The Effects of Peer Assessment on EFL Students' Writing Performance at a Lower Secondary School inTien Giang Province - Vietnam

Tran Hong Canh*–Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam*

ABSTRACT:
A vast majority of second language learners encounter difficulties when they learn writing in the target language of English and students at lower secondary schools is not an exception. On the account of the differences in their background knowledge, their lack of appropriate strategies in learning writing and so forth, students find it challenging to master the writing skill in English. To address this problem, students need to obtain an insightful understanding of the nature of writing as well as support from more capable or experienced learners like friends or teachers. In this sense, this study was conducted to aim at investigating the effects of peer assessment (PA) on EFL students' writing performance, preferentially in the scenario of lower secondary schools.One hundred students at Le Ngoc Han Lower Secondary School were assigned into control group and experimental group. The students in the experimental group were treated with PA while those in the control group were instructed with the traditional technique. The research instruments of pre-test and post-test were employed to measure the students' writing performance before and after the treatment. Simultaneously, a questionnaire was used to investigate students' attitudes towards PA in their learning writing. The findings of the study uncovered that PA considerably improves EFL students' writing ability and a large number of the participants had positive attitudes towards PA in their learning writing.Therefore,the teachers' implementation of PA in teaching writing in lower secondary schools should be encouraged with a view to enhancingthe students' writing performance.
Keywords: writing performance, effects, peer assessment, attitudes, enhance

I.   INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that writing is one of the fundamental skills in learning English, yet it is often thought that it is so challenging for learners to acquire. The reality shows that although writing tasks are integrated in English curriculum, including the piloted English curriculum and taught formally in nearly all secondary schools, a vast majority of English students still fail to write well up to their teachers' expectations. Despite this, lots of teachers still scratch their heads to figure out suitable methods to promote their students' writing performance.

In considering the importance of writing in teaching and learning English as well as the difficulties that learners encounter in developing their writing ability over time in an EFL context, considerable number of studies have been conducted to explore the impacts of various techniques in enabling students to become better writers, especially the effects of peer assessment on students' writing performance. However, to date, studies investigating the effects of peer assessment on EFL students' writing performance have yielded mixed results, with some studies showing an effect (Cho, K. & MacArthur, 2011; Gielen& De Wever, 2015; Gielen& De Wever, 2012) and others not showing an impact on performance (Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, &Struyven, 2010; Sluijsmans et al., 2004). In addition, in Vietnam, there is little research addressing this debating issue. Above all, most previous studies have participants who are university students, and only few studies whose participants are secondary school, especially lower secondary school students have been publicized. The above-mentioned reasons are the incentive for the researcher to conduct the study into the impact of peer assessment on EFL students' writing performance at lower secondary schools.

In alignment with the problem that was previously stated, this study mainly aims at investigating how peer assessment affects students' writing performance and students' attitudes towards peer assessment in their learning writing.

In light of the aforementioned aims, this research seeks the answers to the two following questions:
(**1**) To what extent does peer assessment affect students' writing performance?
(**2**) What are students' attitudes towards peer assessment in their learning writing?

This study could provide teachers and students with perspectives of the potential usefulness of peer assessment in teaching and learning writing to enhance students' writing performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer assessment (PA)

Peer assessment or PA for its abbreviation, as a formative type of "assessment for learning" or "formative assessment" that fosters student-centered evaluation, has widely been discussed (Lee and Hannafin, 2016; Panadero et al., 2016; Wanner and Palmer, 2018). Additionally, through the lens of O'Donnell, A.M. & Topping, K.J (1998, p.256), peer assessment is an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value or quality of a product or performance of other equal-status learners. In this sense, Strijbos, J. W. &Sluijsmans, D (2010) hold a view that peer assessment is an educational arrangement where students judge their peers' performance quantitatively and/or qualitatively and which stimulates students' reflection, discussion and collaboration. In the same vein, Jones, I. &Alcock, L. (2014) views peer assessment as a collaborative learning activity in which peers participate in judging and assessing each other's work. Furthermore, peer assessment is a precious "learning how to learn" technique (Li et al. 2012) thanks to its positive influences on motivation and involvement in learning of students regardless of their age (Reinholz, 2016; Tenorio et al., 2016). It greatly supports students since they are responsible for their learning empowering each other's achievements through peer response and evaluation (Tillema et al. 2011). It is also deemed to be an effective method of boosting students' appreciation of their own learning potential (Lynch et al. 2012).

It is well established that it is rather challenging to identify what the theories underlying peer assessment are owing to their great variations. Topping (1998) asserts that peer assessment could be grounded on Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). The core tenet of this theory is that knowledge is enhanced through the learners' interactions in social contexts and cultural settings. Vygotsky (1978) states that learning is of social origins and an individual's development cannot be comprehended without a reference to its social and cultural contexts. He also claims that higher mental functions work in case learners interact with one another and with the outside world. One of the key concepts of Vygotsky's Social Constructivism is the More Knowledgeable Other. Vygotsky (1978) defined it as someone with higher skills or more experiences than the learner regarding a certain task such as teachers, parents and even peers. According to Van Der Stuyf (2002), in a scaffolding instruction, a More Knowledgeable Other provides support to facilitate a learner's development.

Another fundamental concept of Social Constructivism that is in line with the More Knowledgeable Other is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined by Vygotsky (1978, p.86) as the distance between the "actual development level" of a learner and "potential development" that can be attained through the guidance of adults or in the collaboration of more capable peers. To wrap it up, Vygotsky's social constructivist approach covering the aforementioned concepts of the More Knowledgeable Other and the Zone of Proximal Developments serves as the grounds for most formative peer assessment models in which students first act on what they can do individually; subsequently with the aids from peers, teachers or other supporting systems, students can develop their concept knowledge and improve the quality of their work. Also, it is the interplay between students during peer assessment that potentially promotes learning and skill acquisition; therefore, less able students can elevate their competence (Zone of Proximal Development) via the help from more capable peers (More Knowledgeable Other).

Writing

According to Harmer, J (2001), writing is a form of communication to deliver or express through written form. Olshtain, E., &Celce-Murcia, M. (2001)explain that writing is an act of communication, which suggests an interactive process which takes place between the writer and reader via written text. Cohen, L. & Riel, M. (1989) defines writing as a communicative act, the way students share observation, information, thoughts, or ideas with themselves and others. Nunan (2003, p. 88) views writing as a physical and mental process since it deals with graphic representation of speech and thoughts presented in a well-mannered structural way. As a whole, writing plays a momentous role in language acquisition since it aims at conveying not only information but insights to others as well. Jacob in Ismayanti (2008, p.22) sketches five basic components of writing, namely content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Peer assessment and writing

According to Elfiyanto (2019, p.434), there are certain positive effects of applying peer assessment on students' writing performance. To begin with, peer assessment makes it possible to increase students' ability in writing. Additionally, peer assessment fully develops students' cognitive thinking in a way that it optimizes students' interaction, confidence, critical thinking skill and builds interpersonal relationship between peers. What is more, peer assessment makes economical and efficient use of the students' and the teacher's time; nevertheless, it is not to say that the teacher is no longer in charge of assisting upgrading his/her students'

writing ability. Ultimately, peer assessment greatly benefits students in gaining their writing performance by stimulating peers to discuss, reflect and collaborate with their peers. In the view of Topping (2018, p. 17), peer assessment can be used to students' interpersonal skills in case they are given sufficient guidance, thus it has positive impacts on students' learning and needs. Liu et al (as cited in Double, K. S., McGrane, J. A., &Hopfenbeck, T. N., 2020) argue that peer assessment is likely to improve the interaction or feedback communication in response to their written work and reviewing peers' work potentially trains them to become better reviewers of their own work and facilitates them a lot in revising and further improves their writing performance. If peer assessment is carried out on a regular basis, it can enhance positive learners' attitudes towards peer assessment. Falchikov (2001) is in an agreement that peer assessment engages students in assessing their peer's paper and putting notes or comments on grammar, ideas organization, vocabulary, structure, punctuation and so forth, which establishes students' mutual learning in every dimension of writing such as content accuracy, vocabulary knowledge, grammar and sentence structure and also ideas organization. In alignment with this, Falchikov (2001) affirms that the utmost objective to get students to assess their peers' writings is to enable them to teach and learn from one another, thereby promoting their writing performance.

Procedure of applying Peer Assessment (PA) in teaching and learning writing
Nguyen Thi Gia Dinh (2014) forms a writing process with seven stages which she combines the theory stated by Richards and Renandya (2002) that the writing process comprises four main stages, namely planning, drafting, revising and editing with three other stages in a writing classroom which are responding (sharing), evaluating and post-writing as below.

a. Planning (Pre-writing)
Richards and Renandya (2002) defines planning or pre-writing as an activity which aims to create an encouragement for students to write and stimulate their thoughts for an outset of the writing. Some tools such as brainstorming, clustering, free writing and WH-questions are employed.

b. Drafting
Grounded on the ideas gathered from the planning stage, students are engaged in writing the first draft. Specifically, the writer develops or outlines the ideas suggested in the former step: Planning. Ideas are organized logically, structurally and lexically to make the reader understand the message of content with relative ease.

c. Responding
At this stage, students work together to give response to their peers' writing with their teacher to get their feedback. In this stage, students are encouraged to focus on the meaning or the fluency of writing without paying much attention to grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft. In Lee (2009)'s view, this stage is very beneficial due to the fact that it activates collaborative learning and mutual learning through their peers' responses.

In this research, at this stage, the teacher focusses on the integration of PA in teaching writing. To be more precise, students are allowed to figure out and correct the mistakes of their peers. That is the students share their drafts, read and give feedback to their peers' ones. Students employ the writing checklist (Table 1) provided by the teacher to give comments and feedback for the others' drafts in terms of the flow of the draft.

d. Revising
At this stage, the student writer has a check and figures out the error made by him/her. The errors in content, organization, language use, vocabulary, capitalization, and spelling then can be revised.

e. Editing
At this stage, students edit their own work or their peers' writing in terms of the form such as grammatical aspect, spelling, punctuation, dictation, sentence structure and accuracy with quotations or examples (Richard and Renadya, 2002)

In this study, at this stage, the PA technique is further used. To be more specific, this time the students focus on giving comments on the form of their peers' writings with regard to grammatical aspect, spelling, punctuation, dictation, sentence structure and accuracy by using writing checklist (Table 1) and the correction codes indicating error types for corrective feedback (Table 2).

f. Evaluating
At this stage, the writing teacher assigns scores based on the rubrics with specific criteria which may be analytical (describing particular aspects of writing) or holistic (overall interpretation of the effectiveness of the writing), thereby helping students become more responsible for their own writing.

g. Post-writing

       Richard and Renadya (2002) mentions some activities included in this stage which are publishing, sharing, reading aloud, role-playing or displaying texts on notice-boards. Accordingly, students are enabled to exhibit their work they are writing for a very real purpose.

Figure 1. The framework of writing process using PA

Table 1. Paragraph writing checklist

Direction: Use this checklist to proofread your peer's paragraph

5-1 is the rating scale for each category

5: Very good; 4: Good; 3: OK; 2: Improvement needed; 1: Unsatisfactory

CATEGORY	5	4	3	2	1
* Topic sentence/ Main idea Topic sentence is strong and clearly stated the main idea, and it stimulates interest.					
* Supporting ideas & explanations Consistent development of main idea. It creates Interest through details and a variety of sentence structures.					
* Concluding sentence The concluding sentence is complete and effectively restates the main idea.					
* Organization/ Fluency Well-organized with clear topic, body and conclusion. Flows logically. Consistent focus on topic.					
* Word choice & Grammar Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. Uses descriptive language. Neat final draft.					

Table 2. Correction codes indicating error types for corrective feedback

No	Code	Meaning	Kinds of error
1	WC	Word Choice	The words are inapplicable with the sentences/ meaning.
2	WF	Word Form	Wrong word form.
3	^	Missing word	There is a missing word in the sentence/ you should add a word here.
4	?	Unclear meaning	The meaning is not clear. Write in another way to make the meaning clearer.
5	S/V A	Subject-Verb Agreement	Subject and verb do not agree.
6	⌀	Not necessary	The word is not necessary in this sentence.
7	Prep.	Preposition	Wrong preposition.
8	Art.	Article	Use article a, an, or the for singular noun.
9	WO	Word order	Wrong word order.
10	SP	Spelling error	You have to check and correct the spelling of the word.
11	Capt.	Capitalization	The word should be started by capital letter/ not capital.
12	Punct.	Punctuation	There is something wrong with the punctuation, you have to add punctuation here (coma, fullstop, etc.).
13	VT	Verb Tense	Wrong tense/use another tense.
14	DNS	Does not support	The developing sentence does not support the main idea.
15	More	Need More	Need more developing sentence.
16	Org	Organization	You have to check the sequence of your developmental paragraph.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants involved in this study are 100 ninth-graders of Le Ngoc Han Lower Secondary School in the school year 2021-2022. Class 9^2 with 50 students will be chosen as the experimental group (EG) and Class 9^5 with 50 students is the control group (CG). The participants' level of English is nearly the same based on the result of the placement test at the beginning of the academic year 2021-2022. The researcher will choose these two classes for this study since the researcher is now in charge of both Class 9^2 and Class 9^5, so it is so convenient for the researcher to conduct the study, especially administering the questionnaire and the tests (pre-test and post-test) to participants. The description of the participants' characteristics regarding gender and duration of English learning is summarized in the Table 1 below.

Table 3. Description of participants' characteristics

Participants		The control group (9^5)	The experimental group(9^2)
Number		50	50
Gender	Male	30	27
	Female	20	23
Duration of English learning	1-5 years	0	0
	> 5 years	50	50

Research methods

The major aim of this study was to get an insight into the effects of peer assessment on EFL students' writing performance. Hence, an experimental research design was employed. However, in order not to cause any confusion to the organization of the classes of the school, this study will apply a quasi-experimental design without random assignments.Overall, the research design in this study is in alignment with the quantitative approach.

Additionally, the textbook "*Tieng Anh 9*" of the new English curriculum published by the Ministry of Education and Training was used during the experiment. The book comprises 12 units. Each unit is composed of seven subsections with the total seven periods of teaching. It is designed in terms of two main parts respectively: language input of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation in Getting started, A closer look 1 and A closer look 2 and skills development including Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing in Communication, Skills 1, Skills 2 and Looking back and Project. The writing part in Skills 2 of six units of the second semester (Unit 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) aims to teach students how to write a paragraph about a topic related to the content of each unit which is detailed in Table 4 below. The experimental group was treated with peer assessment while the control group was not.

Table 4. Specific objectives of each unit

Unit	Title	Content
7	Recipes and eating habits	Write a paragraph about the eating habits of a classmate
8	Tourism	Write a paragraph about the negative effects of tourism on an area/country
9	English in the world	Write a paragraph about the uses of English in everyday life
10	Space travel	Write a paragraph about why space travel is popular nowadays
11	Changing roles in society	Write a paragraph about the roles of teenagers in the future
12	My future career	Write a paragraph about the qualities one needs to be able to do a certain job

Instruments

The data of this study were obtained through tests (a pre-test and a post-test) and a questionnaire. The detailed description of the instruments employed in this study to measure the students' writing performance as well as investigate their attitudes towards peer assessment in learning.

Procedure of the study

The study was conducted in 12 weeks in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022, from April 11th to June 18th, 2022. This study went through three main stages. In the first stage, all the instruments were piloted to ensure that the students could understand how to do the pre-test and post-test and give responses for the questionnaire items, then a pre-test was administered to all of the participants and the results are recorded for the subsequent comparison. In the second stage, the experimental group was treated with PA in their English writing lessons, whereas the control group was instructed without the employment of PA. In this case, the researcher acted as a teacher for both experimental and control groups. What is noted is that apart from the distinction regarding the instructional method of using PA, both groups are in common in the aspects of the teacher, duration time and the textbook. The final stage engaged all participants in the post-test. The results of the post-test were then put in a detailed analysis and comparison with the pre-test results to clarify the

differences in writing performance enhancement of participants from the two groups. After the post-test was a questionnaire which was delivered to participants of the experimental class to get an insight into their attitudes towards the utilization of PA in English writing classes.

Data analysis

The analysis of questionnaire data was based on the answers from 50 students of the experimental group. The data from 20 closed-ended questions of the questionnaire will be processed with the use of quantitative analysis. That is students' choices in the questionnaire were synthesized and the data was converted into a machine-readable format. In accordance with this, the responses from the participants were coded into numbers, from 1-5 (1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree). Frequency, percentage and the mean value of each statement were calculated with the aid of SPSS software. Grounded on these statistical values, readers might comprehend how students went through the treatment with PA. To determine the minimum and maximum length of the 5-point Likert scale, the mean range was calculated by (maximum – minimum)/n = (5-1) / 5 = 0.8. According to Likert, R (1932), the length of the mean scale was then determined as below, together with the level of support:1 to 1.80: strongly disagree (SD); 1.81 to 2.60: disagree (D); 2.61 to 3.40: neutral (N); 3.41 to 4.29: agree (A); 4.21 to 5.00: strongly agree (SA).

Data collected fromthe pre-test and the post-test were analyzed to examine the students' writing performance before and after the treatment by the researcher. A comparison between the control and experimental group was carried out to make sure that the students' writing ability before the treatment was similar. As far as the post-test scores are concerned, an analysis of the data served as the evidence for possible improvements in the students' writing performance after the treatment. In order to make the data analysis more convenient and reliable, the researcher used the SPSS software to process the data. The individual scores were grouped to differentiate the two groups' results. Nevertheless, the researcher was in charge of reasonable analysis and interpretation and informed conclusions that can be drawn afterwards. Besides, a differentiation of means was examined and certain underlying assumptions of the Independent samples t-test were tested as well.

For convenience in interpretation, the scores of tests after being marked were put into clusters in terms of frequency and percentage. Specifically, the scores of the tests were put into five clusters, namely Weak (marks: 0–4.9), Average (marks: 5 – 6.9), Fair (marks: 7–7.9), Good (marks: 8– 8.9) and Excellent (marks: 9.0-10). These test scores of the same levels for each group in the pre-test were put into comparison with the test scores of the post-test so as to see if there was any progress in the participants' writing performance in the experimental group compared to that in the control group.

Validity and reliability of the instruments
   * Questionnaire:
The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess the reliability of the questionnaire survey. A commonly accepted rule of thumb for describing internal consistency is as follows.

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient(George & Mallery, 2003)

Cronbach's alpha	Internal Consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 \geq \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

It is essential to have "Cronbach's alpha" value equal or greater than 0.7 and "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" value is equal to or greater than 0.3 for each item. If the "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" value of any question item is below 0.3, this might lead the researcher to consider removing this item from the questionnaire (Pallant, 2005).

* Tests (Pre-test and Post-test):
The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also used in this study to assess the reliability, or internal consistency of a set of scale or test items. In addition, to ensure the validity of independent samples t-test, it is essential to check the assumptions about normal distribution of the test scores of the two groups. At this stage, the researcher employed Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test to assess the assumption of normal distribution of the tests' scores of both groups and Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) Plots which helped compare two probability distributions by plotting their quantiles against each other.

IV. RESULTS

Data analysis and interpretation of tests' scores

The main content of this section is to analyze the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups. Each test is graded by two teachers (coded score 1 and score 2). Before analyzing the thesis, the researcher used SPSS to determine the inter-rater reliability between scorer 1 and scorer 2 by the Pearson correlation method. Here are the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two scorers:

Table 6. Pearson correlations of pre-test

Correlations		Scorer 1	Scorer 2
Scorer 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.972[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Scorer 2	Pearson Correlation	.972[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The results of testing the correlation between the pre-test scores of the first rater and the second scorer showed a strong Pearson correlation with statistical significance (r = 0.972, sig. = 0.000 < 0.05.). This means that the scores of the two teachers on the previous test are strongly correlated.

Table 7. Pearson correlations of post-test

Correlations		Scorer 1	Scorer 2
Scorer 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.960[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Scorer 2	Pearson Correlation	.960[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The results of testing the correlation between the post-test scores of the first and second raters show a strong Pearson correlation with statistical significance (r = 0.960, sig. = 0.000 < 0.05.). This means that the two teachers' scores on the post-experiment test are strongly correlated.

* Distribution of grades

The distribution of pre-test scores of the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) is presented in Chart 1 below.

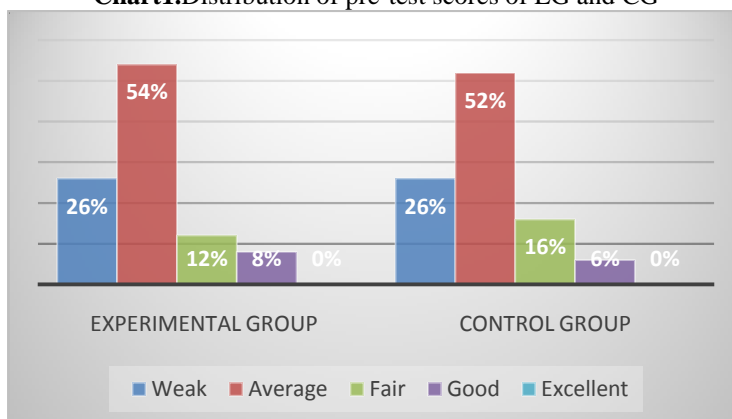**Chart1.** Distribution of pre-test scores of EG and CG

Chart 1 above shows the distribution of the pre-test scores in the CG and EG. The chart shows that the percentages of average scores (52%) and fair scores (16%) of the CG are a bit higher than those of the EG (average scores account for 54% and fair scores account for 12%). Meanwhile, the ratio of the students getting

weak scores (26%) and good scores (6%) in the CG is a bit lower than those of in the EG (26% for weak scores and 8% for good scores).

The distribution of post-test scores of the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) is presented in Chart 2 below.

Chart 2. Distribution of post-test scores of EG and CG
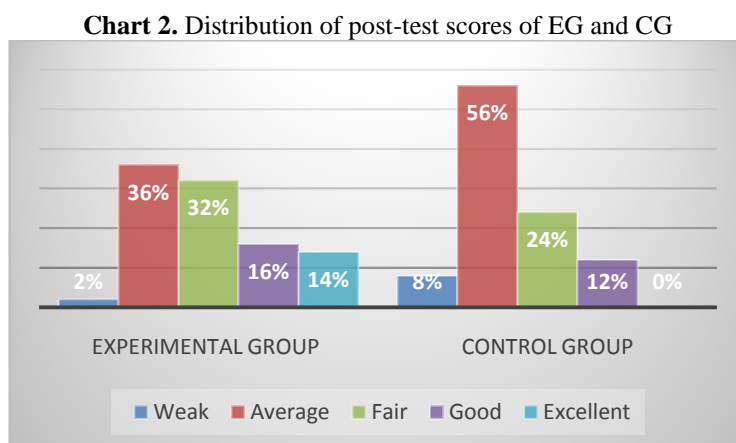
As presented in Chart 2, the percentage of weak scores of the CG (8%) is still higher than that of the EG (2%). The percentage of average scores of the CG (56%) is higher than that of the EG (36%). The percentage of fair scores of the CG (24%) is lower than that of the EG (32%). The percentage of good scores of the CG (12%) is lower than that of the EG (16%). The percentage of excellent scores of the EG is 14%, whereas no students in the CG got excellent scores.

The aforementioned results uncover that the distribution of groups of scores (weak, average, fair, good, and excellent) in each of the groups before and after the treatment of PA is somehow distinctive. Therefore, it is very essential to calculate the mean scores of both groups to decide if there is any difference. Accordingly, an independent samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores to determine whether the difference is statistically significant.

* Comparison of mean scores
Independent samples t-test on the pre-test of the CG and EG

Table 8. Group statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	EG	50	5.6850	1.43642	.20314
	CG	50	5.6800	1.30544	.18462

The independent samples t-test on the pre-test of the CG and EG is presented below.

Table 9. AnIndependent samples t-test on the pre-test of the CG and EG

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower	Upper
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	1.186	.279	.018	98	.986	.00500	.27450	-.53973	.54973
	Equal variances not assumed			.018	97.118	.986	.00500	.27450	-.53980	.54980

Tables 8and 9present the results of mean scores and t-tests, respectively, in the experimental and control groups' pre-experiment tests. The analytical results in Table 4.3 show that the standard deviation of the pre-test of the experimental group is 1.43642 higher than the standard deviation of the control group (STD = 1.30544). Alternatively, to put it another way, there is more variation in the scores on the pre-test of the experimental group than in the control group. The mean in CG (X = 5.68) was lower than in EG (X = 5.685)

The analysis results are shown in Table 4.4 for the Sig value. = .279 is higher than the probability level of .05 established at the beginning of the study. The variances of the two groups are equal, so the t value in the firstrow Equal variance is used.

The results in Table 9 show the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.986 higher than the 0.05 probability level established at the beginning of the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) of no difference between the two groups cannot be rejected. Therefore, the difference in the pre-test mean scores of the two groups was not statistically significant. In general, the level of students in the two groups was the same before the experiment.

Independent samples t-test on the post-test of the CG and EG

Tables 10 and 11below present the results of mean scores and a t-test of the CG and EG

Table 10. Group statistics

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	EG	50	7.2050	1.22546	.17331
	CG	50	6.2500	1.32288	.18708

Table 11. Independent samples t-test on the post-test of the CG and EG

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	.330	.567	3.745	98	.000	.95500	.25502	.44892	1.46108
	Equal variances not assumed			3.745	97.432	.000	.95500	.25502	.44888	1.46112

The test results presented in Table 10 show that the experimental group's mean value of post-experiment test scores (X = 7,205) is higher than that of the control group (X = 6.25). This shows that the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups are significantly different. Specifically, the mean score of the experimental group was higher than the mean score of the control group (7.205 > 6.25). The standard deviation of the experimental group (STD = 1.22546) is lower than the standard deviation of the control group (S.D. = 1.32288). This means there is more variation in the score after the control group's test.

Table 11 show that the value Sig.= .567 > .05 was established at the beginning of the study. The variances of the two groups were equal, so the t value in the first row was used.

Besides, the results in Table 11 show the value of Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < 0.05 was established at the start of the study. This means that hypothesis H_0 is rejected. Based on this result, it can be concluded that the participants in the EG got more improvement in their writing performance than those in the CG.

* Checking assumption about normal distribution of the tests' scores

To ensure the validity of the result of the t-test, a K-S test and a Q-Q plot were conducted to check the assumption about normal distribution.
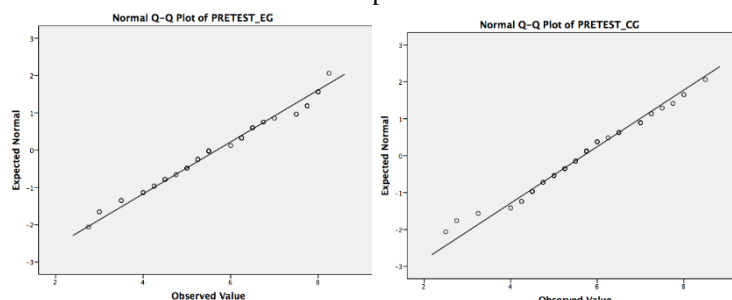
Checking assumption about normal distribution of the pre-test's scores of the control group and experimental group

Table 12. Tests of normality in the pre-test's scores of the CG and EG

	Mean (X)	S.D.	Min	Max	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
					Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test EG	5.685	1.43642	2.75	8.25	.093	50	.200[*]	.971	50	.254
Pre-test CG	5.68	1.30544	2.5	8.5	.099	50	.200*	.983	50	.699

The analytical results presented in Table 12 are the results of the K-S test of pre-test scores of the CG and the EG. The results show that both groups haddifferent minimum and maximum values (the EG had a Min of 2.75 and a Max of 8.25; the CG had a Min of 2.5 and a Max of 8.5). Besides, the value of Sig. in the CG was 0.699 (> 0.05), and this value of the EG was 0.254 (> 0.05). From these values, it can be seen that the pre-test score distribution of both groups is significantly normal. Chart 3below confirms the above-mentioned statistics.

Chart 3. Normal distribution of the pre-test's scores in the CG and EG

As illustrated in Chart 3, the expected values are straight diagonal, and the observed values are individual points. It can be seen that the observed values fall along the line. This means that the data is normally distributed. From the above data, it can be concluded that the pre-test scores of both groups are normally distributed.

Checking assumption about normal distribution of the post-test's scores of the control group and experimental group

Table 13. Tests of normality in the post-test's scores of the CG and EG

	Mean (X)	S.D.	Min	Max	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
					Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Post-test EG	7.205	1.22546	4.75	9.25	.085	50	.200[*]	.962	50	.111
Post-test CG	6.25	1.32288	3.00	8.75	.115	50	.095	.968	50	.189

The analytical results presented in Table 13 are the results of the K-S test on test scores after the experiment of the CG and EG. The results show that both groups have different minimum and maximum values (the experimental group has a Min of 4.75 and a Max of 9.25; the control group has Min of 3.00 and a Max of 8.75). Besides, the value of Sig. in the control group was 0.189 (> 0.05), and this value of the experimental group was 0.111 (> 0.05). From these values, it can be seen that the distribution of test scores after the experimentation of both groups is significantly normal.

Chart 4. Normal distribution of the post-test's scores in the CG and EG
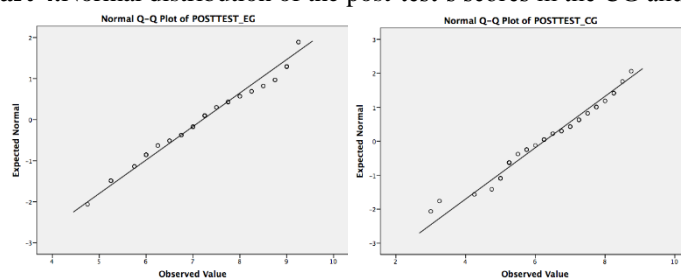
As presented in Chart 4, the expected values are straight diagonal, and the observed values are individual points. It can be seen that the observed values fall along the straight line. It means that the data are normally distributed. Grounded on the data, it can be concluded that the distribution of scores after the experiment of both groups is normal. Based on the results of the K-S test and the Q-Q graph, the distribution of scores before and after the test of both groups was shown to be normal. Hence, it can be claimed that the result of the t-test is valid and tight.

To put it briefly, the above analysis and interpretation of data shed light on the strong evidence that learning writing in the EG with the application of PA technique produced higher results than that in the CG without the implementation of PA. This means that the writing performance of the participants in the EG have improved more considerably than that of the students in the CG.

Data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire
* Checking reliability of the questionnaire
Table 14. The results of testing the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Question	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Cronbach's Alpha = .930				
Q1	74.6000	156.571	.705	.925
Q2	74.7800	156.093	.743	.924
Q3	74.7600	159.696	.583	.927
Q4	74.6200	158.853	.662	.925
Q5	74.6600	158.392	.697	.925
Q6	74.7600	156.064	.689	.925
Q7	74.7000	154.010	.685	.925
Q8	74.7600	154.717	.676	.925
Q9	75.0200	156.673	.671	.925
Q10	74.8800	157.904	.597	.927
Q11	74.8600	157.837	.604	.927
Q12	74.9200	158.891	.587	.927
Q13	74.8600	165.511	.395	.930
Q14	74.7400	162.686	.567	.927
Q15	74.7800	159.849	.584	.927
Q16	74.8400	159.770	.545	.928
Q17	75.1400	158.409	.518	.929
Q18	74.7800	162.624	.611	.927
Q19	74.6800	163.896	.458	.929
Q20	74.9200	159.585	.629	.926

(Source: Analytical results using SPSS 20.0)

The evaluation of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the observed variables all have Corrected item-total Correlation above 0.3, and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scales is all > 0.6. This shows that the scales ensure the necessary reliability. Therefore, all of these scales are used in the following analysis steps.

* Students' attitudes towards peer assessment in learning writing
  Students' attitudes towards the benefits of peer assessment in English writing classes

To investigate students' attitudes towards the benefits of peer assessment in a writing class, the researcher designed ten survey questions, and the survey questions were measured using a 5-level Likert scale. Below is a descriptive statistic describing the experimental class students' evaluations of the benefits of peer assessment:

Table 15. Students' attitudes towards the benefits of peer assessment in English writing classes

Question item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Peer assessment enables me to concentrate more in writing classes.	50	2.00	5.00	4.1400	1.01035
2. Time seems to elapse quickly during a writing lesson with the implementation of peer assessment.	50	2.00	5.00	3.9600	.98892
3. My activeness is boosted in learning writing with peer assessment.	50	2.00	5.00	3.9800	.99980
4. Using peer assessment helps me establish good rapport with my peers via providing responses to my peers' writing papers.	50	2.00	5.00	4.1200	.93982
5. The co-operation among peers and me is enhanced when peer assessment is employed in writing classes.	50	2.00	5.00	4.0800	.92229
6. The lessons seem more gripping when peer assessment is utilized in English writing classes.	50	1.00	5.00	3.9800	1.05926
7. I will become more centered in writing classes when I assess my friends' writings.	50	1.00	5.00	4.0400	1.17734
8. I feel more motivated and responsible for my peers' writing when being asked to take the role of an assessor.	50	1.00	5.00	3.9800	1.15157

9. My problem-solving skills are considerably improved thanks to the application of peer assessment in writing classes.	50	1.00	5.00	3.7200	1.05056
10. My former perspective on learning writing has changed positively as a result of peer assessment implementation in writing classes.	50	1.00	5.00	3.8600	1.08816
Valid N (listwise)	50				

(Source: Analytical results using SPSS 20.0)

The survey results show that students appreciate the benefits of peer assessment in English writing classes. The survey questions have an average score of high to very high (ranging from 3.72 to 4.14 points). The specific results are as follows:

The point of view with the highest average score was that peer assessment helped students concentrate more in the writing class (Mean=4.14; STD=1.01). Students' second most perceived benefit is that peer assessment helps them establish good relationships with their peers by providing feedback on their colleagues' writings. their (Mean=4.12; STD=0.94). Another benefit that students perceive at a very high level is that through the implementation of peer assessment, students have increased cooperation with their peers in the writing class. (Mean=4.08; STD=0.92).

Next, students reported being more focused in writing class when they assessed their classmate's writing (Mean=4.04; STD=1.17). With a high average score of 3.98 points, it is the view that through the implementation of the peer assessment method, students can promote their positivity (Mean=3.98; STD=0.99), motivation, and ideas more accountability for their classmates' writing when students are asked to take on the role of reviewers (Mean=3.98; STD=1.15) and the peer assessment approach makes lessons more engaging (Mean=3.98; STD=1.05).

The benefits of the peer assessment that help the learning time pass quickly are highly appreciated by students with Mean= 3.96; STD = 0.98. In addition, students said that their previous views on learning to write had changed thanks to teachers' implementation of the peer assessment method (Mean=3.86; STD=1.08) positively. The lowest perceived benefit by the experimental class students was that the peer assessment method helped students improve their problem-solving skills (Mean=3.72; STD=1.05)

Students' attitudes towards the effects of peer assessment on their writing performance

To investigate students' attitudes about the influence of peer assessment on their writing performance, the researcher designed ten survey questions, which were measured using a 5-level Likert scale. The following statistics describe experimental class students' assessments of the effects of peer assessment on their writing performance:

Table 16. Students' attitudes towards the effects of peer assessment on their writing performance

Question item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. I can finalize the structure, organization and content of my writing with relative ease owing to my peers' relevant feedback.	50	1.00	5.00	3.8800	1.08119
12. I can modify my drafts effectively with my peers' assistance of feedback.	50	1.00	5.00	3.8200	1.04374
13. My evaluation skills gained from peer assessment potentially helps me improve my writing performance in the long run.	50	2.00	5.00	3.8800	.89534
14. I am able to better organize ideas and use language more properly for the next writings, which is a very crucial factor in learning writing.	50	2.00	5.00	4.0000	.83299
15. I get more experiences to avoid making the same mistakes made in my peers' writing.	50	1.00	5.00	3.9600	.98892
16. My writing process happens smoothly when the I take the main role in writing classes.	50	1.00	5.00	3.9000	1.05463
17. I can become more organized in writing when I am provided with clear rubrics for writing.	50	1.00	5.00	3.6000	1.19523
18. I will become more conscious of error making in the process of writing.	50	2.00	5.00	3.9600	.78142
19. It is irrefutable that I have become more experienced in providing feedback to my peers' work.	50	2.00	5.00	4.0600	.91272
20. I feel a sense of good direction for writing from my peers' assessment in alignment with my teacher's guidance.	50	2.00	5.00	3.8200	.94091
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The survey results showed that students appreciated the impact of teachers implementing peer assessment in writing classes on their writing performance. The average score of survey questions ranges from 3.6 points to 4.06 points. The specific results are as follows:

The greatest impact perceived by grade-schoolers was that peer assessment has helped them gain experience providing feedback on their classmates' work (Mean=4.06, STD=0.91). Then there is the view that peer assessment helps them better organize their ideas and use language more properly in their writing, which is a factor that plays a role important in learning to write (Mean=4, STD=0.83). The third biggest influence perceived by students is that peer assessment helps students gain experience to avoid making the same mistakes in the writing of their classmates in which they take on the role of evaluator. (Mean=3.96, STD = 0.98) Moreover, students will be more aware of common mistakes made in the writing process (Mean=3.96, STD = 0.781). The majority of experimental students reported that their writing went more smoothly when they took on the main role in writing classes (Mean=3.9, STD=1.05).

Next, there are two views with the same high average score of 3.88 points, which is the view that through the peer assessment method, students can improve their structure, organization, and content with relative ease (Mean=3.88, STD=1.08) and skills acquired in peer assessment help students improve their writing performance in the long run (Mean=3.88, STD=0.89).

The notion that students can effectively revise their drafts with peer feedback support has a mean score of 3.82 and a standard deviation of 1.04. Sharing an average score of 3.82 points is the view that students have good writing direction from their peers with the guidance of teachers. The view with the lowest average score is that students can become more organized in their writing when they are provided with clear assessment standards for writing (Mean = 3.6, STD = 1.19)

V. DISCUSSIONS

Findings on the effects of peer assessment onthe students' writing performance

The data analysis and interpretation of tests' scores in Chapter 4 show that the scores of the students in the experimental and control group were similar the pre-test (before the experiment) and different in the post-test (after the experiment).The result of the pre-test before the experiment showed that the students of both groups are at the same level in their writing performance. Specifically, the difference in the pre-test mean scores of the two groups is proved to be statistically insignificant via a t-test. Its means that there is no difference in the students' writing performance between the two groups. It is favorable for the research to apply the treatment of using peer assessment to the students of the experimental group.The result of the post-test after the experiment indicated that the students of the experimental group obtained better results. Specifically, the comparison of the post-test mean scores between the two groups clarifies that the students in experimental group get more improvement in their writing performance than those in the control group.

To put it briefly, on the grounds of the aforementioned findings, it can be concluded that the integration of PA in teaching and learning writing helps the students improve their writing performance substantially. This finding is in alignment with those of the previous researchers, such as Kustati&Yuhardi (2014), Do NhatNhu Quynh (2021), who claimed that PA makes more progress in writing and enhances the guided learning and students' problem-solving skills.

Findings on the students' attitudes towards peer assessment in their learning writing

From the data and interpretation of questionnaire in Chapter 4, it is indicated that the majority of the students in the experimental group show their positive attitudes towards PA in their learning writing.

In regards to the benefits of PA, most of the students in the experimental group sided that it plays an essential role in the process of learning writing. To be more precise, the students become more concentrated and active in learning writing. In addition, it helps them build better rapport with their peers, thereby boosting their co-operation in writing classes. Also, PA contributes making the students become more centered in their learning writing because they have to do most of the work in writing classes under the guidance of the teacher. Simultaneously, the students feel a sense of motivation and responsibility when being asked to the role of an assessor for their peers' writings. Accordingly, their problem-solving skills are considerably improved thanks to the application of peer assessment in writing classes. Last but not least, PA can help change the students' former perspective in a more positive direction as a result of PA implementation in writing classes.

In terms of the effects of PA on the students' writing performance, most students are in an agreement that it tremendously assists them in improving their writing performance. To begin with, through classmates' comments, the students can recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their writings, whereby they can figure out ways to improve their writings in particular and their writing performance in general. It bears resemblance to the view of Tsui and Ng's (2000) that through peer feedback, learners can gain a more profound sense of audience writing, control/ownership of the writing, and a perception of the pros and cons. point of his post. To

be more specific, they can modify their drafts effectively with their peers' feedback; finalize the structure, organization and content of their writings; become more conscious of error making in the process of writing and have the ability of organizing ideas and using language more properly for subsequent writing, which is a significant factor in learning to write. Additionally, since they have more awareness of making errors in writing, they can avoid making the same mistakes formerly made in their peers' writings. Finally, the students feel a sense of good direction in writing from their peers' assessment in line with the teachers' guidance, thus making their writing process happen more and more smoothly.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted to figure out the responses to the two research questions posed in the first chapter of this study:

1. To what extent does peer assessment affect students' writing performance?
2. What are students' attitudes towards peer assessment in learning writing?

The findings of the study, discussed in the previous chapter, indicate that:

1. Thanks to the application of PA, the students' writing performance is considerably improved. To be more specific, despite the similarities of the writing performance of the students of the EG and the CG at the beginning of the study, the writing performance of the EG considerably outweighs that of the CG.

2. The majority of the students express highly positive attitudes towards PA in learning writing. Particularly, they positively take PA into consideration in learning writing to improve their writing performance and boosting their motivation, activeness and problem-solving skills in learning writing.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the study findings and discussion, certain positive recommendations for both teachers and students in using PA technique to improve the students' writing performance can be made as follows.

* For teachers
Pre-assessment training

For students to respond effectively, teachers need to raise students' awareness of the activity – including its role and considerations – early in the course and what needs to be done throughout the learning process.

Raising students' awareness of the importance of peer assessment

To perform PA effectively, students must have the right attitude towards this activity. Therefore, teachers need to help students understand the importance of peer assessment and give it in a positive, effective, and responsible manner. By emphasizing that students at the same level can also make helpful comments, teachers will reduce the chances of students belittling classmate comments or the students will be irresponsible when responding to their peers' work. Furthermore, teachers can also increase the accountability of responders by evaluating the comments themselves. The bottom line is that teachers need to ensure that students know the purpose of peer assessment and the responder's role as a critical reader rather than a classmate bug hunter.

Training learners to evaluate classmates' writing

Making students aware of the importance of giving effective feedback is the first step in guiding students to become effective responders. It is even more essential to train students to respond to classmates' writing. Here are some things teachers can do to support students' assessment:

- Instruct students to focus on specific aspects of the writing. Specifically, students need to focus on the content side of the essay (i.e., how the ideas and ideas are organized) and not on the grammatical or formal errors in the first writing. For later writing, students should focus more on formal errors (e.g., grammar, expression, sentence structure).

- Teachers need to provide students with directional questionnaires to assess their peers work. This is considered the most critical job, so students can rely on it to give their friends appropriate comments according to the teacher's orientation. Another issue to keep in mind is that for each different type of writing, a specific response-oriented questionnaire is required for that type of writing. Teachers should avoid using generic questionnaires so that students' feedback will also be general, not going into the specific content of each writing.

- One of the most effective activities for feedback is that teachers have feedback exercises for students to work individually, in pairs, or in groups to decide whether a piece of writing is good or not. This way, students can know what aspect to focus on when giving feedback and what issues they need to keep in mind when writing a paragraph.

Intervention activities

Supporting students when giving classmates feedback is a long, ongoing process requiring teachers always to be available to assist. Even if students already know how to assess their friends' work, they will always encounter problems and in that case, they need the help of teachers. Furthermore, teachers should also comment on the feedback students write to classmates so that the respondent can make more accurate and responsible comments in the following times. In this way, both teachers and students will benefit from the activity because students can consult about issues that they are not clear about; in turn, teachers will get a better view of this activity; through that, they can make changes to operate more suitably for students.

Discussion after peer assessment

This is considered a very effective activity, whereby teachers and all students in the class can discuss issues in responding to a particular writing. Generally speaking, when doing this activity, the teacher can pick out the typical errors in the students' writing, collect those problems, and let the students make comments and ways to fix the problems. Teachers also give students time to ask questions about issues they are not clear about during the editing process and allow commenters time to explain their unclear comments. Furthermore, students can sit together to discuss how to improve a particular piece of writing.

Evaluating comments from students

Teachers need to ask students to submit all writing, especially those with peer comments/feedback. That way, the teacher can see how students have rated classmates' work: what is good, what is not. In this way, they can encourage students to give constructive and highly critical comments.

* For students

It isadvisable that the students should more actively participate in the process of assessing their peers' writings and have more positive attitudes towards writing. In addition, the students are supposed to revise their writings more carefully before submitting their final product to the teacher. Finally, the students are expected to bear the peers' assessing their writings in mind so that the similar errors can be avoided in their final work or subsequent writings.

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