RESEARCH ON FRIENDS' FEEDBACK IN THE PROCESS OF WRITING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Nguyen Thanh Liem[*]

[*]*English Teacher, Nguyen Van Ba Secondary Public school, Thu Duc City, Ho Chi Minh, Việt Nam*

*Corresponding Author:
thanhliem.nguyen0806@gmail.com

Abstract

The use of feedback from classmates plays an integral role in a student's writing process. Peer feedback is considered an important part of the writing process, it not only teaches students how to work cooperatively with others but also helps them correct their writing mistakes and improve their writing. In Vietnam, specifically in the secondary school environment, writing feedback is considered a relatively new learning activity, not yet widely applied and not widely studied.

With the desire to have an overview of this activity as well as the basis for making some recommendations in teaching foreign language writing skills of secondary school students. We conducted a survey with 400 students currently studying in grade 9 at secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Our research results show that: Students are very interested in the feedback on their writing; Most students think that they will review and correct according to the feedback to make their writing more complete. In addition, the percentage of students who can correct their own writing is still not high, and the teacher's support for this problem is still low. Therefore, in order to improve students' writing skills, we believe that teachers and educational institutions need to increase the application of peer feedback in teaching. At the same time, teachers need to better perform the role of a guide in this regard.

Keywords: *writing skills, writing process, feedback on posts, feedback from friends*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is considered an international language because it is used in many fields, including education, commerce, entertainment, science and technology. English is a requirement for access to advanced technology resources and information exchange, cultural diversity, as well as important events in the region and the international community at large (An & Thomas, 2021). Therefore, Vietnamese education attaches great importance to English and includes it in the curriculum as a core subject (Nguyen & Habok, 2021). Over the years, teaching English in Vietnam has undergone profound changes, especially in teaching writing, one of the most difficult skills for learners. This may be the result of focusing only on writing products and not the writing process (McQuillan, 2020). According to Ur (2012), focus should be on the writing process as the best way to improve students' writing skills. It is also the most effective way for students to focus on developing ideas, writing drafts, receiving comments and rewriting and this is a circular process (Paran, 2012). It can be seen that in the process of teaching writing, the use of feedback from classmates plays an integral role in the student's writing process. According to Harmer (2007), peer feedback is considered an important part of the writing process, it not only teaches students how to work cooperatively with others, avoiding passive reactions to teacher comments, but also help them correct their writing errors and improve their writing. In addition to traditional teacher feedback, peer feedback has also been shown to be a very effective form of feedback from which to improve writing (Lu et al., 2021). Moreover, they can also learn the strengths and weaknesses from the writings of their friends to draw experience for their own writing. When they receive feedback they are more likely to improve their skills in each learning activity (Challob, 2021).

However, Saeli & Cheng (2021) reported that students do not realize that receiving feedback helps them correct mistakes and improve their performance on written tests. In addition, Ha & Murray (2021) said that in Vietnam, specifically in the secondary school environment, writing feedback is considered a relatively new learning activity, which has not been widely and effectively applied, at the same time, this issue has not been studied extensively. With the desire to provide an overview of the above issue and to have a basis for making recommendations to improve English writing skills in secondary school students, we have carried out this study. To conduct the study, we set out to answer the following questions:

What is the status of the feedback of friends during the writing process in middle school students today?

What is the student's attitude and behavior when receiving feedback from classmates?

What recommendations are made to promote the effectiveness of peer feedback in improving writing skills?

2. Literature review

2.1 Writing skills

Writing is one of the most basic human communication skills and it is essential in the work of any individual and any job position. There have been many studies giving different definitions of writing skills, of which Byrne (1988) defined writing as the act of graphic symbols. Writing is a creative art, not simply a line-up of words or sentences as a predefined scheme (Brannon et al., 1983). Harris (1993) states that writing is a language skill that is difficult to grasp because of the complexity of the process that takes place over time, especially when we have to spend time thinking about creating a text first. Thus, writing can be viewed as an action, a process or a skill that needs to be taught. Writing is also one of the most difficult skills to master when learning a foreign language (EFL). Developing writing skills is also important for formal and non-verbal communication purposes such as business emails or important event invitations (Akkaya & Aydin, 2019).

2.2 Approach the writing process

According to Graham's research, the goal of the writing process is not the end product; instead, the focus is on how a written text is created including the planning and revision phases of the text (Graham, 2019). To complement this idea, another idea has been formulated as a process-oriented approach to writing that includes all the skills a writer uses such as: pre-write, edit, create drafts, and generate phrases (Harmer, 2015). Furthermore, the writing stages proceed in a recursive rather than linear manner because editing and re-editing are considered important steps in this process, especially when writing in a foreign language (Harmer, 2015).

Besides, Gramham also notes that each writer should have multiple drafts instead of completing their writing in one sitting to select and reshape language in text format correctly (Graham, 2019). This will emphasize the importance of writing revisions and the fact that students must rewrite and edit their writing at all stages of the writing process. To create a perfect final version, the writing process approach must emphasize peer feedback and revision (Paran, 2012)

2.3 Feedback from friends

Peer feedback is feedback from students studying together, which is part of an educational activity where students work together in groups to modify their work (Double et al., 2020). In other words, if students work together and work on a large assignment together, the feedback from their classmates is the students exchanging drafts and commenting on the manuscript. Students learn from their friends a lot of sentence structures, expressions, ideas… while reading and correcting your work and know how to recognize mistakes to correct, so this technique should be used often in their lessons (Yalch et al., 2019).

Peer feedback will bring more responsibility to students and enhance their sense of doing their duties carefully (Ion et al., 2016). As a result, student writing can be enhanced through peer feedback along with increasing students' awareness of

self-assessment of their writing prior to submission. Furthermore, peer feedback can activate students' self-reflective learning as they engage in a range of activities in which they evaluate their own writing as well as other work (Reddy et al., 2021).

2.4 Feedback from friends in the process of writing

According to Banister, feedback generated from classmates is information that readers provide to writers to help edit the writing and make it more complete, while eliminating errors found in the text. (Banister, 2020). In other words, feedback from friends is the comments, questions, or suggestions that reviewers give the writer to improve and make the article better. According to Hyland, peer feedback is also a tool to enhance the information development process giving writers the opportunity to discuss with classmates, discover and enhance the content of their writing (Hyland, 2001). Thus, Hyland's concept of peer feedback in writing focuses on interactions between classmates and the contribution of assessment to each other's work. It is very important to implement peer feedback in the process of teaching and learning to write because its effectiveness has been proven in many literatures related to English teaching methods (Banister, 2020). Using feedback from classmates gives learners a greater opportunity to read and positively critique each other's work, helping them reveal their strengths and weaknesses along with patterns for improving it. (Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020).

Storch (2019) argues that, in the process of writing and implementing peer feedback, personal work will be reduced, paving the way for collaborative writing and exchange of ideas, this helps them become better reflexive writers. At the same time, peer-generated feedback was perceived as friendlier, more cooperative, less stressful, and significantly reduced the anxiety commonly experienced during the teacher-editing phase (Double et al., 2020).

3. Data and methods

To determine the sample for the study, we use the sample calculation method for survey studies, specifically as follows:

$$\mathbf{n} = Z_{1-\alpha/2}^2 \frac{p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Where: n is the number of students surveyed;
p is the probability to approach the population, in case the population is unknown, take p=50% because p=50%, then the above formula will give the largest sample size (Al-Subaihi, 2003);
α is the significance level, choose α = 0.05 with 95% confidence
Z (1 - α/2) is the confidence limit coefficient, with 95% confidence Z = 1.96; d is expected error = 0.05.
Substitute into the above formula: n = (1.96)2 x (0.5) x (0.5)/ (0.05)2 ≈ 385. Thus, the minimum sample of this study is ≥385 students.

To achieve the minimum number of samples above, we sent 450 questionnaires to 9th grade students at 10 secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City, the results after 3 months (from December 2022 to March 2023), we obtained 400 satisfactory votes, of which 217 women (54.3%) and 183 men (45.7%).

We chose the above subjects for two reasons: (i) Ho Chi Minh City is one of the top cities in Vietnam, and is also the leading unit in improving educational methods to improve the quality of training, so all research results here can be used as a reference for other localities; (ii) we chose 9th graders because at this level they can create complex structured text while fully realizing the important role of improving writing skills.

To collect data, we designed a structured questionnaire with 2 parts, Part 1 is student information, part 2 is questions related to feedback from friends including key issues such as: the actual status of friends' feedback to the article; students' attitudes toward feedback, and how it is handled. After collected data, we perform descriptive statistical analysis, calculate indicators such as quantity, percentage and present it in the form of tables and charts.

4. Results and discussion
4.1 Overall rating of friends' responses to the article

Figure 1a shows that the level of friend feedback on the article that the writer receives "frequent" and "very often" is 38%, while the level of feedback is "sometimes" and " seldom" accounted for 54.4%. Thus, it can be seen that the level of feedback to the article of friends in secondary schools is not high.

In addition, Figure 1b shows that 51.8% of students said they received feedback from friends at the "detailed" and "very detailed" levels. Graham (2019) argues that reviewers often focus on certain issues, so they often have detailed comments. We think that when students read your work, each student will likely have their own strengths in a certain skill, and when they use it to their strengths, they will give detailed comments. . Besides, there is still a small percentage of students giving general comments (23.0%), or sketchy (18.0%). Thereby, it shows that there are still some students who lack responsibility in giving feedback and need a change in their perception of participating in the assessment of their classmates' writing. Banister (2020) attributes this problem to the psychological effect of reluctance to criticize the work of friends. We think

that it may be because students are not capable, or lack confidence, or are afraid, so they do not dare to comment on the articles of their classmates.
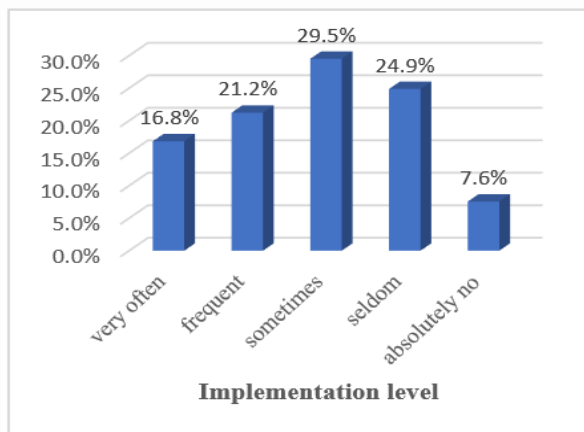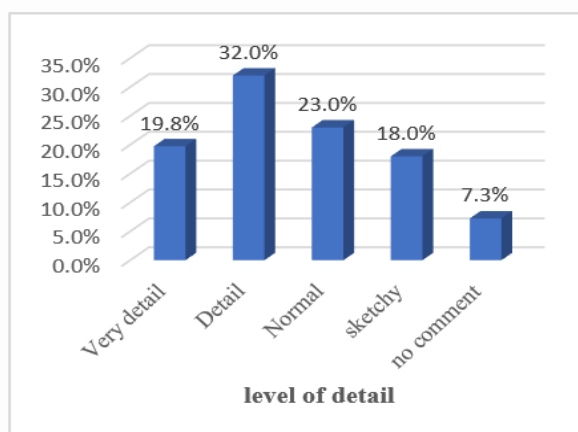

Figure 1a: Level of responses

Figure 1b: Level of responses

4.2 Content of the feedback and form of feedback

The level of feedback on content is measured by 5 levels from "not at all" to "very often", corresponding to a score of 1 to 5, the average score measures the response level of each content. , the higher the average score, the more frequent the response. Figure 2a depicts response levels according to issues such as ideas, content of the article, grammar, vocabulary, and errors. In which, the problem that students give the most feedback on is grammar (4 scores), this means that students often give feedback on grammar. Besides, the second highest level of feedback is feedback on vocabulary and errors (3.7 and 3.6 scores). The results of this study are similar to the study of Andrade (2019). Andrade (2019) considers the above errors to be the most obvious errors found in a text. Besides, Kroll, (2010) also said that most students when giving feedback often focus on the above issues because they tend to focus on the correct form of language to create appropriate meanings.

In addition, other issues such as the content of the text and ideas of the article have lower response scoress (2.6 to 2.7 scores). This may explain that students show a tendency to hesitate to give feedback on the presentation of the text as well as the quality of the text content. Logan (2015) suggests that students at this level may not have the necessary skills to evaluate their peers' content and suggests how to adjust the order of ideas appropriately. Another reason why respondents are less likely to comment on text content is fear of negatively affecting the recipient's writing skills due to insufficient knowledge of writing skills (Tribble, 1996).

About the form of feedback is depicted in Figure 2b. The analysis results for positive and negative feedback, finding that the majority of students used positive feedback (51.9%) more than negative feedback (48.1%) when giving feedback to their classmates. The high positive response rate may explain that students as they try to avoid hurting their friend's feelings through the feedback process (Nilson, 2003). In contrast, the difference between the two types of feedback is not too large, which is also consistent with the concept of balancing positive and negative feedback to maximize learning opportunities (Glass et al., 2017). This can be understood as their colleague's devotion to doing their best to point out errors discovered in the text to improve their colleague's writing.

In addition, both direct and indirect feedback were used although direct feedback tended to be used more by students (50.9%) while indirect feedback was 49.1%. This shows that these are both options used by students to respond to your writing. Okyar & Eksi (2019) argue that direct feedback is more likely to avoid confusion than indirect feedback. But using indirect feedback not only makes the respondent more comfortable, less afraid to point out mistakes, but also moves the corrected part into his article.
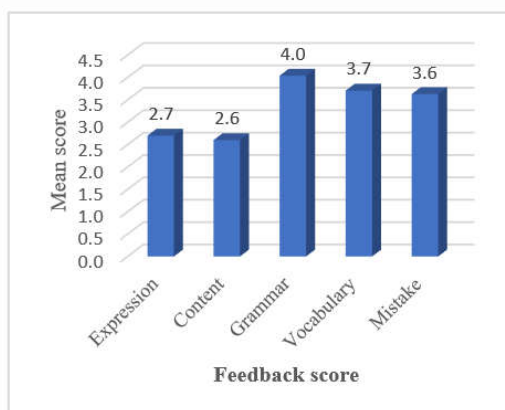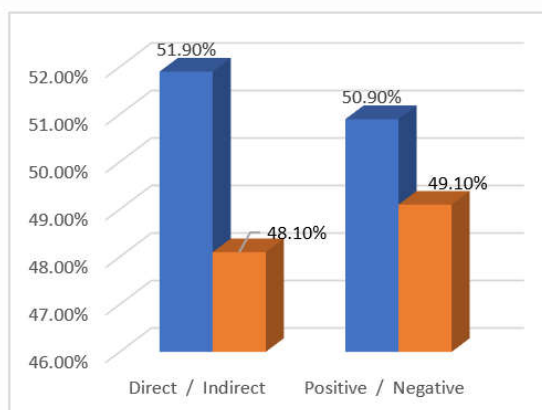

Figure 2a: Feedback content

Figure 2b: Forms of feedback

4.3 Attitude and behavior of the writer when receiving feedback from friends

The attitude of students when receiving feedback from friends about their writing is shown in Figure 3a. The analysis results showed that 61.8% of students surveyed said that they were "always care" and "care" about the feedback of their friends. This shows that students are interested in using peer feedback in improving their writing. Faulconer et al. (2021) suggested that this problem is due to the impact of psychological effects, and that it occurs in an environment without the pressure and stress of the teacher's judgment.

In addition, Figure 3b also shows that students are also very focused on fixing according to your feedback (90.3%) students will perform repair related activities such as learning or adjusting to your feedbacks. In which, the sources for students to rely on to correct the essay include teacher support, ask the respondent to explain more, look up references or self-correct the article. However, the ability of students to correct themselves is only 47.5%, and the ability to ask teachers for support to correct their homework is still limited (27%). This shows that students are afraid to ask for help from teachers. Meanwhile, Fathman & Whalley (1990) argue that teachers will act as facilitators and facilitators to guide students in the feedback process, which helps students to get more understandable explanations and more reliable. Similarly, Okyar & Eksi (2019) said that teachers have an important role as facilitators in this activity. On the other hand, up to 39% of students choose to look up references to learn or correct after receiving feedback. Meanwhile, Tribble (1996) argues that reference materials only help students correct grammar errors or sentence construction, but do not have much effect on problems related to content or presentation of article ideas.
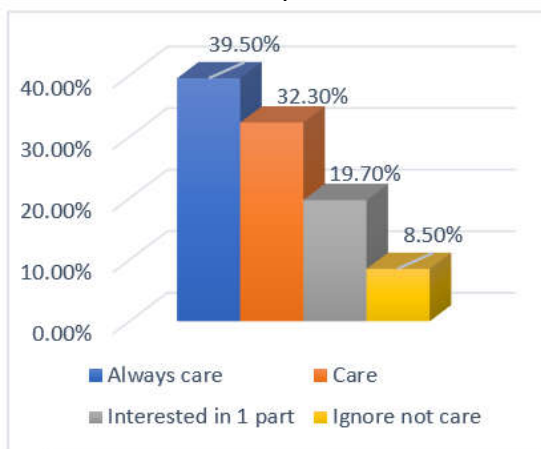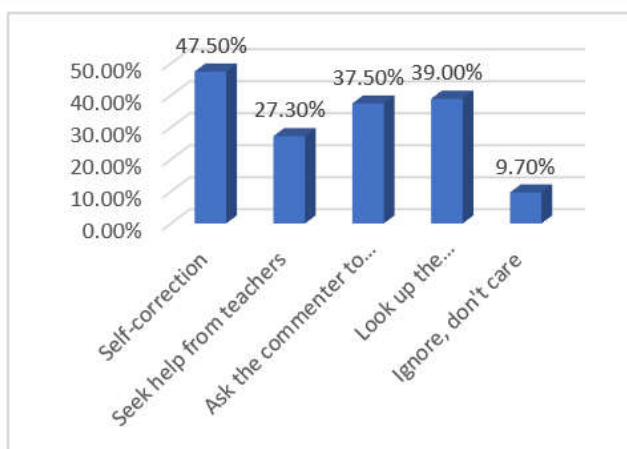

Figure 3a: Student's attitude

Figure 3b: Student's behavior

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The results of our research show that students are very interested in having their friends respond to their writing. At the same time, most students think that they will review and correct according to the feedback to make their writing more complete. Besides, the percentage of students who can correct their own writing is still low, but the effective use of help channels such as teachers' support is still low. In addition, feedback from friends is often related to errors in vocabulary and grammar mainly, other responses such as text content, ideas, and expressions are still limited.

In order to improve the quality of feedback as well as make effective use of the feedback of friends on the article to improve the writing skills of students in foreign languages, we recommend that educational institutions, teachers as follows: Increasing the application of the writing feedback method in training students' writing skills; Raise awareness among students so that they see the importance of writing feedback in enhancing their foreign language writing skills; In addition, teachers need to show more in their role as a guide for those who respond to articles and those who receive feedback. In this way, the content of the feedback will be high-quality, multi-radiant, and the recipient of the feedback will edit the article more effectively.

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