

# INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

## The Effectiveness of and Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback: A Vietnam Action Research Project

# RUPKATHA JOURNAL

ON INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN HUMANITIES



ISSN 0975-2935

### About the Journal

<b>Journal DOI</b>	<a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha">https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha</a>
<b>Journal Home</b>	<a href="http://www.rupkatha.com">www.rupkatha.com</a>
<b>Indexed by</b>	<a href="#">Scopus</a> <a href="#">Web of Science: ESCI</a> <a href="#">DOAJ</a>

### About the Issue

<b>Themed issue</b>	<b>Volume 15, number 1, 2023   Current and Future Directions in TESOL Studies</b>
<b>Edited by</b>	<b>Dr John R. Baker</b>
<b>Issue DOI</b>	<a href="https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v15n1">https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v15n1</a>
<b>TOC</b>	<a href="https://rupkatha.com/v15n1.php">https://rupkatha.com/v15n1.php</a>

### About the Article

<b>Title</b>	<b>The Effectiveness of and Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback: A Vietnam Action Research Project</b>	
<b>Author/s</b>	Phan Thi Ngoc Le	
<b>Affiliation</b>	VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam	
<b>Author ID</b>	<a href="#">0000-0002-2337-9135</a>	
<b>DOI</b>	<a href="https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v15n1.09">https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v15n1.09</a>	<b>Pages:</b> 1-22
<b>Abstract</b>	<a href="https://rupkatha.com/v15n109">https://rupkatha.com/v15n109</a>	
<b>Full-text PDF</b>	<a href="https://rupkatha.com/V15/n1/v15n109.pdf">https://rupkatha.com/V15/n1/v15n109.pdf</a>	
<b>Article History</b>	<b>First Published: 23 May 2023</b>	
<b>Article Impact</b>	<a href="#">Check Dynamic Impact</a>	
<b>Copyright</b>	<a href="#">Aesthetics Media Services</a>	

# The Effectiveness of and Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback: A Vietnam Action Research Project

Phan Thi Ngoc Le

VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam. ORCID: 0000-0002-2337-9135. Email: lehang6778@gmail.com

---

## Abstract

The utilization of peer feedback is an established and growing global trend. However, it has been less employed and explored in the Vietnamese context. Therefore, this action research study explored the effectiveness of peer feedback on students' writing and perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. In the first phase, a pre-test and post-test design was employed to explore how student performance changed after receiving peer feedback. After that, questionnaires and interviews were conducted to explore this phenomenon further. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group, and students had positive perceptions toward peer feedback concerning learning strategies, attitudes, motivation, and self-esteem. Reported disadvantages included students' lack of writing and assessment knowledge. The results can potentially inform scholars and teachers interested in implementing peer feedback in the Vietnamese context.

**Keywords:** Peer feedback, writing skill, action research, Vietnamese students

## 1. Introduction

Writing is a key component in educational settings (Al-Shboul et al., 2023), and one that necessitates that learners generate quality written texts (Uli et al., 2022), both to achieve academic success and for their future careers (Osama, 2021). However, many students struggle to write in a second language, as mistakes are a natural component of language learning (Nguyen & Phan, 2023). Related to this is the question of evaluation and feedback in that teachers' assessments of students' mistakes are not always accurate (Orsmond & Merry, 2006) and may be subject to teacher bias (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). As such, it would be prudent to explore learning achievement further using additional sources, such as peer feedback.

The effectiveness of peer feedback has been a major topic of discussion in the educational community. From very early studies, Falchikov (1995) defined peer feedback as a method in which students evaluate their peers' work, which may or may not involve an agreed-upon set of criteria among teachers and students. More specifically, peer feedback is where students consider the "amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success" of peers' work (Topping, 1998. p. 50), and where they offer a rating and/or comments and may be evaluated on the quality of their appraisals (Davies, 2006).

Peer feedback has also been addressed in English foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning contexts, where it has been shown to be beneficial in teaching and improving writing abilities since it reduces EFL teachers' workload while improving students' writing skills (Pham et al., 2020). Furthermore, peer feedback produces positive results by identifying strengths, flaws, and recommendations for improvement (Meletiadou, 2021). It has also been shown that students trust that peer feedback can facilitate learning and motivation (Wu & Schunn, 2021). Another advantage is that it is available in greater quantities and offered with more timeliness than teacher feedback (Huisman et al., 2019)

The utilization of peer feedback is an established and growing global trend (Yu & Lee, 2016b), and an increasing number of studies have explored its application within the Vietnamese educational context. Nevertheless, each university has a distinct context characterized by evolving demands in diverse teaching situations. Consequently, an action research study focusing on both the effectiveness of peer feedback and students' perceptions remains prudent, as action research endeavors to facilitate the identification of specific challenges and generate viable solutions tailored to address the needs arising within specific teaching contexts.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Review of Studies on the Effectiveness and Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback in International Settings**

Trends in language instruction have followed advancements in mainstream L1 educational practice, as there has been a paradigmatic shift away from teacher-centered learning towards more individualized or participatory models (Nunan, 2000). Peer feedback, for instance, is essential to successful language learning (Amal & Lubna, 2022), and one of the elements that help establish a learning environment where students can advance their knowledge and abilities (Arshad & Alam, 2022).

International studies have examined peer feedback's effects on second language learning, emphasizing how peer feedback can boost students' writing abilities. Lundstrom and Baker (2009) argued students' writing abilities improve when they understand the requirements of writing evaluations. Almahasneh and Abdul-Hamid (2019) found that students who understand writing assessment criteria produce better drafts than those who received traditional writing instruction. Furthermore, Huisman et al. (2018) reported that undergraduates' final writing samples improved when they received or provided peer feedback about content, structure, and style. In line with this, Herwiana (2021) showed that peer feedback can help learners improve their grammar and vocabulary. Regarding motivational effects, Vahid and Hossein (2016) provided empirical evidence that peer feedback played a critical role in increasing students' academic motivation. Additionally, Liang (2006) asserted that a fair, supportive, and welcoming assessment environment can help students better understand learning objectives.

Literature has also examined students' perceptions of peer feedback, and numerous studies have found that students hold favorable opinions regarding this practice. For instance, Tang's (1999)

early studies indicated that students' attitudes toward peer feedback become increasingly positive as they effectively engage with it throughout the semester. Additionally, they actively participate in various cognitive, social, and language tasks during peer work. Lee (1997) likewise noted that students developed positive attitudes toward peer feedback, especially when teachers incorporate it as a regular class activity. Furthermore, Farah (2012) demonstrated that students' positive attitudes toward peer feedback enhance critical thinking, originality, motivation, and confidence. Similarly, students find peer input valuable, perceiving it to reduce nervousness (Bilki & Irgin, 2021). Yu and Hu (2017) reported that participants were motivated to use peer feedback based on the assertive nature of peers' shared thoughts. Moreover, Yu and Lee (2016a) reported that many students expressed satisfaction with their classmates' feedback and subsequently chose to revise their initial writings based on those comments.

While numerous studies have shown the benefits of peer feedback, some have raised concerns. Brown (2004), for instance, demonstrated that students might perceive their lack of knowledge as a weakness, while Tahir (2012) described a lack of students' confidence when providing feedback. Likewise, Muamaroh and Ulya (2021) explained that students feared their comments might be incorrect or inappropriate, leading to wariness in giving feedback. In addition, Freeman (1995) and Kwan and Leung (1996) highlighted another negative aspect: Students consistently gave less capable peers higher ratings than better ones, and Rouhi and Azizian (2013) asserted that students' negative attitudes about peer feedback might cause them to be unfair to peers, resulting in overly critical remarks. Additionally, Ashenafi (2017) found that students were skeptical of their peers' feedback, whereas Carless (2006) and Eksi (2012) showed that students were dissatisfied with their peers' opinions, and Wang (2004) explained confidence in peers' feedback reduced over time. Additionally, Nelson (2004) added that peers' comments could lead to confusion and the author's resistance to revisions (Nelson, 2004).

Overall, numerous studies worldwide have demonstrated the effectiveness of peer feedback and students' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of the approach.

## **2.2 Review of Studies on the Effectiveness and Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback in Vietnam**

Although peer feedback is an established and growing global trend (Yu & Lee, 2016b), it is still relatively new in Vietnam. The traditional approach to teaching and learning in Vietnam, which strongly emphasizes the teacher-centered approach, remains dominant and poses hurdles to the adoption of more modern ideas and methodologies. Thus, peer feedback is a concept that most Vietnamese students are unfamiliar with. Nevertheless, both teaching and learning have undergone modifications because of current educational reforms. As a result, some academic institutions, including schools and universities, have attempted to promote peer feedback in English language teaching and curricula.

In the Vietnamese context, the effectiveness of peer feedback has also received moderate attention in the literature. Pham and Nguyen (2014), for instance, found peer feedback to be an efficient technique for helping learners modify their drafts. Similarly, Le and Phan (2014) showed that peer feedback improves students' writing skills, particularly in grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, Dong (2018) analyzed first-year students' writing to investigate the impact of peer

feedback on students' writing performance, finding that students significantly improved their writing ability after receiving peer feedback. Likewise, Nguyen (2022) found that participants who received peer feedback outperformed those who received traditional feedback.

Literature has also addressed students' perceptions of peer feedback in the Vietnamese context. Nguyen (2012), for instance, investigated Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions of peer feedback, arguing that peer comments result in substantive revisions of written drafts. Likewise, Le and Truong (2018) and Nguyen (2022) observed positive student attitudes toward peer feedback, and Dong (2018) indicated that students were satisfied with peer feedback and that a high percentage would continue using it. Additionally, Pham et al. (2020) found that students trust peer feedback to improve their writing quality regarding content, organization, and grammar/structure.

Converse to studies demonstrating students' positive perceptions of peer feedback, some studies have presented opposing views. For instance, Bui (2000) showed that students often provide general comments, finding it challenging to give critical feedback. Similar findings were reported by Nguyen (2008), who highlighted that students paid limited attention to the structural aspects of feedback. Furthermore, Pham (2016) found that students exhibited reticence due to low language competencies, while Vo (2022) and Nguyen (2023) indicated that students have a preference for teacher feedback.

A limited amount of research has also been conducted at the site of this action research study, Vietnam National University (VNU). Pham (2016), for instance, observed that although students struggle to identify errors and provide suggestions for their peers' work, they still engage in the process. More positively, Dong (2016) found that students achieve significant improvements and hold positive attitudes.

## **2.3 Research Gap**

According to prior studies, peer feedback is a promising approach but has received contradictory results regarding learners' views globally and in Vietnam. A similarly incomplete picture emerges by examining the limited literature undertaken at the target institution. Accepting the value of action research and its worth to the target context, this study has implications for informing pedagogy and curriculum at the target institution. Following this, two research questions were posed:

1. What is the effectiveness of peer feedback on students' writing at VNU?
2. What are students' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback at VNU?

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1.1 Research Study Design**

This study adopted an action research approach. According to Riedy et al. (2023), action research has enormous potential as a technique and is an instructional strategy that equips and encourages

students to engage in transformative activities. Action research is carried out subject to a specific teaching situation when teachers have to be responsive to the changing situation's demands.

I was assigned to instruct VNU second-year students for the second semester of the academic year 2021–2022. An intact class design was applied. Twenty second-year students took part. The study was conducted during 15 weeks of writing lessons in the second semester. The writing lessons were intended to help students approach how to write an argumentative paragraph. In learning the argumentative paragraph, students in groups of three exchanged their first draft and responded to their peer's writing. After revising the first draft based on their peer's comments, students exchanged the revised first draft with another peer in the group and continued to comment on version two of their peer's writing. In the final stage, each student revised the paragraph into a final draft, focusing on six areas: topic sentence, main ideas, concluding sentence, unity and coherence, grammar, and vocabulary.

Specifically, students learned paragraph writing in weeks 1 and 2. In week 3's pre-test, they wrote their paragraphs. Beginning in week 4, they were familiarized with the ideas and methods of peer feedback and editing based on evaluation criteria. In week 5, each student wrote the first draft of a given topic, and students in groups of 3 exchanged their first draft and practiced assessing their peer's writing. For the homework of week 5, students revised the first draft based on their peer's comments. In week 6, students exchanged the completed first draft with another peer in the group and continued to provide feedback to their peers on version two of their paragraph. The final draft was produced in week 7, which was expected to improve in the six above criteria after revisions based on peer comments. From week ten onwards, students participated in questionnaires and interviews.

### **3.1.2 Ethical Considerations for the Study**

Ethical issues were carefully considered for this study. First, all the students were informed about the implementation of the peer feedback activity from the first session of the semester. I gave them an explanation of the research goal and methodology. I also explained to them how the information from the pre-tests and the post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews would be compiled and used for the research. They consented to help me carry out this study after asking a few clarification questions. Second, the students were given an informed-consent form. All 20 students voluntarily participated. In addition, I guaranteed them that I would be the only one to see and use the data from the questionnaires and interviews. Additionally, all participants were given pseudonyms. Therefore, data confidentiality and student anonymity were assured.

## **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

### **3.2.1 Pre-tests and Post-tests**

Pre and post-test evaluations were employed to assess students' progress after joining in peer feedback activities. Six criteria (topic sentence, main ideas, concluding sentence, unity, and coherence, grammar, vocabulary), based on the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (Nguyen, 2020) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and aligned rating schemes such as IELTS (Council of Europe, 2001) were used to score the

pre-test and post-test. To further analyze the data, I calculated and compared the percentage of respondents who made errors on each criterion during the pre-test and post-test.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was used as a primary tool to gather accurate and valid data, as standardized data collection is made possible by the questionnaire as the main and dominant method of collecting quantitative data (Taherdoost, 2022). Therefore, questionnaires were relevant and appropriate for my study as well as highly effective in terms of time, effort, and financial resources (Krosnick, 2018). In addition, a questionnaire provided a quick and efficient way to gather data from many participants. Therefore, the research has a higher degree of external validity.

The questionnaire was conducted in my English class at VNU, a group of twenty second-year students I had been working with since the beginning of the year: seventeen females and three males, ranging from 19 to 21. This group of students had passed the English course at CEFR level B1, equivalent to level 3 according to the 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam. For this course, they aimed to achieve the B2 output standard (equivalent to level 4).

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was divided into two parts, which addressed the two research questions. Part 1 consisted of 15 subsections and examined the main advantages of peer feedback. Part 1 is in a tick-box format. I proposed some main benefits of peer feedback for students to choose from (multiple answers can be selected) to investigate which aspects of peer feedback students felt could benefit them most. Part 2 explored the disadvantages of peer feedback. Participants were required to rate 12 statements on a 5-point Likert scale (never, only occasionally, sometimes, usually, always). A Likert scale was used to reflect the views and actions of the participants (Bouranta et al., 2009). I used two different formats for the two parts of the questionnaire to increase the variety of question types, thereby increasing the respondents' interest. The language of the questionnaires was graded to simple English, so the participants could easily understand. The two-page questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes. These characteristics made it easier to collect and analyze data and gather information.

The questionnaire explored the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback mentioned in the literature review section. To develop the questionnaire, I followed Harlacher's (2016) five-step process. First, I determined the goal of the questionnaire to be to explore the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback. The second step is to examine each goal and create a list of the information required to address that goal. At this step, I based on the theoretical framework of advantages and disadvantages from the studies discussed in the literature review. Moving to the third step - writing the questions, I estimated how many questions to include. A two-page questionnaire is convenient so students can complete it within a 15-minute break. When drafting the questions, I also attended to Harlacher's (2016) guidelines to ensure clarity and avoid bias. In the fourth step, to review and revise the questionnaire for alignment with goals, I piloted the questionnaires with five second-year students before distributing the questionnaires to the whole class. After that, I made some adjustments to the layout of the questionnaire and the wording of several questions to avoid possible ambiguity and misunderstanding. The last step was administration. As I am the teacher for this group, I distributed the questionnaire directly in class

so participants could complete it during the break. To ensure data reliability, the Spearman-Brown formula was used as a split-half method to check the reliability coefficient. In this case, the Spearman-Brown reliability ( $R_{sb}$ ) is high with  $R_{sb} = 0.98$ , which is higher than the value of 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that the obtained data is reliable.

### **3.2.3 Interviews**

Interviewing was used as a research tool together with the questionnaire to further explore the phenomena (Nunan, 1992), as interviews are one of the most promising ways of collecting qualitative data (Taherdoost, 2022). Therefore, interviews are helpful for learning the details of participants' experiences. Specifically, interviewing was used as a follow-up with a sample of the questionnaire respondents to further investigate their responses.

Seven students participated in semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were created using emerging topics from the questionnaire. The interview schedule included two primary questions associated with the two research questions. In addition, there were follow-up questions on each main topic to elicit detailed information from the respondents. Before the interview, participants received a study summary and an explanation of the pertinent details. The interview was conducted in a relaxing and informal manner to help the participants feel at ease. The choice of what language to use was offered to the students (English/Vietnamese). They all decided to speak Vietnamese.

## **3.3 Data Analysis Methods**

### **3.3.1 Phase 1 – Questionnaire**

Both interpretive and statistical techniques were used to process the data that had been collected. First, interpretive methods were used to discuss the findings from the two instruments (questionnaires and interviews). Second, the data were combined and presented in charts and tables. Then, comments and discussions were provided corresponding to the relevant knowledge discussed in the literature review section.

### **3.3.2 Phase 2 – Interviews**

The interview analysis was divided into three steps as follows. In the first step, all of the interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were then arranged according to the research questions. In the second step, the data were categorized according to the topics they addressed. The final step is interpreting the data, in which I compared and contrasted the responses in each group to better understand the collected data. I also compiled and presented all the notes of the participants' responses during the interviews in the form of quotations to offer more context.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

### **4.1 The effectiveness of peer feedback on students' writing**

First, to evaluate the effectiveness of peer feedback on students' writing, I relied on the pre-test and post-test results. Table 1 shows the error frequency of the criteria scored in the pre-test and the post-test:



**Table 1. Error frequency in pre-test and post-test**

Criteria	Pre-test	Post-test
	Error frequency	Error frequency
Topic sentence	19/20	7/20
Main ideas	18/20	9/20
Concluding sentence	15/20	6/20
Unity and Coherence	19/20	12/20
Grammar	11/20	5/20
Vocabulary	16/20	15/20
Total	98	54

Table 1 shows that peer feedback considerably improved the students' writing. More errors were made during the pre-test than during the post-test in all writing skill areas. How students developed their topic sentences provided the most remarkable illustration. In contrast to the pre-test, where 19 of 20 respondents had difficulty drafting an appropriate introduction, the post-test revealed a striking 60% reduction (from 19 errors to 7). Additionally, a higher score was obtained on the post-test for grammar (from 11 errors to 5), concluding sentences (from 15 errors to 6), and main ideas (from 18 errors to 9), where the number of errors was reduced by half or more. Therefore, the pre-test and post-test results showed that the peer feedback activity enhanced the students' writing skills, as evidenced by the noticeable decrease in the frequency of errors in the key elements. These findings align with Le and Phan (2014), who reported that vocabulary and grammar are two areas of knowledge students improve most through peer feedback. Similarly, according to Herwiana (2021), receiving peer comments aided learners in developing their grammar and vocabulary.

To further explore the findings, the data from the questionnaires were examined. Based on the data gathered from the questionnaires on students' perceptions, using peer feedback through the process of writing has many advantages (Table 2).

**Table 2. Advantages of Peer Feedback**

Advantages of Peer Feedback	Percentage
Learning Strategies	
Giving a student a wider variety of feedback and correcting strategies.	70%
Helping students recognize assessment criteria in writing.	100%
Helping students develop their own strategies from others' work in improving their writing.	70%
Providing critical and judgment skills for students to analyze each other's work.	60%
Developing a wide range of transferable skills for future employment.	40%
Attitudes and Motivation	
Giving students a sense of belonging to the assessment process.	80%
Encouraging students to be more responsibly involved in the learning process.	100%
Reducing students' pressure feeling from teacher's evaluation.	30%
Making a sense of seriousness and commitment within students when their grades will be a part of the final evaluation.	60%
Creating a feeling of fairness among students because everyone has the chance to assess.	40%
Self-Esteem	
Helping students identify their weak and strong points.	100%
Improving self-assessment capabilities from correcting others' work.	90%
Giving students a sense of ownership when their decision is important.	20%
Making students confident in writing when they have a chance to evaluate others' work.	50%
Raising students' awareness about their role to perform better in front of their peers.	60%

As shown in Table 2, one or more students benefited from peer feedback in every area. I was pleased to learn that every student seemed to understand the value and practicality of peer feedback for their writing, as evidenced by the fact that no beneficial aspect was left blank and was instead ticked by at least two students.

Starting with the benefits of peer feedback concerning learning strategies, 100% of the students perceived that recognizing assessment criteria in writing was the most advantageous outcome

that peer feedback could offer students to improve their writing. The student interviews provided substantial confirmation of this finding. One student clarified:

Peer review also aids students in understanding writing assessment standards. There are many different types of essay and paragraph writing, including comparison and contrast, cause and effect, argument, and so on. Each type has different requirements. As a result, if you regularly do peer feedback, you are likely already familiar with the evaluation criteria. When you can fulfill all standards, it will be very helpful in your tests. (Student A)

Another student stated that she had not previously been aware of assessment standards, but following this writing course, she learned about them and developed appropriate techniques for marking other students' papers. She stated that those were the primary motivations behind her decision to prioritize this advantage (Student B). One other argument was that "the learners have also offered criteria in writing before analyzing others' writing, but only by practicing, especially verifying or grading others' work, do we retain and comprehend them properly." (Student C). Lundstrom and Baker (2009) provided similar evidence in favor of this conclusion, both offering and receiving peer feedback on writing might improve students' writing abilities because peers were aware of the standards for writing evaluation. Similarly, Almahasneh and Abdul-Hamid (2019) asserted that students who understand writing assessment criteria produced better drafts than those who just received standard essay writing training without the benefit of peer feedback.

Regarding attitudes and motivation-related benefits, 100% of the students reported that the greatest benefit they could receive from peer feedback was the encouragement it provided for them to participate effectively in the learning process. Additionally, with the second rank in the percentage (80%), it was shown that providing them with a sense of belonging during the assessment process is important. Exploring the rationale behind these decisions from the students' viewpoint in the interviews was insightful. For example, one student acknowledged that she became more involved with the new responsibility of reviewing and evaluating others' work because she believed that by doing so, she was acting as both a learner and a judge. She became more responsible and serious about her learning process after she became aware of her position. Additionally, peer feedback, according to 60% of the students, was crucial in instilling a sense of seriousness and commitment in students when they learned that their grades would be included in the final evaluation. Two additional positive factors followed, each with a nearly similar impact, namely fostering a sense of fairness among students and lowering their feelings of pressure from the teacher's evaluation. The benefits related to motivation are in line with Vahid and Hossein (2016), who found that peer evaluation played a vital role in raising students' academic motivation. In addition, Liang (2006) claimed that creating a fair, supportive, and friendly environment in assessment might help students better understand the learning objectives.

Concerning self-esteem-related benefits, two advantages, which also influenced many students' decisions (100%, 90%, respectively), were (1) assisting students in recognizing their strong and weak qualities and (2) raising self-awareness by editing others' work. This result supports the pre-test and post-test findings, which showed that the students' frequency of errors was greatly reduced through peer feedback and practice. One student shared:

It can assist us in identifying our errors and weak areas that need improvement. Through the peer review process, we can examine our writing, which will be helpful in tests or exams as our capacity for self-evaluation develops over time. We can avoid making the same mistakes after correcting the errors for others. (Student D)

Students obtaining peer feedback were able to successfully increase their writing abilities. This result aligns with earlier studies that claimed that EFL students believe peer feedback might increase students' knowledge of their writing abilities (Almahasneh & Abdul-Hamid, 2019; Herwiana, 2021; Huisman et al., 2018; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Conversely, this result is inconsistent with Wang (2014), who reported that students who lack the knowledge necessary to choose an essay topic are unable to provide independent evaluations of their writing abilities.

#### **4.2 Students' perceptions of disadvantages of peer feedback**

Table 3 lists the drawbacks of using peer feedback along with their mean, median, and mode scores.

##### **Table 3. Disadvantages of peer feedback**

Disadvantages of Peer Feedback	Mode	Mean	Median
Learning Strategies			
Incompetent at establishing objective criteria strategies to assess others.	2	2.4	2
Lack of writing knowledge to mark others' work.	4	3.7	4
Lack of critical thinking skills in evaluating each other.	3	3.4	3
Taking a risk of learning from peers' wrong comments.	2	2.5	2
Attitudes and Motivation			
Peer pressure and friendship influence affecting reliability of grades.	2	2.5	2
Tendency to give everyone the same mark.	1	2.1	2
Cheating in collaboration for group assignments.	2	2.3	2
Personality affecting the mark.	3	2.3	2
Self Esteem			
Reluctance to make judgments regarding their peers.	3	3.1	3
Students' ill-equipped knowledge to undertake assessment.	4	3.5	3.5
Unawareness of students about their role in the evaluation processes.	2	2.1	2
Feeling lazy and dependent on other members and teachers' help.	2	2.3	2

Table 3 shows that all the statements had frequencies that fell between the ranges of 2.1 and 3.7. The overall mean frequency was 2.68, which was also approximately at medium degree. It is also interesting to discover that some main drawbacks of peer feedback with the highest rates, mean score (>3), belong to learning strategies and self-esteem aspects.

Regarding disadvantages related to learning strategies, students were quite unconfident that their understanding of writing and peer feedback was sufficient to make an accurate assessment (mean = 3.7). This result is consistent with that of Brown (2004), who showed that students might identify themselves as the primary weakness of peer assessment because, with their inadequate knowledge, they were unable to make an effective assessment. Muamaroh and Ulya (2021) similarly explained that students felt afraid that their feedback was incorrect or unacceptable; thus, they were not confident in commenting on their peers' writing. Table 3 also shows that of all challenges faced by students, a lack of critical thinking abilities was the second most common

barrier in this category and the third overall. This rating is not surprising when considering the requirements for composing a paragraph. Average second-year learners appear to have difficulty spotting writing errors in the target language. As a result, they can be prone to making corrections based on their limited experiences at this point of the second semester in the second year. This result is also highly consistent with the data gathered from the students' interviews. Some of them discussed their struggles with the implementation of peer feedback:

The biggest challenge is that I have little writing knowledge. It can be challenging for me to explain my ideas occasionally because my richness of words is not always useful. Additionally, because I struggled to find the right words to express my ideas, my writings were not always as engaging and appealing as I had hoped. (Student E)

Another disadvantage of peer feedback also received a high mean score (3.5). It is not surprising that the option "Students' ill-equipped knowledge to undertake assessment" ranked first in the self-esteem category, as well as the second position in all disadvantages of the three categories. The main issue was the lack of writing skills in marking in the first category. It seems that practically all the students were aware of their shortcomings when playing the role of evaluator. This outcome is in line with the information provided by the respondents during the interviews. One student believed that, for example, because she had made the same mistakes as others, her knowledge was insufficient to assess their work (Student F). This result is supported by Tahir (2012), in which the author described students' lack of confidence in giving feedback to peers. Additionally, students' dissatisfaction with their peer's comments aligns with Carless's (2006) and Eksi's (2012) findings.

From Table 3, with a mean frequency between 2.1 and 2.5, several drawbacks mentioned in the second category related to attitudes and motivation were at the bottom of the list. After receiving peer feedback, students appeared to have a good attitude and be motivated. According to the interviews, the students understood the significance of their evaluation of their peers' work and made a concerted effort to provide as many comments as they could to assist their peers in identifying and addressing their writing errors. Besides, it is interesting to learn why the statement "Tendency to give everyone the same mark" stood at the lowest point (mean = 2.1). One student reasoned that:

If my writings (in both situations – assessing my classmate's writing and having my writing assessed) were judged tightly while the other writings in my class were not, it would not be fair for me and my partner. Therefore, when assessing the others' writing, I often asked the rest of the students in the class about their peer feedback, and compared them with mine before sending that assessment to the teacher. (Student G)

Therefore, it is probable that students understood their responsibilities when grading others' work, and they did not always tend to give everyone the same grade. This finding contrasts with Freeman (1995) and Kwan and Leung (1996), which showed that students consistently graded their classmates in favor of the less capable students and against the more capable ones.

Overall, the section indicates how peer feedback failed to encourage students' writing. Implementing the peer feedback activity presented several challenges for the students. It is intriguing to learn that their behavior was far more influenced by objective criteria than subjective

ones. These subjective factors include their motivation toward the advantages of peer feedback and their awareness of their role in the review process.

## **5. Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrated the value and viability of peer feedback in improving students' writing skills and their perceptions of its advantages and disadvantages at VNU. Overall, the effectiveness of peer feedback on students' writing was evident through a noticeable decrease in the frequency of errors in various criteria, including topic sentences, main ideas, concluding sentences, unity and coherence, grammar, and vocabulary. Furthermore, based on the students' perceptions, peer feedback enhanced their writing skills across all aspects related to learning strategies, attitude, motivation, and self-esteem. Three advantages consistently identified by all students were the clarification of assessment criteria in writing, increased student responsibility and engagement in the learning process, and the identification of strengths and weaknesses in their writing.

This illustrates that students recognized the advantages of peer feedback in fostering their active participation in the writing process, which is beneficial for English instructors aiming to help them improve their writing skills. However, alongside the highlighted benefits, students also encountered challenges when engaging in peer feedback, with their lack of writing and assessment knowledge being identified as a considerable hurdle. The findings also indicated that objective factors, such as learning strategies, posed greater obstacles for students than subjective aspects like attitudes and motivation.

This study has several inherent limitations. Due to time constraints, surveying every second-year student at VNU was impossible, and only seven participants were selected for interviews. A larger sample size is recommended to obtain more accurate and reliable results.

The implications of this study extend to the target population, teachers, policymakers, and scholars interested in implementing peer feedback. According to Abd Rahman et al. (2022), the success of nurturing writing proficiency lies in collaborative efforts between teachers and students. Therefore, this study provides valuable information to assist English teachers in making informed decisions regarding curriculum, instructional approaches, lesson materials, and assessment methods that support the development of writing skills. Furthermore, I hope this study can help students better understand their writing challenges and how peer feedback can effectively support their writing endeavors.

### **Declaration of Conflicts of Interests**

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest.

### **Funding**

No funding was received. This paper was published free of charge (without APC)

## References

- Abd Rahman, E., Md Yunus, M., Hashim, H., & Ab. Rahman, N. K. (2022). Learner autonomy between students and teachers at a defence university: Perception vs. expectation. *Sustainability*, 14(10), 60-86. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14106086>
- Almahasneh, A.M.S., & Abdul- Hamid, S. (2019). The effect of peer assessment training on writing performance among Arab EFL high school students in Malaysia. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(1), 105-115. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no1.10>
- Al-Shboul, O. K., Rababah, L. M., Banikalef, A. A., & Mehawesh, M. I. (2023). Role of learner autonomy in intrinsic motivation in EFL writing. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 12(2), 107-116. <https://doi.org/10.55493/5019.v12i2.4756>
- Amal, A., & Lubna, A. (2022). EFL university teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and the effect of online learning experience. *English Language Teaching*, 15(6), 135-153. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v15n6p135>
- Arshad, A. M., & Alam, A. (2022). *Examining learner autonomy in EFL learning of the undergraduate students*. Preprints.org. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202211.0053.v1>
- Ashenafi, M. M. (2017). Peer-assessment in higher education—twenty-first century practices, challenges and the way forward. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(2), 226-251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1129775>
- Bilki, Z. & Irgin, P. (2021). Using blog-based peer comments to promote L2 writing performance. *ELT Research Journal*, 10(2), 140-161. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/eltrj/issue/67200/956934>
- Bouranta, N., Chitiris, L., & Paravantis, J. (2009). The relationship between internal and external service quality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 21(3), 275-293. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110910948297>
- Brown, D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practice*. Longman.
- Bui, Y. N. (2000). *Towards teaching writing effectively: An error analysis of elementary learners' performance in writing*. Master's thesis, Vietnam National University.
- Carless, D. (2006). Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 219-233. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572132>
- Council of Europe. (2001). *The common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR) – euroexam international*. <http://www.euroexam.org>
- Davies, P. (2006). Peer assessment: Judging the quality of students' work by comments rather than marks. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 43(1), 69-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290500467566>
- Dong, H. M. (2016). *The effects of peer feedback on the first year students' writing performance: An action research at Hanoi Law University*. Master's thesis, Vietnam National University.
- Dong, H. M. (2018). The effects of peer feedback on the first-year students' writing performance. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning Today 2018*, 211-227, VNU-HCM Publishing House.



- Ekşi, G. Y. (2012). Peer review versus teacher feedback in process writing: How effective? *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, 13(1).  
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A297715820/AONE?u=anon~a017c0e7&sid=googleScholar&xid=bc540680>
- Falchikov, N. (1995). Peer feedback marking: Developing peer assessment. *Innovations in Education and Training International*, 32(2), 175-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1355800950320212>
- Falchikov, N., & Goldfinch, J. (2000). Student peer assessment in higher education: A meta-analysis comparing peer and teacher marks. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 287-322.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070003287>
- Farah, M. (2012). The impact of peer feedback on improving the writing skills among Hebron University students. *An-Najah University Journal for Research - B (Humanities)*, 26(1), 180-210.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11888/2229>
- Freeman, M. (1995). Peer assessment by groups of group work. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 20(1), 289-300. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293950200305>
- Harlacher, J. (2016). *An educator's guide to questionnaire development* (REL 2016-108). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Central. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>
- Herwiana, S. (2021). Strengths and weaknesses of collaborative writing and peer feedback in an EFL intensive reading and writing coursework. *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature*, 13(1), 105-121. <https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v13i1.944>
- Huisman, B., Saab, N., Driel, J. V., & Broek, P. V. D. (2018). Peer feedback on academic writing: Undergraduate students' peer feedback role, peer feedback perceptions, and essay performance. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(6), 955-968.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1424318>
- Huisman, B., Saab, N., van den Broek, P., & van Driel, J. (2019). The impact of formative peer feedback on higher education students' academic writing: a meta-analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(6), 863-880. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1545896>
- Krosnick, J. A. (2018). *Questionnaire design the Palgrave handbook of survey research*. Springer.
- Kwan, K. P., & Leung, R. (1996). Tutor versus peer group assessment of student performance in a simulation exercise. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 21(1), 205-214.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293960210301>
- Lee, I. (1997). Peer reviews in a Hong Kong tertiary classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*, 15(1), 58-69.  
<https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v15i1.692>
- Le, T. M. P., & Phan, T. M. H. (2014). Using peer written feedback in improving students' paragraph writing skills. *Science Journal of Quang Nam University*, 20, 61-72. <http://qnamuni.edu.vn/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/TC-KH-20.pdf>
- Le, T. T., & Truong, V. (2018). A study on peer feedback activities in writing classes at Quang Binh university. *Journal of Science and Education*, 3(47), 33-44. <https://vjol.info.vn/index.php/DHSP-DHH/article/view/38452/31086>

- Liang, J. (2006). *Overview of self-assessment in the second language writing classroom*. Paper presented at the 2006 TESOL Convention, Tampa, Florida. Available at: [secondlanguagewriting.com/documents/Overview.Doc](http://secondlanguagewriting.com/documents/Overview.Doc).
- Lundstrom, K., & Baker, W. (2009). To give is better than to receive: The benefits of peer review to the reviewer's own writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 18(1), 30-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2008.06.002>
- Meletiadou, E. (2021). Exploring the impact of peer assessment on EFL students' writing performance. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 9(3), 77-95. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.9.3.05>
- Muamaroh, M., & Ulya, S. P. (2021). Advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback on EFL students' essay writing at tertiary level. *Proceedings of the International Conference of Learning on Advance Education (ICOLAE 2021)*, 1122-1128, Atlantis Press.
- Nelson, M. (2004). *The nature of feedback: How different types of peer feedback affect writing performance* (B.A. Thesis), 1-48. University of South Florida.
- Nguyen, H. T. (2022). The effects of peer feedback on EFL students' writing performance. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 6(2), 123-136. <https://doi.org/10.52296/vje.2022.185>
- Nguyen, H. T. N., & Phan, U. T. M. (2023). Some difficulties in writing skills of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University in Viet Nam. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 4(1), 68-86. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0100>
- Nguyen, T. N. (2008). *An investigation into students' peer-written feedback in paragraphs writing skills among intermediate students at Hanoi University of Industry*. Master's thesis, Vietnam National University.
- Nguyen, T. N. Q. (2020). Vietnamese standardized test of English proficiency – A panorama. In Lily I-Wen, Su, et al. (eds). (2020). *English Language Proficiency Testing in Asia*. Routledge. 71-1000.
- Nguyen, T. T. P. (2012). Peer feedback on second language writing through blogs: The case of a Vietnamese EFL classroom. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching*, 2(1), 13-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4018/ijcallt.2012010102>
- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2000). *Autonomy in language learning*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Orsmond, P., & Merry, S. (2006). The importance of marking criteria in the use of peer assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 21(3), 239-250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293960210304>
- Osama, A. J. (2021). EFL students' needs for improving their writing skills. *Scholars International Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 4(4), 106-111. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sijll.2021.v04i04.004>
- Pham, P. K. M. (2016). *An investigation into pre-intermediate learners' attitudes towards peer correction in English writing*. Master's thesis, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City.
- Pham, T. H. (2016). *Practice of peer written feedback in paragraph writing skills among third-year students of Hanam College of Education (HCE)*. Master's thesis, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.
- Pham, V. P. H., & Nguyen, T. T. D. (2014). The effectiveness of peer feedback on graduate academic writing at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science*, 4(2), 11-24. <https://vjol.info.vn/index.php/DHMHCM-KHXH/article/view/56510/47114>

- Pham, V. P. H., Huyen, L. H., & Nguyen, M. T. (2020). The incorporation of qualified peer feedback into writing revision. *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 45-59. Retrieved from <https://caes.hku.hk/ajal/index.php/ajal/article/view/732>
- Pham, V. P. H., Nguyen, M. T., Tran, T. T. O., & Do, T. P. T. (2020). The effects of the process approach on high school students' writing performances. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10(2), 406-413. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n2p40>
- Riedy, C., Parenti, M., Childers-McKee, C., & Teehankee, B. (2023). Action research pedagogy in educational institutions: Emancipatory, relational, critical and contextual. *Action Research*, 21(1), 3-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14767503221150337>
- Rouhi, A., & Azizian, E. (2013). Peer review: Is giving corrective feedback better than receiving it in L2 writing? *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 1349-1354. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.042>
- Taherdoost, H. (2022). Designing a questionnaire for a research paper: A comprehensive guide to design and develop an effective questionnaire. *Asian Journal of Managerial Science*, 11(1), 8-16. <https://doi.org/10.51983/ajms-2022.11.1.3087>
- Tahir, I. H. (2012). A study on peer evaluation and its influence on college ESL students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 68, 192-201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.219>
- Tang, G. M. (1999). Peer response in ESL writing. *TESL Canada Journal*, 16(2), 20-38. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v16i2.716>
- Topping, K. (1998). Peer assessment between students in colleges and universities. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(3), 249-276. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543068003249>
- Uli, A. G., Widyastuti, P., & Anita, T. (2022). The relationship between learner autonomy and students' writing skills. *Journal of Human University Natural Sciences*, 49(10), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.55463/issn.1674-2974.49.10.1>
- Vahid, N. L., & Hossein, S. O. (2016). *On the effect of self-assessment and peer-assessment on Iranian EFL learners' learner autonomy*. Science Publishing Group.
- Vo, T. T. M. (2022). EFL students' attitudes towards teacher correction and peer correction in writing skills. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, 1(1), 155-173. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.221113>
- Vo, T., & Nguyen, N. (2023). Students' perceptions towards the application of peer assessment in a virtual English writing class. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.02.05>
- Wang, W. (2014). Students' perceptions of rubric-referenced peer feedback on EFL writing: A longitudinal inquiry. *Assessing Writing*, 19(0), 80-96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2013.11.008>
- Wu, Y., & Schunn, C. D. (2021). The effects of providing and receiving peer feedback on writing performance and learning of secondary school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 58(3), 492-526. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831220945266>
- Yu, S., & Hu, G. (2017). Can higher-proficiency L2 learners benefit from working with lower-proficiency partners in peer feedback? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(2), 178-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1221806>

Yu, S., & Lee, I. (2016a). Understanding the role of learners with low English language proficiency in peer feedback of second language writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 50(2), 483-494. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.301>

Yu, S., & Lee, I. (2016b). Peer feedback in second language writing (2005–2014). *Language Teaching*, 49(4), 461-493. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444816000161>

---

Dr. Phan Thi Ngoc Le is an English lecturer at VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Her research interests include English linguistics, World Englishes, L1 transfer to L2, English as a medium of instruction, English for specific purposes, peer assessment, and academic writing.

---

## **Appendix 1 - Questionnaire**

### **An Action Research on the Effectiveness and Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback**

*Hi, everybody. I would like to ask for your help with this questionnaire, which serves as my paper's major source of data. Thank you very much for your help!*

---

**Part 1: Advantages of Peer Feedback**

*Please tick beside the answers suitable to your choice. You can choose more than one.*

<b>Advantages of Peer Feedback</b>	
<b>Learning Strategies</b>	
Giving a student a wider variety of feedback and correcting strategies.	
Helping students recognize assessment criteria in writing.	
Helping students develop their own strategies from others' work in improving their writing.	
Providing critical and judgment skills for students to analyze each other's work.	
Developing a wide range of transferable skills for future employment.	
<b>Attitudes and Motivation</b>	
Giving students a sense of belonging to the assessment process.	
Encouraging students to be more responsibly involved in the learning process.	
Reducing students' pressure feeling from teacher's evaluation.	
Making a sense of seriousness and commitment within students when their grades will be a part of the final evaluation.	
Creating a feeling of fairness among students because everyone has the chance to assess.	
<b>Self – Esteem</b>	
Helping students identify their weak and strong points.	
Improving self-assessment capabilities from correcting others' work.	
Giving students a sense of ownership when their decision is important.	
Making students confident in writing when they have a chance to evaluate others' work.	
Raising students' awareness about their role to perform better in front of their peers.	

**Part 2: Disadvantages of Peer Feedback**

*Circle the number that best describes your choice.*

- |       |                   |           |         |        |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------|
| Never | Only occasionally | Sometimes | Usually | Always |
| 1     | 2                 | 3         | 4       | 5      |

<b>Disadvantages of Peer Feedback</b>	<b>Likert Scale</b>
<b>Learning Strategies</b>	
Incompetent at establishing objective criteria strategies to assess others.	12345
Lack of writing knowledge to mark others' work.	12345
Lack of critical thinking skills in evaluating each other.	12345
Taking a risk of learning from peers' wrong comments.	12345
<b>Attitudes and Motivation</b>	
Peer pressure and friendship influence affecting reliability of grades.	12345
Tendency to give everyone the same mark.	12345
Cheating in collaboration for group assignments.	12345
Personality affecting the mark.	12345
<b>Self – Esteem</b>	
Reluctance to make a judgment regarding their peers.	12345
Students' ill-equipped knowledge to undertake an assessment.	12345
Unawareness of students about their role in the evaluation process.	12345
Feeling lazy and dependent on other members' and teachers' help.	12345

## **Appendix 2 – Interview Questions**

### **A. Advantages of Peer Feedback**

1. Could you elaborate on your selections for the advantages of peer feedback that you made in Part 1 of the questionnaire?
2. Are there any other advantages that you can derive from the peer feedback activity of this course?
3. Do you believe knowing about these advantages of peer feedback can help you improve your writing?

22 | Please tick beside the answers suitable to your choice. You can choose more than one.

### **B. Disadvantages of Peer Feedback**

1. Have you ever found it challenging to learn writing? If so, what kind of things?
2. Which of the peer feedback drawbacks mentioned in the questionnaire did you find the most difficult to deal with during the course?
3. Can you go into further detail about the causes of your persistent difficulty with these things?
4. What ideas or recommendations have you had to address your own issues with utilizing peer feedback to foster writing skills?