
FEEDBACK PRACTICES IN THE EFL WRITING PROCESS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHER AND PEER RESPONSES IN A HANOI CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the roles of teacher and peer feedback in supporting students' writing development within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Hanoi, Vietnam. Drawing on a classroom-based comparative design, the research examines how different sources of feedback influence students' writing across key aspects, including content, organization, language use, and mechanics. Two groups of upper-secondary students participated in a process-oriented writing program, in which one group received structured teacher feedback while the other engaged in guided peer review activities during the revision stage. Data were collected through pre- and post-writing tasks, student drafts, and revision outcomes. The findings indicate that both teacher and peer feedback contribute positively to students' writing improvement, although their effects vary across writing dimensions. Teacher feedback appears to be more influential in enhancing grammatical accuracy and language use, while peer feedback shows stronger contributions to surface-level features and fosters greater student engagement with ideas and text organization. Importantly, no statistically significant difference was found in overall writing performance between the two groups, suggesting that both feedback types are pedagogically valuable when implemented effectively. The study highlights the complementary nature of teacher and peer feedback in the EFL writing process and underscores the importance of integrating both practices in classroom instruction. Implications are discussed for designing feedback strategies that are contextually appropriate for Vietnamese secondary school settings and for promoting more interactive, student-centered writing environments.

KEYWORDS: *EFL writing, teacher feedback, peer feedback, writing process, secondary education, Vietnam, student revision, classroom-based research.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most demanding skills for learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Beyond the ability to produce grammatically accurate sentences, effective writing requires students to generate ideas, organize arguments coherently, and communicate meaning appropriately for a target audience. In many Asian educational settings, including Vietnam, writing instruction has traditionally emphasized accuracy and final products, often overlooking the complex processes through which writing develops (Nguyen & Gu, 2013). However, recent shifts toward process-oriented approaches have highlighted the importance of supporting learners throughout stages such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

Within this process, feedback plays a central role in shaping students' writing development. According to Ken Hyland and Fiona Hyland (2006), feedback is not merely a corrective tool but a form of interaction that guides learners in constructing and refining their texts. Similarly, Dana Ferris (2014) argues that effective feedback can help learners notice linguistic problems, develop revision strategies, and improve overall writing quality. In this sense, feedback is integral to the writing process rather than an isolated evaluative act at the end of instruction.

Two primary sources of feedback have been widely discussed in the literature: teacher feedback and peer feedback. Teacher feedback is often perceived as authoritative and reliable, given teachers' expertise in language and assessment. Research has shown that teacher feedback can be particularly effective in improving grammatical accuracy and language use (Ferris, 2014; Bitchener & Storch, 2016). On the other hand, peer feedback has gained increasing attention as a student-centered practice that encourages collaboration, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Studies such as those by David Carless and David Boud (2018) suggest that peer feedback can foster deeper engagement with writing and help students develop evaluative judgment by reviewing others' work.

Despite extensive research, the relative effectiveness of teacher and peer feedback remains a topic of ongoing debate. Some studies indicate that teacher feedback leads to greater improvements in linguistic accuracy, while peer feedback contributes more to idea development and organization (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Other research suggests that there is no significant difference in overall writing performance between the two feedback types,

highlighting their complementary roles rather than a hierarchical relationship (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). These mixed findings point to the importance of examining feedback practices within specific educational contexts.

In Vietnam, English writing instruction continues to evolve alongside broader educational reforms aimed at promoting communicative competence and learner autonomy. However, classroom practices often remain exam-oriented, with limited opportunities for interactive feedback and revision (Nguyen, 2021). As a result, students may rely heavily on teacher corrections while lacking experience in evaluating and improving their own or their peers' writing. Investigating how different feedback practices function in Vietnamese classrooms is therefore essential for informing more effective and context-sensitive pedagogy.

Against this backdrop, the present study explores the use of teacher and peer feedback in an EFL writing classroom in Hanoi. By comparing their effects on students' writing development across multiple dimensions, the study aims to provide empirical insights into how feedback can be integrated into the writing process in a meaningful and balanced way. In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of research on feedback practices in EFL contexts and offers practical implications for enhancing writing instruction in Vietnamese secondary schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. L2 Writing and Process-Oriented Pedagogy

Writing in a second or foreign language is widely acknowledged as a complex and multifaceted skill, requiring the integration of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processes, and rhetorical awareness. Earlier instructional approaches tended to adopt a product-oriented perspective, emphasizing grammatical accuracy and the final written output. However, contemporary scholarship has increasingly shifted toward a process-oriented view, which conceptualizes writing as a recursive and developmental activity involving planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Hyland, 2019).

From this perspective, writing is not merely an individual cognitive act but also a socially mediated practice shaped by interaction and feedback. As Ken Hyland (2019) argues, writing development occurs through engagement with readers, whose responses help writers refine meaning and improve textual quality. This shift underscores the importance of incorporating feedback mechanisms throughout the writing process rather than treating writing as a one-stage product.

2.2. Conceptualizing Feedback in L2 Writing

Feedback is a central component of effective writing instruction, providing learners with information about their performance and guidance for revision. In L2 writing research, feedback has been conceptualized in multiple ways, including corrective feedback, formative feedback, and dialogic feedback (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Carless & Boud, 2018). These perspectives reflect an evolving understanding of feedback not simply as error correction but as a dynamic process that supports learning.

A key development in recent years is the notion of feedback literacy, which emphasizes learners' active role in interpreting and utilizing feedback. Carless and Boud (2018) argue that feedback is only effective when students are able to engage with it meaningfully, suggesting that instructional practices should focus not only on providing feedback but also on developing students' capacity to use it. Similarly, Dana Ferris (2014) highlights that feedback contributes to writing development when it promotes noticing, reflection, and revision.

Furthermore, feedback is increasingly viewed as an iterative and dialogic process embedded within classroom interaction. Rather than being confined to written comments on final drafts, effective feedback involves ongoing exchanges that guide learners through successive stages of writing (Hyland, 2019).

2.3. Teacher Feedback

Teacher feedback remains a dominant practice in EFL writing classrooms due to teachers' perceived authority and expertise. It typically involves direct or indirect corrections, comments, and suggestions aimed at improving students' writing. Empirical research indicates that teacher feedback is particularly effective in addressing linguistic accuracy, including grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

However, the effectiveness of teacher feedback is influenced by its focus and delivery. Overemphasis on error correction may lead students to prioritize form over meaning, potentially limiting their development as writers. As Fiona Hyland (2013) notes, feedback that encourages deeper revision and engagement with content tends to have a more substantial impact on writing quality. Additionally, excessive reliance on teacher feedback may reduce opportunities for learner autonomy and self-regulation.

2.4. Peer Feedback

Peer feedback has gained prominence as a student-centered alternative or complement to teacher feedback. It involves learners providing comments on each other's writing, often guided by specific criteria or training. Research suggests that peer feedback can enhance students' awareness of audience, promote critical thinking, and encourage active participation in the writing process (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

One of the key benefits of peer feedback lies in its potential to foster evaluative judgment—the ability to assess the quality of work and make informed revisions. According to David Carless and David Boud (2018), engaging in peer review helps students internalize assessment criteria and apply them to their own writing. This aligns with broader educational goals of developing independent and reflective learners.

Despite these advantages, concerns have been raised regarding the reliability and quality of peer feedback. Students may lack the linguistic competence or confidence to provide accurate and constructive comments. To address this issue, previous studies emphasize the importance of explicit training and structured guidance in peer feedback activities (Min, 2016).

2.5. Comparative Effects of Teacher and Peer Feedback

A substantial body of research has examined the comparative effectiveness of teacher and peer feedback in L2 writing. While findings are mixed, a consistent pattern emerges: each type of feedback contributes differently to various aspects of writing. Teacher feedback tends to be more effective in improving grammatical accuracy, whereas peer feedback often facilitates idea development, organization, and audience awareness (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

Importantly, recent studies suggest that these two forms of feedback should be viewed as complementary rather than competing. Integrating both teacher and peer feedback can provide learners with multiple perspectives and richer opportunities for revision. As Ken Hyland (2019) emphasizes, effective writing instruction balances expert guidance with interactive and collaborative learning experiences.

2.6. Feedback Practices in the Vietnamese EFL Context

In the Vietnamese context, English language education has undergone significant reforms aimed at promoting communicative competence and learner-centered approaches. Nevertheless, writing instruction often remains influenced by exam-oriented practices, with a strong emphasis on accuracy and teacher-led correction (Nguyen, 2021). As a result,

opportunities for interactive feedback and student engagement in revision processes may be limited.

Emerging research indicates that Vietnamese students can benefit from peer feedback when it is carefully structured and supported. However, cultural factors—such as respect for teacher authority and reluctance to critique peers—may affect students' willingness to participate actively in peer review (Nguyen & Gu, 2013). These contextual considerations highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that are both effective and culturally responsive.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that feedback is a critical and multifaceted element of EFL writing instruction. Teacher and peer feedback each offer distinct advantages and contribute to different dimensions of writing development. Their effectiveness depends largely on how they are implemented and how students engage with them. Building on these insights, the present study seeks to examine the roles of teacher and peer feedback in a Hanoi classroom, with particular attention to their comparative and complementary effects within a process-oriented writing framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the comparative effects of teacher feedback and peer feedback on students' writing development in an EFL classroom. Specifically, a pretest–posttest non-equivalent group design was adopted, as intact classes were used without random assignment. This design is commonly applied in classroom-based research where experimental control is limited but ecological validity is prioritized (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Two groups of students participated in the study: one group received teacher feedback, while the other engaged in structured peer feedback during the revision stage of the writing process. Both groups followed the same instructional content and writing tasks, differing only in the source of feedback provided. This approach allowed for a direct comparison of the effects of the two feedback types on students' writing performance.

3.2. Participants

The participants were 60 Grade 11 students from a public upper-secondary school in Hanoi, Vietnam. The students were divided into two intact classes, each consisting of 30 students with comparable English proficiency levels based on school placement records. One class was assigned as the teacher feedback group, and the other as the peer feedback group.

All participants had studied English for at least five years within the national curriculum. However, their prior experience with process-oriented writing and peer feedback activities was limited, as writing instruction in their context had traditionally focused on grammar and examination preparation. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were informed about the purpose of the research.

3.3. Instruments

To measure students' writing performance, the study employed a series of writing tasks administered as pretest and posttest. Students were asked to produce short argumentative essays (approximately 200–250 words) on familiar topics relevant to their school context. The tasks were designed to elicit comparable writing samples across both testing points. Students' writings were assessed using an analytic scoring rubric adapted from established ESL composition frameworks (Jacobs et al., 1981; Hyland, 2019). The rubric evaluated four key aspects of writing:

- Content (idea development and relevance)
- Organization (coherence and logical structure)
- Language use (grammar and sentence construction)
- Mechanics (punctuation and spelling)

Each aspect was scored separately to allow for detailed analysis of how different feedback types influenced specific dimensions of writing.

In addition, students' drafts and revised versions were collected throughout the intervention to track changes and examine how feedback was incorporated into their writing.

3.4. Procedure

The study was conducted over a six-week period as part of regular classroom instruction. At the beginning of the study, both groups completed a pretest writing task to establish baseline proficiency levels.

During the intervention phase, students in both groups followed a process writing approach that included planning, drafting, revising, and editing. The key difference lay in the feedback stage:

- In the teacher feedback group, students submitted their drafts to the teacher, who provided written comments and corrections focusing on the four assessed aspects. The teacher also conducted brief in-class discussions to address common errors and guide revision.

- In the peer feedback group, students exchanged drafts with classmates and provided feedback using a structured checklist aligned with the scoring rubric. Prior to this activity, students received training on how to give constructive and meaningful feedback. Follow-up discussions were conducted to clarify comments and resolve uncertainties. At the end of the intervention, all students completed a posttest writing task under conditions similar to the pretest.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitatively, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize students' performance in the pretest and posttest.

To examine differences between the two groups, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted on posttest scores. In addition, gain scores (calculated as posttest minus pretest) were analyzed for each writing aspect to determine the extent of improvement associated with each type of feedback.

Qualitatively, selected student drafts and revisions were analyzed to explore how feedback was interpreted and incorporated into writing. This analysis provided insights into revision patterns and the differential impact of teacher and peer feedback on students' writing processes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for students' writing scores in the pretest and posttest for both groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Writing Scores.

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD
Teacher Feedback	Pretest	30	13.52	6.85
	Posttest	30	17.94	5.72
Peer Feedback	Pretest	30	13.76	7.10
	Posttest	30	18.36	6.21

As shown in Table 1, both groups demonstrated improvement from pretest to posttest. The teacher feedback group increased from $M = 13.52$ ($SD = 6.85$) to $M = 17.94$ ($SD = 5.72$), while the peer feedback group improved from $M = 13.76$ ($SD = 7.10$) to $M = 18.36$ ($SD = 6.21$). The similar starting points suggest that the two groups were comparable at baseline.

4.2. Inferential Analysis

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare posttest scores between the teacher feedback and peer feedback groups.

Table 2: Independent Samples *t*-test for Posttest Scores.

Group Comparison	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Teacher vs. Peer Feedback	-0.29	58	.773	0.07

The results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of overall writing performance at posttest, $t(58) = -0.29$, $p = .773$. Since the *p*-value is greater than the conventional threshold of .05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

In addition, the effect size, measured by Cohen's *d* (0.07), is considered negligible, suggesting that the difference between the two groups is not practically meaningful. This finding indicates that both teacher and peer feedback are similarly effective in improving overall writing performance.

4.3. Analysis of Writing Aspects

To gain deeper insights, gain scores were calculated for each writing aspect.

Table 3: Mean Gain Scores by Writing Aspect.

Writing Aspect	Teacher Feedback	Peer Feedback
Content	+5.3	+5.5
Organization	+1.8	+2.6
Language Use	+4.2	+2.5
Mechanics	+0.6	+1.1

The results reveal distinct patterns in how each feedback type influenced specific aspects of writing. Teacher feedback led to greater improvement in language use, suggesting its effectiveness in addressing grammatical accuracy and sentence structure. In contrast, peer feedback resulted in higher gains in organization and mechanics, indicating its role in enhancing coherence and attention to surface-level features.

Both groups showed similar improvements in content, suggesting that both feedback types supported idea development and relevance.

4.4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that both teacher and peer feedback contribute positively to students' writing development, with no significant difference in overall performance

between the two groups. This result aligns with previous research suggesting that different feedback sources can be equally effective when implemented within a structured writing process (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

However, the analysis of individual writing aspects highlights the complementary nature of the two feedback types. Teacher feedback appears to be more effective in improving linguistic accuracy, which may be attributed to teachers' expertise in identifying and correcting grammatical errors. This supports earlier findings by Dana Ferris (2014), who emphasized the role of teacher feedback in facilitating language development.

On the other hand, peer feedback demonstrated stronger effects on organization and mechanics. This may be explained by the interactive nature of peer review, which encourages students to engage with the structure and clarity of texts. By evaluating their peers' writing, students become more aware of audience expectations and textual coherence. This finding is consistent with the work of David Carless and David Boud (2018), who highlight the role of peer feedback in developing evaluative judgment.

The absence of a statistically significant difference between the two groups suggests that feedback effectiveness may depend less on the source and more on how it is implemented. Both groups in this study benefited from a structured process writing approach, which likely enhanced the impact of feedback by providing opportunities for revision and reflection.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings support the integration of both teacher and peer feedback in EFL writing classrooms. Rather than viewing them as competing approaches, teachers should consider how to combine them strategically to address different aspects of writing. In contexts such as Vietnam, where teacher-centered practices are still prevalent, incorporating peer feedback may also promote greater student engagement and autonomy.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the comparative effects of teacher feedback and peer feedback on EFL students' writing development in a Hanoi secondary school context. The findings reveal that both forms of feedback contribute positively to students' writing performance, with no statistically significant difference in overall outcomes between the two groups. This suggests that both teacher and peer feedback are effective when embedded within a structured process writing framework.

However, a more nuanced analysis shows that each type of feedback supports different aspects of writing. Teacher feedback appears to be more effective in improving language use,

particularly grammatical accuracy, while peer feedback contributes more to organization and mechanics. Both feedback types were found to support content development, indicating their shared role in helping students generate and refine ideas.

Overall, the findings reinforce the view that feedback is most effective when it is integrated as an ongoing, interactive component of the writing process. Rather than relying exclusively on one source, combining teacher and peer feedback can provide learners with diverse perspectives and richer opportunities for revision.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications for EFL writing instruction, particularly in Vietnamese secondary school contexts.

First, teachers should consider integrating both teacher and peer feedback into classroom practice. While teacher feedback remains essential for addressing linguistic accuracy, peer feedback can enhance students' engagement and promote collaborative learning. A balanced approach allows each feedback type to complement the other.

Second, explicit training in peer feedback is crucial. Students need guidance on how to provide constructive, specific, and meaningful comments. Without such training, peer feedback may be superficial or ineffective. Structured tools such as checklists or rubrics can support students in this process.

Third, feedback should be embedded within a process-oriented writing approach. Providing feedback at multiple stages—rather than only on final drafts—encourages students to view writing as a process of revision and improvement. This can help shift classroom practices away from a sole focus on final products.

Finally, fostering students' feedback literacy should be a key instructional goal. Teachers should encourage students not only to receive feedback but also to interpret and apply it effectively. Developing these skills can promote greater learner autonomy and long-term improvement in writing.

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