereas an analytic rubric outlines explicit evaluative criteria, both guiding students better in the peer evaluation process for better and more usable returned feedback to improve writing.

Allagui (2024) further supports this synergy by explaining that when structured scaffolding is combined with exemplars/rubrics, it strengthens students' capability in organising texts and revision while boosting greater self-efficacy. Similarly, a study by Phuong et al. (2023) on the effects of using analytic rubrics in peer and self-assessment on

students' writing proficiency indicates that rubrics help students clarify evaluative criteria and enable them to critically and actively engage in a discussion in the writing process. Rubrics also foster critical reflection and elevate students' overall accountability within the peer feedback exchanges.

This is supported by Phuong et al. (2023), who indicate how analytic rubrics, with their detailed assessment criteria, can cultivate greater student awareness in systematically assessing various components of their writing. His work on the effects of integrating analytic rubrics within self- and peer assessment activities among EFL learners in Vietnam shows that students can critically evaluate their own and their peers' work with the use of analytic rubrics, resulting in improvements in writing quality, specifically in organisation and coherence. Given that clarity and coherence often pose challenges in writing contexts, the authors assert the effectiveness of the pedagogical value of integrating analytic rubrics alongside self- and peer assessment activities to enhance students' writing skills. This approach delineates the importance of clear and transparent evaluative tools in assisting students to produce effective and coherent writing.

Eika (2021a,b), likewise, through her findings on the impact of rubric-guided peer and self-assessment on literature review writing, demonstrates how rubrics help organise and structure the peer evaluation process, enhance student autonomy and improve students' revision skills. Extending this view, Phuong et al. (2023), in their study on the use of analytic rubrics for peer assessment (PA) and self-assessment (SA) among Vietnamese students, reveal that the accompanying use of rubrics yields significant results on listed criteria, demonstrating how rubrics help in clarifying what constitutes effective writing in specific dimensions.

Pardede (2024) accentuates that the interactive and scaffolded dimensions of peer collaborative writing promote opportunities for students to negotiate around argumentative flow and coherence. This collaborative process evolves into guided peer evaluation practice when combined with analytic rubrics, serving as a powerful pedagogical approach that can contribute meaningfully to students' writing coherence and overall improvement of their writing quality. Mulyati and Hadiananto (2023) similarly posit the advantages of rubrics within peer feedback, asserting that it allows students to produce more coherent argumentative writing and strengthen thematic continuity throughout.

In addition to empirical depth to this perspective, Aljohani (2022) presents findings from a longitudinal action research study where he examines the impact of a peer review training programme on low-proficiency EFL students' ability to provide substantive feedback on rhetorical and grammatical aspects of academic writing. The intervention that spans 11 weeks demonstrates that exposure to recursive peer feedback cycles guided by clear key evaluative criteria leads to greater improvements in quality, coherence and rhetorical accuracy among low-proficiency students. He argues that the adapted assessment rubric-guided peer evaluation supports cultivating students' rhetorical sensitivity and metacognitive awareness despite fostering writing quality. This claim aligns with propositions posited by Casinto (2023) and Fleckney et al. (2025), who advocate that the integration of a transparent and detailed analytic rubric, guided/explicit training, recursive feedback iteration and overall effective use of assessment practices help students cultivate their rhetorical, reflective and metacognitive awareness. By being consciously aware of the thought and evaluative processes when engaging in a particular cognitive task (Goh & Vandergrift, 2022), students are better able to navigate pathways toward attaining writing goals and objectives, even beyond the outcomes possible with traditional teacher assessment alone. Such practices ultimately strengthen students' learning, which enables students to effectively manage both micro- and macro-levels of textual organisation, thus facilitating translating experiential learning into positive outcomes.

Together, the above provides concrete evidence for how scaffolding, peer evaluation, and an analytic rubric can help sharpen precision not only in peer feedback but also in students' overall writing quality. Through scaffolding – by stating clear evaluative criteria through the rubric of what constitutes a cohesive and coherent argumentative essay and structured, guided peer evaluation – it is anticipated that students would better engage in a

conscientious evaluation which in turn fosters both their peers' and their own work. Therefore, this comprehensive process contributes to improved writing performance and leads to measurable gains in their own upcoming revision scores.

Overall, such pedagogical synergy has the potential to help students develop a more attuned awareness and informed understanding of writing conventions, maintain confidence in their writing and ultimately foster greater writing cohesion and coherence. However, it is important to acknowledge that its effectiveness is also likely contingent upon the quality and contextual appropriateness of its implementation, as well as students' capacities to engage meaningfully with the approach. This equally accentuates the need to discuss the likely practical implementation challenges associated with the approach, which are presented later in Section 4.0. Prior to this discussion, the next section proposes a conceptual framework, as illustrated and described below.

3.0 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Previous studies have accentuated the importance of scaffolding, peer evaluation, peer assessment (and peer feedback), particularly when supported by rubrics as presented in the preceding sections. This synthesis of theoretical foundations and empirical evidence informs the development of the following conceptual framework to foster cohesion and coherence in students' argumentative essays, as shown in **Fig. 1**.

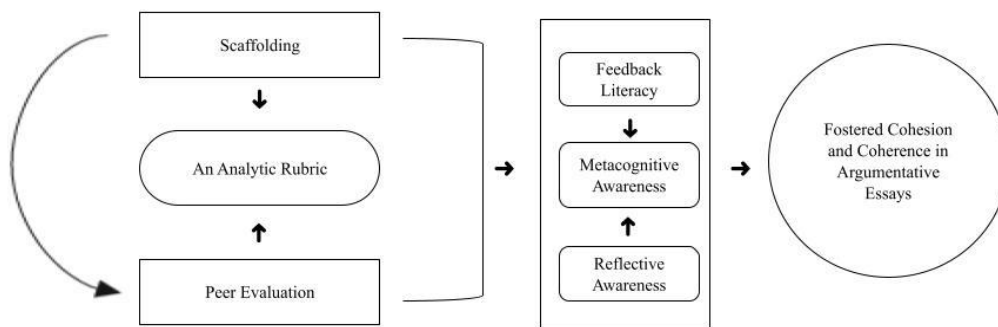


Fig. 1 *Proposed Conceptual Framework for Scaffolded Analytic Rubric-Based Peer Evaluation to Foster Cohesion and Coherence in Argumentative Essays*

The proposed framework conceptualises the interaction between two pedagogical constructs: scaffolding and peer evaluation guided by an analytic rubric as a mediating tool for fostering cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays. Three learner constructs, namely feedback literacy, reflective awareness and metacognitive awareness, are also positioned within the framework, which represents learner capacities that may be fostered through engagement with the pedagogical constructs and mediating tool. Together, the framework represents a pathway through which students may progressively foster cohesion and coherence, thereby contributing to more effective argumentative essays.

Scaffolding provides structured support for developing students' feedback literacy, reflective and metacognitive awareness through peer evaluation and rubric use (Yu & Liu, 2021). For example, the integration of mini lessons with modelled essay samples, demonstrations of revision strategies and rubric exploration comprising a guided walkthrough of its criteria and performance levels facilitates students' gradual internalisation of cohesion and coherence principles as well as the performance expectations embedded within the rubric descriptors. These scaffolded activities also support students' development of the related knowledge, evaluative capabilities and revision strategies vital for critical engagement when providing, and/or receiving feedback. Moreover, collaborative discussions and scaffolded engagement with the complex expectations of argumentative essays equally promote more meaningful and critical involvement in the feedback process. Collectively, scaffolding strengthens students' ability in the process of fostering the cohesion and coherence of both their own and peers' argumentative essays. Following sustained

scaffolding, students can potentially develop the capacity to interpret, give and apply feedback with greater reliability and more independently (Hyland, 2019).

The *analytic rubric* functions not only as an evaluative and mediating tool, but also as a learning scaffold in this framework. Beyond guiding peer evaluation, it allows students to align their own essay with the established explicit criteria grounded in relevant writing frameworks to better foster writing cohesion and coherence. Through this reciprocal engagement with the rubric, students cultivate their feedback literacy, reflective and metacognitive awareness by critically considering their own evaluative judgments, reflecting on their own decision-making, and activating relevant learning trajectories as they engage with their peers' and their own essays against rubric criteria. In tandem, students would deepen their understanding of the micro- and macro-level aspects underpinning cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays. In turn, this has the potential to enable them to produce argumentative essays that reflect greater awareness of cohesion and coherence. At the same time, their engagement with and understanding of the rubric guides them to formulate more well-founded evaluative judgments of their own and peers' essays.

Peer evaluation, when scaffolded and supported by the analytic rubric, fosters richer collaborative learning and a shared sense of responsibility to improve argumentative essays. Through this deeper learning process, students develop reciprocal awareness of what constitutes cohesive, coherent, strong, and weak argumentative essays as they actively participate in the evaluation process. Additionally, this evaluative engagement simultaneously heightens students' feedback literacy, reflective and metacognitive awareness which are activated when they pause to think, notice, process, monitor, control, revise, and act in the experience (Aljohani, 2022; Ho and Lau, 2025). In turn, these developments support the provision and generation of constructive peer feedback. This is necessary in guiding iterative improvement of the essay quality, particularly related to cohesion and coherence (Casinto, 2023 & Fleckney et al., 2025). Ultimately, it similarly benefits both their peers' work and their own.

Ultimately, the interaction of these pedagogical constructs, a mediating tool and learner constructs promotes the desired outcome of the framework. Overall, this proposed conceptual framework illustrates how the integration of pedagogical supports with cognitive and reflective processes using the rubric as a mediating tool can potentially and systematically foster students' development of cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays.

4.0 PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Despite the anticipated pedagogical contributions of this synergy derived from the integration of scaffolding, peer evaluation and analytic rubric, its implementation warrants close attention to several potential practical challenges. Among these are students' limited experience in peer evaluation, variations in the quality and reliability of peer feedback and possibly time constraints. The first two challenges are particularly salient, as the effectiveness of the approach may also be shaped by the interplay between the pedagogical constructs and the rubric as a mediating tool as well as students' development of feedback literacy, reflective and metacognitive awareness. Meanwhile, contextual factors such as time availability may influence implementation feasibility and the effectiveness of the approach in achieving its intended outcomes.

First, students with limited prior experience in peer evaluation may initially experience uncertainty when evaluating their peers' work. Therefore, training or guided practice through mini lessons, including explicit rubric familiarisation and demonstration of revision strategies would provide the necessary scaffolding to support students in attending to peer feedback while developing their confidence and evaluative competence (Alqassab et al., 2023; Chen & Zhang, 2024; Panadero et al., 2023). In line with this, Tuzcu-Eken (2021) highlights that "explicit rater training" has been recognised as one of the appropriate strategies, which is a point that has also been emphasised in Section 2.2.

Second, the quality and reliability of peer feedback may vary according to students' writing competence, overall language proficiency and interpersonal biases. Particularly, variations in writing competence may mediate the extent to which students can engage effectively in peer evaluation, potentially shaping their capacity to identify textual issues, formulate reasoned judgments, and provide feedback that supports substantive and meaningful revisions (Cui & Schunn, 2024). In line with this, students with lower English proficiency may be less engaged and confident in doing peer evaluation compared with more proficient peers who demonstrate greater willingness, which may affect the quality of peer feedback provided (Tuzcu-Eken, 2021). In addition, peer feedback may also be shaped by interpersonal familiarity, which could affect the criticality and objectivity of peer evaluations. To mitigate these, collaborative peer learning can be promoted through purposeful grouping arrangements that facilitate knowledge exchange among students with diverse proficiency levels (Fleckney et al., 2025). The arrangements may also involve students with limited prior interaction or integrate anonymity to limit the effects of peer familiarity and support more meaningful and accurate peer feedback (van Herdeen&Baruthram, 2021). Concurrently, continuous teacher-instructor feedback and guidance are equally essential for ensuring student engagement in peer evaluation, enhancing peer feedback accuracy and facilitating alignment between feedback practices and the intended learning objectives (Cui et al., 2021).

Third, given the time constraint that may be imposed by existing course schedules in some tertiary institutions, teacher-instructors may need to strategically plan and tailor peer evaluation activities to ensure adequate time for rubric exploration, evaluation, discussion, as well as revision. Similarly, continuous teacher-instructor feedback, monitoring and adequate facilitation time remain integral to support effective implementation and maximise students' effective improvement of cohesion and coherence in their argumentative essays.

Accordingly, future researchers and teacher-instructors should account for any potential practical challenges within their respective research contexts prior to translating the proposed framework into classroom practice. Anticipating such challenges may enable more informed preparation, enhance feasibility and effectiveness of the implementation as well as facilitate a more rigorous evaluation of the proposed framework's contribution to students' writing overall.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This paper proposes a conceptual framework for scaffolded analytic rubric-based peer evaluation to foster cohesion and coherence in argumentative essays. The framework draws on robust theoretical foundations and recent empirical evidence, positioning it as a viable pedagogical approach to advance ESL/EFL argumentative essays within a structured, guided, collaborative rich-feedback environment supported by an analytic rubric in tertiary writing instruction. The practical implementation challenges are equally acknowledged and discussed.

The explicit focus on cohesion and coherence within the framework benefits students by providing a systematic means to refine their abilities in evaluating, generating feedback on peers' work and composing better argumentative essays. Consequently, this provides them the simultaneous ability to improve both their peers' and their own overall essay cohesion and coherence performance.

Also, while the proposed framework is theoretically and conceptually grounded, empirical studies are necessary. This is to investigate its potential implementation as well as its contribution to students' argumentative essays development, particularly related to cohesion and coherence alongside further practical implementation challenges that may emerge.

Future researchers are not limited to but may employ pre- and post-test argumentative essays within a quasi-experimental study involving comparable groups. One group would serve as the experimental while another would serve as the control group to empirically

examine the effectiveness of this synergy in fostering cohesion and coherence in students' argumentative essays.

Complementing this methodological design, both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of quantitative data and thematic analyses of qualitative data obtained from questionnaires, interviews or reflective journals can capture insights into students' feedback literacy, reflective awareness, metacognitive awareness and their overall engagement throughout the scaffolded analytic rubric-based peer evaluation process.

In sum, this systematic, multi-method design is expected to provide strong empirical evidence of how scaffolded analytic rubric-based peer evaluation influences both measurable argumentative writing outcomes as well as revision behaviours and reflective attitudes underpinning continuous development in students' writing, primarily argumentative essays relating to cohesion and coherence.

Beyond the proposed methodological design, the enactment of the framework through the pedagogical synergy of scaffolding, rubrics and peer evaluation is expected to, over time, nurture students' ability to meet broader academic demands requiring sustained cohesion and coherence across varied academic writing tasks. The framework therefore informs actionable avenues for future research and classroom practice.

It is anticipated that the pedagogical synergy of the interconnected framework, when appropriately enacted and engaged with, will prove beneficial in advancing students' writing developmental growth of cohesion and coherence in their academic argumentative essays. Future studies could also evaluate its adaptability across different academic writing genres, as potentially, many of the rubric criteria are transferable beyond argumentative essay writing tasks.

In addition, researchers could empirically test its effectiveness with diverse student populations in either one of the varied delivery modes (either fully physical, fully online or hybrid intervention setting) or extended/iterative sessions to further validate and refine its applicability. Longitudinal or long-term studies may also be valuable for exploring the sustained influence of scaffolded analytic rubric-based peer evaluation on students' argumentative essay development over multiple semesters or academic years.

As RahmtAllah (2020) also recommends, varied essay or writing topics could be introduced to provide students with more opportunities to practise cohesive and coherent ties that can foster writing cohesion and coherence within the proposed conceptual framework.

As a further avenue of exploration, another dimension to consider is feedback dialogue. Examination of these interactions may further provide deeper insights and clarify how such collaborative evaluative interactions cultivate the development of feedback literacy, reflective awareness and metacognitive awareness.

CO-AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. All authors were equally involved in the study's conception.

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