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Developing a Blended Digital Feedback Module for Literature-Based EFL Writing: A CEFR-Aligned Design and Development Study

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Abstract: This study reports the design and development of a blended digital writing feedback module for literature-based English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing. Guided by a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) aligned design and development orientation, the study responded to the need for structured support in helping undergraduate EFL learners produce, revise, and reflect on personal responses to literary texts. The module was developed within a British Literature and Appreciation course at a public university in China, where learners were expected to engage with literary texts, construct personal interpretations, and improve written responses through feedback. Adopting a Design and Development Research Type I orientation, the module integrated Reader-Response Theory, Sociocultural Theory, CEFR-oriented writing descriptors, automated writing feedback, teacher-supplied feedback, and a Presentation–Practice–Production–Reproduction (PPPR) instructional sequence. During development, learner needs, literature-based writing requirements, CEFR-informed expectations, and blended feedback functions were translated into staged instructional procedures. The module was further refined through expert review and examined through implementation-informed evidence from 32 post-module learner reflective journals. Findings suggest that the module supported learners' perceived engagement with literary interpretation, revision awareness, and feedback-informed writing development. Automated feedback was useful for immediate language-level revision, while teacher feedback remained important for interpretation, organization, and reflective response quality. The study contributes a design and development account of how blended digital writing feedback may be organized as part of a teacher-mediated feedback ecology for literature-based EFL writing instruction.

Keywords: Blended Writing Feedback; CEFR Alignment; Literature-Based EFL Writing; Personal Response Writing; Design and Development Research

1. Introduction

In undergraduate EFL literature courses, students are often expected to do more than understand plot, characters, and historical background. They are also expected to explain how they respond to literary texts, connect textual meanings with personal experience, and express interpretation in written English. For many Chinese English-major undergraduates, this type of literature-based writing can be demanding. A personal response to a literary text requires comprehension, interpretation, emotional engagement, textual support, organization, and language control. When classroom instruction remains strongly text-explanatory or assessment-oriented, students may have limited opportunities to practise this kind of response writing through drafting, feedback, and revision.

Digital writing feedback has created new possibilities for supporting this process. Automated writing feedback

(AWF) systems can provide immediate comments on grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and aspects of coherence, allowing learners to notice language problems and revise their writing during the drafting process [1–4]. Recent work on AI-supported and technology-enhanced writing feedback also suggests that digital feedback environments may encourage revision behaviour, self-regulation, and learner engagement when they are embedded within meaningful pedagogical designs rather than used only as scoring or correction tools [3,5,6]. However, the value of AWF in literature-based EFL writing cannot be assumed automatically. A technically accurate response may still be interpretively thin, while a thoughtful personal response may contain language problems that require further support. This tension is particularly visible in personal response writing, where learners need to develop both written English expression and literary meaning-making.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides a useful reference for clarifying writing expectations and developmental progression in this context. CEFR descriptors have been widely used in language curriculum design, assessment, and pedagogy to describe communicative competence and written production across proficiency levels [7,8]. More recently, the CEFR Companion Volume and CEFR alignment guidance have extended the relevance of the framework to creative texts, personal response, interpretation, mediation, and expressive language use [7, 9]. These descriptors are relevant to literature-based EFL writing because they help teachers and learners move beyond grammar-only feedback and consider how students express reactions, opinions, interpretations, and reflective connections with literary texts.

At the same time, CEFR alignment alone does not solve the instructional problem. Literature-based personal response writing requires a structured classroom process through which learners can read, discuss, write, receive feedback, and revise. Reader-Response Theory emphasizes that literary meaning emerges through the interaction between reader and text, shaped by readers' experience, emotion, and interpretation [10]. From this perspective, writing about literature should not be limited to reproducing teacher-provided interpretations. Learners need space to construct personal meanings and test these meanings through discussion and writing. Sociocultural Theory further suggests that writing development is mediated through interaction, scaffolding, tools, and feedback [11,12]. In a technology-enhanced writing environment, automated feedback, teacher feedback, peer discussion, and literary texts can all function as mediational resources, but their roles need to be clearly organized.

This need is especially important because AWF and teacher-supplied feedback do not support the same aspects of writing. AWF may be useful for language-level noticing, repeated submission, and immediate revision support. However, it is less able to judge literary interpretation, emotional nuance, personal voice, or the relevance of textual evidence. Teacher-supplied feedback remains necessary for guiding interpretive depth, rhetorical organization, contextual understanding, and the quality of literary response. Therefore, a blended feedback approach should not simply place automated and teacher feedback side by side. It should clarify how each feedback source contributes to different stages of writing development and how learners are expected to use feedback during revision.

Although previous studies have examined automated feedback, blended feedback, CEFR-oriented instruction, and reader-response pedagogy, fewer studies have brought these elements together in a design that specifically supports literature-based personal response writing among Chinese undergraduate EFL learners. Existing technology-enhanced writing practices often remain focused on general writing accuracy, automated correction, or assessment outcomes. Less attention has been given to how digital feedback can be organized within a literature classroom where students are expected to develop personal interpretation, reflective expression, and feedback-informed revision. This gap indicates the need for a pedagogically structured module that connects literature-based reading, CEFR-informed writing expectations, blended digital writing feedback, and recursive revision.

To address this gap, the present study develops a blended digital writing feedback module for literature-based EFL writing in a British Literature and Appreciation course at a public university in China. The study is positioned as a CEFR-aligned design and development study, with the purpose of constructing and examining a pedagogically usable module rather than testing broad comparative effectiveness. The module draws on Reader-Response Theory, Sociocultural Theory, CEFR-oriented writing descriptors, and blended feedback practices. It is organized through a Presentation–Practice–Production–Reproduction (PPPR) sequence, which guides learners from literary input and classroom interpretation to personal response writing and feedback-supported revision. In this article, the focus is placed on how the module was pedagogically constructed, how automated and teacher feedback were functionally integrated, and how implementation-informed learner reflections helped illuminate its perceived value and limitations in a literature-based EFL writing context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Literature-Based EFL Writing and Personal Response

Literature-based EFL writing requires learners to move beyond textual comprehension and use English to express interpretation, emotional response, and reflective understanding. In undergraduate literature courses, students are often expected to discuss characters, themes, conflicts, and cultural meanings, but they may not always receive sufficient support in transforming these understandings into written personal responses. Personal response writing is therefore both a literary response activity and an EFL writing task. It requires learners to connect textual meanings with their own experiences and perspectives while also organizing ideas clearly and accurately in English.

Reader-Response Theory provides an important foundation for this type of writing. Rosenblatt [10] argues that literary meaning emerges through the transaction between reader and text, shaped by the reader's experience, emotion, and interpretation. From this perspective, learners should not only reproduce teacher-provided interpretations but also construct and express their own meanings. Personal Response Journal (PRJ) writing offers a practical way to apply this principle in literature classrooms. Through PRJ tasks, learners can express reactions, questions, interpretations, emotional responses, and textual connections in written English. Previous studies have suggested that response-based writing can support interpretive awareness, reflection, creativity, and learner engagement in literature learning [13].

However, personal response writing also requires pedagogical guidance. If learners only summarize the plot, their writing may remain descriptive rather than interpretive. If they only express personal feelings without textual grounding, their responses may become disconnected from the literary text. For this reason, literature-based EFL writing needs structured classroom support, including guided discussion, writing prompts, feedback, and revision opportunities. In the present study, personal response writing is treated as a staged and feedback-supported process rather than as a one-time written assignment.

2.2. CEFR-Aligned Blended Digital Writing Feedback

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides a useful reference for aligning writing tasks, feedback criteria, and developmental expectations. CEFR descriptors have been widely used in language teaching, curriculum design, and assessment to describe communicative competence and written production [7–9]. In this study, CEFR is not used simply as a proficiency label. Rather, it functions as a pedagogical alignment tool for clarifying what learners are expected to do when producing literature-based personal responses in English.

The CEFR Companion Volume is particularly relevant because it extends the framework to creative texts, personal response, interpretation, mediation, and expressive language use [7,9]. These descriptors support the design of writing tasks that move beyond grammar-only development. They help connect literary response with written expression by drawing attention to how learners express reactions, explain interpretations, relate texts to personal experience, and organize reflective responses coherently. In this sense, CEFR alignment helps balance two goals of the module: improving learners' written English and supporting their ability to produce meaningful personal responses to literature.

Blended digital writing feedback is used in this study to support this dual goal. Automated writing feedback (AWF) can provide immediate comments on grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and aspects of coherence, enabling learners to notice language problems and revise repeatedly during the writing process [1–4]. However, AWF has limitations in literature-based writing because it cannot fully evaluate interpretation, emotional nuance, personal voice, textual relevance, or reflective depth. Teacher-supplied feedback (TSF) is therefore needed to support the literature-specific dimensions of personal response writing. In the proposed module, AWF and TSF are treated as complementary forms of feedback: AWF supports language-level noticing and self-revision, while TSF supports interpretation, organization, and response quality. Blended feedback is therefore understood as a feedback ecology rather than a simple combination of automated and teacher comments.

2.3. Theoretical Basis for the Module Design

The module design is also informed by Sociocultural Theory, which views learning as a mediated process shaped by interaction, scaffolding, tools, and feedback [11]. In second language writing, learners develop written

expression through classroom dialogue, teacher guidance, peer interaction, feedback interpretation, and revision rather than through independent writing alone [12,13]. This perspective is especially relevant to literature-based EFL writing because learners need to move between literary comprehension, personal interpretation, and written expression.

In the proposed module, mediation occurs through several connected resources. Literary texts provide the content for interpretation. Classroom discussion allows learners to test and compare ideas before writing. Automated feedback directs learners' attention to language-level problems during drafting and revision. Teacher feedback provides interpretive and rhetorical guidance that automated systems cannot fully offer. CEFR-informed expectations help clarify the developmental direction of writing and feedback. Together, these elements support learners' movement from literary engagement to written personal response and then to feedback-informed revision.

The theoretical framework of the study therefore integrates Reader-Response Theory, Sociocultural Theory, CEFR alignment, and blended digital writing feedback. Reader-Response Theory explains why learners should be encouraged to construct personal meanings from literary texts. Sociocultural Theory explains how this writing development can be supported through scaffolding, interaction, tools, and feedback. CEFR alignment provides a reference for writing expectations and feedback criteria. Blended digital writing feedback provides the mechanism through which learners revise and develop their responses. As shown in **Figure 1**, these components together inform the Presentation–Practice–Production–Reproduction (PPPR) sequence used in the module.

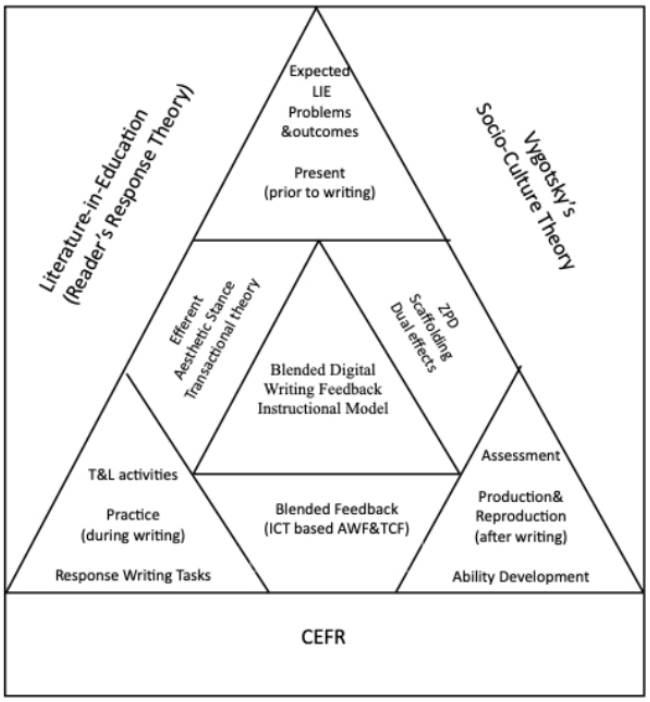


Figure 1. Integrated theoretical framework for the CEFR-aligned blended digital writing feedback module.

3. Methodology and Module Development

3.1. Research Design and Development Orientation

This study adopted a Design and Development Research (DDR) Type I orientation to guide the development of the blended digital writing feedback module for literature-based EFL writing. DDR Type I was selected because the purpose of the study was to design, validate, implement, and evaluate a context-responsive instructional module rather than to generate a new instructional design theory or conduct a controlled experimental comparison [14,15]. The study therefore focused on the practical question of how blended digital writing feedback could be pedagogically organized to support undergraduate EFL learners' personal response writing in a literature course.

The ADDIE framework was used to structure the development process because it provides a systematic but flex-

ible sequence for instructional analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation [16]. In this study, ADDIE was operationalized through three connected phases: Analysis, Design and Development, and Implementation and Evaluation. The Analysis phase explored learners' prior experiences, readiness, and instructional needs in relation to literature-based personal response writing and feedback-supported revision. The Design and Development phase translated learner needs, theoretical principles, CEFR-informed expectations, and feedback functions into a module blueprint. The Implementation and Evaluation phase examined how learners experienced the module after it was embedded in an authentic EFL literature classroom.

This methodological positioning is important for interpreting the findings. The study was not designed to compare the module with a control-group intervention or to make broad statistical claims about writing improvement. Instead, it aimed to provide a design and development account of a CEFR-aligned module and to examine its pedagogical feasibility, learner-perceived value, and implementation constraints. Evidence from learner reflections and supplementary feedback records was therefore used to support contextual evaluation rather than causal effectiveness testing.

3.2. Research Context, Participants, and Data Sources

The study was conducted in a Selected Readings in British Literature course at a public university in China. This course was selected because it naturally involved literary reading, classroom discussion, interpretation, and written response. The module was not introduced as a separate writing course. Instead, it was embedded into the existing literature course as a structured writing-and-feedback layer. This arrangement allowed the module to work within the normal teaching context while adding clearer support for personal response writing, automated feedback use, teacher feedback, and revision.

Participants were involved at different stages of the research process. In the Analysis phase, 24 Chinese undergraduate EFL learners participated in semi-structured focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were appropriate because they allowed learners with shared classroom experiences to discuss their needs, difficulties, and expectations interactively. The interviews explored learners' experiences of literature learning, their difficulties in personal response writing, their previous feedback experiences, and their expectations for blended feedback support.

In the Design and Development phase, five TESL expert validators reviewed the module blueprint and provided written feedback on its pedagogical suitability, design quality, CEFR alignment, literature-based activities, and blended feedback procedures. Expert review was used as a formative validation procedure because instructional products in DDR normally require specialist judgement before classroom implementation [14]. In the Implementation and Evaluation phase, the module was implemented with an intact class of 40 undergraduate EFL learners. Among them, 32 learners submitted valid post-module reflective narratives, which formed the main qualitative evidence for examining learner experience and perceived development.

The study used multiple sources of evidence across the three phases. Focus group interview data informed the identification of learner needs. Expert validation feedback supported module refinement before implementation. Post-module reflective narratives were used to examine learners' perceptions of the module, writing experiences, feedback engagement, and challenges. Supplementary records from Write & Improve and teacher feedback were also considered to understand how learners engaged with automated and teacher-supplied feedback during the writing and revision process. These records were not treated as statistical outcome measures, but as contextual evidence that helped explain how the blended feedback process operated during implementation.

3.3. Development of the Blended Digital Writing Feedback Module

The module was developed by translating learner needs and theoretical principles into classroom procedures. The needs analysis indicated that learners required support in three main areas: understanding and interpreting literary texts, transforming interpretation into personal response writing, and using feedback to revise their writing. These needs shaped the design of the module. Rather than treating personal response writing as a single assignment after reading, the module organized it as a staged process involving literary input, guided response preparation, initial writing, and feedback-supported revision.

The instructional sequence was organized through Presentation, Practice, Production, and Reproduction (PPPR). This sequence adapted the familiar Presentation–Practice–Production structure by adding a fourth stage, Reproduc-

tion. The Presentation stage introduced the literary text, contextual background, key themes, task expectations, and CEFR-informed response focus. The Practice stage provided guided discussion, interpretive questions, response modelling, and preparation for writing. The Production stage required learners to compose an initial personal response journal entry. The Reproduction stage then required learners to revise and resubmit their writing after engaging with automated writing feedback and teacher-supplied feedback. The additional Reproduction stage was central to the module because writing development was treated as a recursive process rather than a one-time submission.

CEFR alignment was built into the module as a pedagogical guide rather than a rigid assessment mechanism. CEFR-informed descriptors were used to clarify expectations for written expression, coherence, personal response, and interpretation of creative texts. In practical terms, this meant that writing tasks encouraged learners to express reactions to literary texts, explain interpretations, connect textual meanings with personal experience, and organize reflective responses in written English. CEFR alignment also informed the feedback design by helping distinguish between general writing support and literature-specific response support.

Blended digital feedback was designed as a complementary feedback system. Automated writing feedback was provided through Write & Improve and mainly supported language-level revision. Its role was to help learners notice and revise issues related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence-level expression, clarity, and general coherence. Teacher-supplied feedback addressed dimensions that automated feedback could not adequately evaluate, including personal interpretation, emotional response, textual connection, organization of ideas, reflective quality, and the overall relevance of the literary response. In this way, the module did not position automated feedback as a replacement for teacher feedback. Instead, automated feedback and teacher feedback were assigned different but connected pedagogical functions.

The module blueprint was reviewed by five TESL expert validators before implementation. Their feedback focused on whether the instructional sequence was feasible, whether the CEFR alignment was clear, whether the blended feedback procedures were appropriate, and whether the module could support literature-based personal response writing in the selected EFL context. Expert comments were used to refine the module before classroom implementation. These refinements helped clarify the writing tasks, feedback roles, instructional stages, and teacher guidance needed to support learners during the module.

3.4. Data Analysis, Validation, and Trustworthiness

The study adopted a qualitative-dominant approach to data analysis. Focus group interview data from the Analysis phase were analysed thematically to identify learners' instructional needs, writing difficulties, feedback expectations, and readiness for blended feedback-supported personal response writing. Thematic analysis was appropriate because it enabled recurring meanings and patterns to be identified across qualitative data while still allowing attention to context-specific interpretation [17]. Expert validation feedback was also analysed thematically, with attention to recurring comments on pedagogical suitability, CEFR alignment, task design, feedback procedures, and implementation feasibility. These findings informed the refinement of the module blueprint.

The 32 valid post-module reflective narratives were analysed to examine learners' experiences during implementation. The analysis began with repeated reading of the reflections to identify meaningful units related to literature learning, personal response writing, automated feedback, teacher feedback, revision behaviour, confidence, anxiety, and perceived writing development. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories, including learning experience in literature-based writing, perceived development in personal response writing, engagement with blended feedback, and challenges encountered during implementation. The analysis focused on recurring patterns across learner reflections rather than isolated statements.

Supplementary records from Write & Improve and teacher feedback were used to support interpretation of the reflective data. Write & Improve records helped indicate how learners interacted with automated feedback during drafting and revision, while teacher feedback records helped show the types of literature-specific support provided during the module. These supplementary records were used for triangulation, not for statistical comparison. They helped contextualize learners' reflections and provided additional evidence of how the blended feedback ecology operated in practice.

Several procedures were used to strengthen trustworthiness. First, the module was informed by multiple sources, including learner needs analysis, theoretical literature, CEFR-informed descriptors, expert validation, and implementation evidence. Second, expert validation provided formative review of the module before implemen-

tation. Third, the use of multiple data sources supported triangulation across learner reflections, automated feedback records, and teacher feedback records. Triangulation was used to strengthen the credibility of interpretation by comparing evidence from different data sources. Fourth, participant responses were anonymized, and findings were reported through recurring themes rather than personally identifiable information. Finally, the study remained transparent about its design-oriented scope. It did not claim broad statistical generalizability, but instead presented contextually grounded evidence of module development, learner-perceived value, and pedagogical feasibility in a literature-based EFL writing context.

4. Module Design and Implementation Findings

Before presenting the implementation findings, **Figure 2** provides an overview of the developed blended digital writing feedback module. The figure illustrates how the theoretical foundations, instructional sequence, feedback mechanisms, learner engagement, and intended writing development outcomes were integrated into a coherent module structure. It shows that the module was not designed as a linear writing activity, but as a staged and recursive process in which literature-based input, guided response preparation, automated writing feedback, teacher-supplied feedback, and revision were connected to support learners' personal response writing.

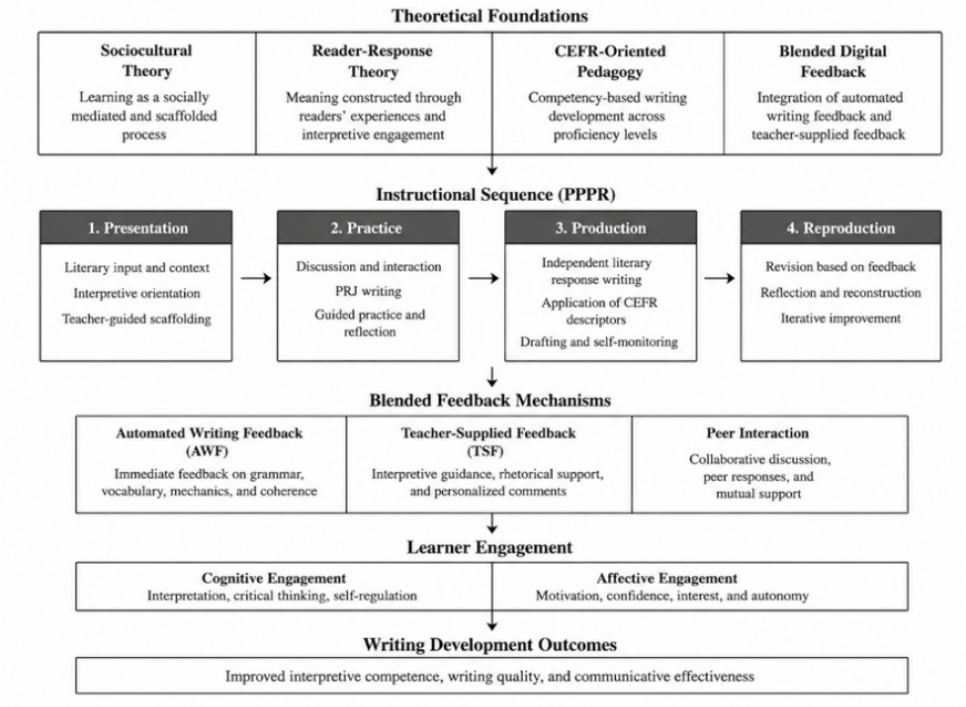


Figure 2. Blended Digital Writing Feedback Module for Literature-Based EFL Writing.

4.1. From Learner Needs to Module Design Principles

The design of the module began with the instructional problems identified in the needs analysis. Learners did not simply require more writing assignments. They needed clearer support in moving from literary reading to personal response writing, organizing interpretive ideas in English, and using feedback to revise their writing. Many learners were familiar with reading literary texts for plot, characters, themes, and classroom discussion, but they had fewer structured opportunities to transform these understandings into personal, reflective, and textually grounded written responses. This finding was consistent with the design logic of DDR, in which learner needs and contextual constraints are translated into instructional specifications before implementation [14,15].

Three design principles were therefore established. First, the module needed to provide literary and interpretive scaffolding before writing. This included background explanation, guided reading, discussion questions, response preparation, and clarification of task expectations. Second, personal response writing needed to be made explicit. Learners needed to understand that a personal response should not be limited to plot summary or general

opinion, but should include interpretation, emotional reaction, textual connection, and organized written expression. Third, the module needed to include feedback-supported revision. Learners required opportunities to revise their writing after receiving both immediate language-level feedback and teacher guidance on literature-specific response quality.

These principles shaped the module as a writing-and-feedback layer embedded within the existing literature course. The module was not designed to replace the course syllabus or literary content. Instead, it added a structured process through which learners could read, discuss, write, receive feedback, and revise. This design decision was important because the course already provided the literary materials and classroom context, while the module added a clearer pathway for developing literature-based personal response writing.

4.2. Operational Structure of the Module

The module was organized through a Presentation–Practice–Production–Reproduction (PPPR) sequence. The sequence was adapted from the familiar Presentation–Practice–Production structure, but it added a fourth stage, Reproduction, to make feedback-supported revision a required part of the instructional process. Presentation introduced the literary text, relevant background, key themes, characters, conflicts, and the writing focus for the unit. Practice provided space for guided interpretation through discussion questions, model responses, and collaborative preparation for writing. Production required learners to compose an initial personal response journal entry. Reproduction required learners to revise and resubmit their writing after engaging with automated writing feedback and teacher-supplied feedback.

The addition of Reproduction was central to the module because literature-based writing development was treated as recursive rather than linear. In a traditional staged lesson, writing may end after learners produce a text. In this module, the first draft was treated as a starting point for feedback engagement and rewriting. This design reflected process-oriented views of writing as a developmental activity shaped by drafting, feedback, revision, and further writing [12,18]. It also responded to the learner need for more sustained revision opportunities in literature-based writing.

CEFR alignment was incorporated into both writing task design and feedback design. At the task level, CEFR-informed expectations helped clarify that learners were expected to express reactions to literary texts, explain personal interpretations, connect textual meanings with personal experience, and organize reflective responses in written English. At the feedback level, CEFR-informed criteria helped distinguish between general writing development and literature-specific response development. The CEFR Companion Volume was particularly useful because it includes descriptors related to creative texts, personal response, interpretation, mediation, and expressive language use [7,9].

Blended digital writing feedback was designed as a complementary feedback system. Automated writing feedback through Write & Improve mainly supported language-level revision, including grammar, vocabulary, sentence-level expression, clarity, and general coherence. Teacher-supplied feedback addressed dimensions that automated feedback could not adequately judge, including personal interpretation, emotional response, textual relevance, organization of ideas, reflective depth, and overall response quality. This division of feedback roles was consistent with recent research suggesting that AI-supported and hybrid feedback are most useful when embedded within a broader pedagogical system that supports learner judgement, feedback uptake, and revision rather than functioning as an isolated source of correction [19,20].

The resulting feedback arrangement positioned automated feedback and teacher feedback as complementary rather than interchangeable. Automated feedback provided immediacy and repeated opportunities for self-revision, while teacher feedback provided contextual, interpretive, and pedagogical mediation. This distinction was important for literature-based EFL writing because a response could be linguistically improved but still lack interpretive depth, or it could contain meaningful interpretation while still requiring language-level revision. Recent comparisons of teacher, peer, and AI feedback sources also suggest that different feedback sources may support learning differently, which reinforces the need to define their functions rather than assuming that one source can replace another [21].

4.3. Expert Validation and Module Refinement

Before classroom implementation, the module blueprint was reviewed by five TESL expert validators. The expert review served as formative validation, which is a common procedure in design and development research for improving the suitability, clarity, and feasibility of instructional products before they are used in authentic learning contexts [14,15]. The experts evaluated the module in relation to pedagogical suitability, CEFR alignment, literature-based task design, blended feedback procedures, and overall instructional coherence.

Overall, the expert feedback supported the pedagogical value of the module while also indicating areas requiring refinement. The experts agreed that the module was relevant to the needs of undergraduate EFL learners in literature-based writing contexts because it connected literary engagement, writing production, feedback, and revision. They also recognized the value of combining automated feedback with teacher feedback, particularly because automated systems could support language-level revision while teacher feedback remained necessary for literary interpretation and response quality.

Several refinements were made in response to expert suggestions. First, the PRJ writing tasks were clarified so that learners would understand the difference between summary, personal response, and literary interpretation. Second, CEFR-informed expectations were made more explicit in the writing and feedback procedures. Third, the distinction between automated writing feedback and teacher-supplied feedback was strengthened. Automated feedback was positioned as support for general writing features, while teacher feedback was positioned as support for literature-specific personal response quality. Fourth, teacher guidance was emphasized more clearly in the Presentation and Practice stages to ensure that learners were not expected to interpret and write independently without preparation.

These refinements strengthened the operational clarity of the module. They also helped address the risk that blended feedback could become fragmented if learners did not understand how to use different feedback sources. As a result, the validated module presented a more coherent pathway from literary input to response preparation, initial writing, automated feedback, teacher feedback, and revised reproduction.

4.4. Implementation-Informed Learner Responses

The implementation phase provided evidence of how learners experienced the module in practice. The analysis of 32 valid post-module reflective narratives suggested that learners perceived the module as useful in supporting literature-based personal response writing, particularly because it made the writing process more structured. Several learners reported that guided discussion and response preparation helped them understand literary themes more deeply before writing. Others indicated that repeated writing and revision helped them become more aware of organization, expression, and the relationship between personal ideas and textual evidence.

Learners also described the value of automated writing feedback for language-level revision. Write & Improve was perceived as useful because it provided immediate feedback and allowed learners to revise repeatedly before submitting or finalizing their writing. This immediacy helped some learners notice grammar problems, vocabulary repetition, unclear sentences, and coherence issues. In this sense, automated feedback appeared to support self-monitoring and revision awareness. However, learners also recognized that automated feedback was limited when the writing involved literary interpretation, personal meaning, or emotional nuance. This finding supports previous concerns that automated feedback tools are more effective for surface-level language support than for evaluating complex meaning or rhetorical appropriateness [22,23].

Teacher-supplied feedback was perceived as important for the literature-specific dimensions of personal response writing. Learners reported that teacher comments helped them reconsider interpretation, clarify the connection between personal response and the literary text, improve organization, and develop deeper reflection. This finding suggests that teacher feedback remained central to the module, especially where learners needed support for meaning-making rather than only error correction. The learner responses therefore confirmed the design assumption that automated feedback and teacher feedback should not be treated as competing sources of correction. Instead, they supported different parts of the writing process.

The reflective narratives also revealed affective dimensions of implementation. Some learners initially felt uncertain about writing personal responses in English because they were concerned about language accuracy, literary interpretation, or whether their responses were appropriate. However, the staged structure of the module

and the availability of feedback appeared to reduce some of this uncertainty. Learners could discuss ideas before writing, use automated feedback to revise language, and rely on teacher feedback for more complex interpretive guidance. At the same time, some challenges remained. Learners still needed support in deciding which automated suggestions to accept, how to balance personal voice with textual evidence, and how to revise beyond surface-level correction.

Overall, the implementation findings suggest that the module was pedagogically feasible and meaningful within the selected literature-based EFL writing context. The findings do not establish broad causal effectiveness, nor do they claim that the module would produce the same outcomes across all EFL settings. Rather, they show how a CEFR-aligned blended digital writing feedback module can organize literature-based personal response writing through staged instruction, complementary feedback, and recursive revision. The implementation evidence therefore supports the module as a context-responsive instructional design with potential relevance for similar EFL literature classrooms.

5. Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study show that the value of the module lies not only in combining literature-based writing with digital feedback, but also in organizing these elements into a usable instructional process. In many EFL literature classrooms, students are asked to read literary texts and discuss meanings, but the movement from reading to personal response writing is often not explicitly supported. The module addressed this issue by creating a structured pathway from literary input to guided interpretation, initial response writing, and feedback-supported revision. In this sense, the main contribution of the study is not the claim that one instructional model is universally effective, but the development of a context-responsive module that makes literature-based writing and feedback engagement more teachable.

The PPPR sequence was important because it gave revision a formal place in the module. The Presentation and Practice stages helped learners prepare for writing by engaging with literary content, discussion, and response ideas. The Production stage allowed learners to transform interpretation into written English. The Reproduction stage then required learners to revisit their writing after receiving feedback. This sequence is pedagogically meaningful because literature-based personal response writing is not a simple transfer of ideas from reading to writing. Learners need time to interpret texts, express personal meanings, notice language problems, and refine their responses. By adding Reproduction to the familiar Presentation–Practice–Production sequence, the module treated revision as part of learning rather than as a final correction activity.

The findings also highlight the importance of distinguishing the roles of automated writing feedback and teacher-supplied feedback. Automated feedback was useful because it provided immediate and repeatable language-level support. Learners could identify grammar problems, vocabulary repetition, unclear sentences, and general coherence issues before or during revision. This helped reduce the burden on teacher feedback and encouraged learners to take more responsibility for first-stage language revision. However, automated feedback was not sufficient for literature-based personal response writing. It could not adequately evaluate whether a learner's interpretation was meaningful, whether the response was connected to the literary text, or whether the writing showed emotional and reflective depth.

Teacher feedback therefore remained central to the module. In this study, teacher-supplied feedback supported the dimensions of writing that required human judgement, including interpretation, organization, textual relevance, personal voice, and reflective response quality. This finding reinforces the idea that digital feedback should not be understood as a replacement for teacher mediation. Rather, the pedagogical value of blended digital writing feedback depends on how different feedback sources are assigned appropriate functions. Automated feedback can support linguistic noticing and self-revision, while teacher feedback can support meaning-making, rhetorical development, and literature-specific response quality. Recent studies on AI-supported feedback similarly suggest that feedback source, learner uptake, and pedagogical framing shape whether students actually use feedback productively [20,21,24–27].

The study also contributes to CEFR-aligned writing pedagogy by showing how CEFR descriptors may be used as design resources rather than only as assessment labels. In the module, CEFR alignment helped clarify expectations for written expression, coherence, personal response, and interpretation of creative texts. This was useful because literature-based personal response writing requires both linguistic development and literary engagement.

If feedback focuses only on grammar, learners may produce more accurate but less meaningful responses. If feedback focuses only on personal interpretation, learners may not develop sufficient control over written English. The CEFR-aligned design therefore helped balance attention to language quality and response quality.

Another implication concerns learner support in literature-based EFL writing. The implementation findings suggest that learners may benefit from a staged process that reduces the difficulty of personal response writing. Guided discussion before writing can help learners develop confidence in interpretation. Automated feedback can support immediate revision and self-monitoring. Teacher feedback can guide deeper reflection and textual grounding. Together, these forms of support may help learners move beyond plot summary and teacher-dependent interpretation toward more personally meaningful and organized written responses.

For teachers, the module offers a practical way to integrate digital feedback into literature instruction without allowing technology to dominate the learning process. Digital feedback is most useful when it is placed within a clear instructional sequence and connected to teacher guidance. Teachers can use AWF to support first-stage language revision, while reserving teacher feedback for higher-order response quality, organization, interpretation, and reflection. This arrangement may be especially useful in university EFL classrooms where teachers face time constraints but still need to support learners' writing development.

At the same time, the implementation findings also show that learners need guidance in using automated feedback. Some learners may focus too heavily on correcting surface-level errors, while others may be uncertain about which automated suggestions to accept. This means that feedback literacy should be built into blended digital feedback instruction [19,28,29]. Learners need to understand that automated feedback is a resource for revision, not an unquestionable authority. They also need to learn how to compare automated suggestions with their intended meaning, teacher feedback, task expectations, and the literary purpose of the response.

Overall, the study suggests that blended digital feedback can support literature-based EFL writing when it is integrated into a coherent pedagogical design. The module developed in this study connects literary reading, personal response writing, CEFR-informed expectations, automated feedback, teacher feedback, and revision. Its value lies in this integration. Rather than treating digital feedback as a stand-alone technology, the module positions it as one part of a broader teacher-mediated feedback ecology for developing personal response writing in EFL literature classrooms.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in one public university in China and within one undergraduate EFL literature course. The findings are therefore context-specific and should not be generalized statistically to all EFL writing or literature-learning contexts. However, this limitation is consistent with the design and development orientation of the study, which aimed to develop and examine a context-responsive instructional module within an authentic classroom setting rather than to test a universal intervention across multiple institutions.

Second, the implementation evidence was based mainly on 32 valid post-module learner reflective narratives, supported by Write & Improve records and teacher feedback records. These data provided useful insight into learners' perceived writing development, feedback engagement, and implementation experiences, but they did not constitute a controlled measurement of writing improvement. Future studies could strengthen the empirical basis of the module by including pre- and post-writing samples, independent scoring, revision-tracking data, classroom observation, or comparison with another instructional approach.

Third, the study did not include a control group or longitudinal follow-up. As a result, it cannot determine whether the module produced stronger outcomes than traditional literature-based writing instruction or whether learners' perceived development was sustained over time. Future research may examine the module through quasi-experimental or mixed-method designs, larger participant groups, and delayed post-intervention measures. Such studies could provide more robust evidence regarding writing development, feedback uptake, and long-term learner autonomy.

Fourth, although the study clarified the complementary roles of automated writing feedback and teacher-supplied feedback, it did not isolate the independent effect of each feedback source. In practice, the value of the module emerged from the interaction between literary tasks, classroom discussion, automated feedback, teacher feedback, and revision. Future research could examine how learners make decisions when automated feedback and

teacher feedback differ, how they prioritize feedback during revision, and how feedback literacy develops across repeated writing cycles.

Finally, the CEFR-aligned design was adapted to literature-based personal response writing within the selected EFL context. Although CEFR descriptors provided useful guidance for writing expectations and feedback criteria, their application to literary response writing still requires contextual interpretation. Further studies may refine CEFR-adapted rubrics for personal response writing, compare their use across proficiency levels, and examine how teachers and learners understand CEFR-informed feedback in different EFL literature classrooms.

7. Conclusion

This study developed a blended digital writing feedback module for literature-based EFL writing through a CEFR-aligned design and development approach. Guided by DDR Type I and the ADDIE framework, the study translated learner needs, literature-based writing requirements, CEFR-informed expectations, and blended feedback functions into a structured instructional module. The module was organized through a Presentation–Practice–Production–Reproduction sequence, which supported learners' movement from literary input and guided interpretation to personal response writing and feedback-informed revision.

The study contributes to technology-enhanced EFL writing pedagogy by showing how automated writing feedback and teacher-supplied feedback can be integrated within a literature-based writing module. Automated feedback supported immediate language-level noticing and repeated revision, while teacher feedback supported interpretation, organization, textual connection, reflective depth, and personal response quality. The findings therefore suggest that the pedagogical value of blended digital feedback lies not in replacing teacher judgement, but in coordinating different feedback sources within a teacher-mediated feedback ecology.

The study also contributes to CEFR-aligned literature-based writing instruction. Rather than using CEFR only as a proficiency label, the module used CEFR-informed descriptors to guide writing task design, feedback criteria, and developmental expectations. This helped connect learners' language development with their ability to produce personal, interpretive, and reflective responses to literary texts.

Overall, the study offers a context-responsive design and development account of how blended digital writing feedback can be organized for literature-based EFL writing. While further empirical validation is needed, the module provides a pedagogically grounded pathway for integrating literary engagement, personal response writing, automated feedback, teacher feedback, CEFR alignment, and recursive revision in undergraduate EFL literature instruction.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, T.L., A.A.A., and N.A.S.; methodology, T.L., A.A.A., and N.A.S.; module design and development, T.L.; validation, T.L.; formal analysis, T.L.; investigation, T.L.; data curation, T.L.; writing—original draft preparation, T.L.; writing—review and editing, T.L., A.A.A., and N.A.S.; supervision, A.A.A. and N.A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee before data collection.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw from the study. Participant identities were anonymized in all reporting.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical and confidentiality considerations involving student participants. Relevant anonymized data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to institutional and ethical restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Use Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT solely for language refinement and editorial polishing. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation, literature selection, research design, or generation of scientific content. All AI-assisted language outputs were critically reviewed, revised, and approved by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity, originality, and accuracy of the work.

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