



## The Effects of Peer Feedback on EFL Students' Writing Performance

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### ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the common problem confronting English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in public schools is over-sized classes. This study investigates the utilization of peer feedback which is believed to reduce the teacher's workload and increase students' capability in learning a foreign language. The study recruited 84 EFL students who learn General Business English to be the participants, of whom 42 were in the control group and the rest in the experimental group. They were asked to write a business email after a period of instructions. The participants benefiting from peer feedback outperformed those who received conventional method although both groups had an overall higher mean score in the post-test. Most of the responses to the questions in the questionnaire reached high scales of the five-point Likert scale which showed that the experimental students appreciated peer feedback provided. Some recommendations and limitations are included in the paper for future exploration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Students are expected to learn English in an environment which enhances interactions with their friends (Monalisa & Ardi, 2013). This project aims to train a group of non-English majored students who major in Business at the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City to write English business emails to their partners. As these students, after graduation, are likely to work with their business partners, especially those who speak foreign languages other than their mother tongue, their knowledge of business emails is extremely necessary to help them advance at work. However, primarily, this project was carried out to test whether or not using peer feedback would ameliorate the quality of email messages, with the hope to provide a reference for training on using emails, letters or scripts in English for various purposes. As Hewitt (2006) puts it, email has appeared and become the primary medium used to communicate internally and externally within an organization with growing trend.

Moreover, Safdari (2021) affirms that writing contributes to the assessment of learners' academic achievement. However, according to Ma'azi and Janfeshan (2018), writing is thought to be an intricate skill for both native and non-native learners. For English as second language learners, writing skill can be a challenge since it requires them to obtain formal content, cultural schemata, and knowledge of script organization (Mokhamar, 2016). As Rass (2015) states, writing is a difficult skill for both native speakers and non-native speakers since the writing process asks the writer to concentrate on several aspects, namely content, organization, aim, audience, vocabulary and mechanics.

In recent years, peer feedback has received much attention from multiple researchers in EFL teaching and learning contexts (Chaudron, 1984; Cahyono & Rosyida, 2016; Pham et al., 2020; Elfiyanto & Fukazawa, 2021; Saeli & Cheng, 2021). Peer feedback is proved to be effective in teaching and learning writing skills as it can reduce the workload of EFL teachers and improve students' writing skills (Pham et al., 2020).

From the academic results of the students in their previous courses in English, the teacher author of the current study has noticed her EFL students' problems in business email writing. Hence, she hopes having the students read and comment on each other's writing drafts would help them improve their email writing after the treatment.

The present study aims at exploring whether training on using peer feedback can impact a group of undergraduate students in writing their business emails. As these non-majored English students are likely to work in international business entities after graduation, this impact can support important decisions to further consider writing strategies used generally and in writing emails in particular. In order to meet the objectives of the study, the author searched for the answers to the following questions: (1) To what degree does using peer feedback influence non-English majors' email-writing performance?; (2) How do these students perceive using peer feedback after receiving the treatment?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

#### 2.1.1. Writing

According to Kellogg and Raulerson III (2007, p. 238), "mature adult authors transform their own ideas as a consequence of generating text and reviewing their ideas and text. They come to use writing as a way of thinking through matters and constructing new knowledge structures in long-term memory". "Learning how to write a coherent, effective text is a difficult and protracted achievement of cognitive development that contrasts sharply with the acquisition of speech" (Kellogg, 2008, p. 2). Additionally, according to Nguyen (2009), writing skill places many demands on teachers and learners of EFL, and therefore a clear evaluation checklist should be designed and given to students.

#### 2.1.2. English language email writing

Park et al. (2021) states that the American writers are prone to use supportive moves like using promising compensation words and appear to compliment the addressee, the Korean writers appear to use more direct words to make their requests and go straight to the point. Thus, teaching email writing helped both of these groups raise awareness of what and how to write an appropriate email. This example has persuaded the author to introduce the email definition and format of it. Janani (2021) describes the email as follows.

What is a business email? Business email is just an email used particularly in businesses. A business email address will correspond to your domain name (name@leadmine.net) and every staff in a company has the same email address format.

An email writer is not only required to be proficient at linguistics, but also to master sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic norms to achieve communicative purposes at best (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). One prime example provided by Herck et al. (2022) is about the moves in a discourse structure of organizational email responses to customer complaints in a business-to-consumer context. They mainly searched for moves and submoves in emails. These typical submoves are Greeting, Gratitude, Conclusion, and Sign-off/Signature.

#### 2.1.3. Peer feedback

##### 2.1.3.1. Definitions of peer feedback

Peer feedback is believed to be effective in teaching and learning writing skills. It can reduce the workload of EFL teachers and improve students' writing skills (Pham et al., 2020). According to Oshima and Hogue (2007, pp. 18-19), peer feedback or peer editing occurs when "a classmate reads your paper and helps you improve the content and organization. A peer editor's job is to read, ask questions, and comment on what's good and on what might be changed or made clearer". Topping (as cited in Lan et al., 2011) says peer feedback takes place when a group of students work with each other or with one another. Teammates give each other comments on their teammate's work which can be in a written form or an oral one. In such activity, peers are requested to use a rubric to evaluate their friend's work instead of using their own judgment which tends to be personal and subjective. Smith et al. (as cited in Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014) indicate that peer feedback can have various written samples; it occurs like a writing conference in which the classroom teacher sits with the students as they are writing. These peers give each other comments on their work in the hope of producing a better or quality piece of work which has been corrected based on their peer's comments.

##### 2.1.3.2. The training of using peer feedback

Fritz et al. (2022) suggest that the formulaic language used in emails should be reviewed frequently during the course. Yu and Lee (2016a) show that peer feedback can help ameliorate the effectiveness of giving peer feedback. Rollinson (2005) explains feedback providers should be carefully trained to work together rather than to prioritize correcting things. Westwood (2008) mentions the feedback provider has to give constructively specific remarks as often

as possible. As Kroll (2001) puts it, shaping feedback is indispensable. In addition to remarks obtained from the classroom teacher, students have to be trained to apply the feedback so that it can help improve their own writing performance.

## **2.2. Related studies**

It would be helpful to look through several related studies that support the use of peer feedback in the classroom. Sirikarn (2019a) made an investigation into the effects of peer feedback on 21 undergraduate English majored students in Thailand. The findings revealed that based on the mean scores of the pretest and post-test, the students made significant progress in their writing ability. Furthermore, the students reflected that peer feedback was a worthwhile experience for social interaction, and supported them in perceiving the writing process, developing affective strategies, supporting critical thinking skills, and developing socially and intellectually via working collaboratively. In the same vein, Sirikarn (2019b) provided us with a finding about students' attitudes toward peer feedback to develop their English writing ability. The researcher used mixed methods to collect the data. The research sample included 21 undergraduate English majored students. The findings illustrated that the students had a positive attitude toward using peer feedback with a high level of agreement in the four domains including the writing process, affective strategies, critical thinking skills and social interaction ability. To further illustrate the usefulness of peer feedback, Uymaz (2019) explored the effects of peer feedback on the essay writing performance of eight EFL English preparatory students at a state university with intermediate English level. The study used the participants' first drafts prior to the experiment for analysis. Then, these students were asked to write their second draft using their peer's feedback. When investigating the pretest and post-test essays, the author found more improved post-test essays following the intervention of applying peer feedback. Similarly, Khalil (2018) also studied the effects of peer feedback on Turkish EFL learners at pre-intermediate level. To achieve his/her study objectives, the researcher used a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods. It revealed that the peer feedback process helped learners to improve their writing performance. As a result, the students had a positive attitude towards using peer feedback in EFL classrooms. Huisman et al. (2018) investigated 83 undergraduate students who took the role of peer feedback receivers or peer feedback providers on an authentic academic task. The participants were provided with guidance by looking for features such as content, structure and style of an essay. It was revealed that their final essays, thanks to peer feedback, were improved. They also found that the explanatory comments were the most useful technique in giving feedback and most preferred by feedback receivers. The peers could learn much from each other and were aware of their peers' comments. Furthermore, Yu and Hu (2017) found out that when the participants expressed their opinions, most of them were motivated statements about using peer feedback. Yu and Lee (2016b) surveyed 41 students and found poor language proficiency students could provide their peers with many useful comments with regard to forms, content, organization and other aspects related to their writing. It also uncovered that many students were satisfied with their peers' comments and agreed to revise their first drafts based on such comments. The students' mother tongue used during peer feedback activity helped improve their writing very much. Weiqiang (2014) claimed that the usefulness of peer feedback for draft revision was affected by five factors: (1) Students' knowledge of assigned essay topics; (2) Students' limited English proficiency; (3) Students' attitudes towards the peer feedback practice; (4) Time constraints of the in-class peer feedback session; (5) Students' concerns with interpersonal relationship.

Although many studies have advocated utilization of peer feedback in class, some of the studies raise concern over this technique. Kurihara (2016) carried out a study on the effects of the peer review on group's writing skills of 35 students. It showed that the students' performance who received feedback from the teacher was better, while the performance of those who received feedback from peers was not significantly different. There was no substantial difference between the post-test and the delayed post-test. Nguyen (2016) surveyed 49 English- majored Bachelor students in two classes of the third year English writing course in teaching EFL program. It pointed out that peer feedback practice was not formally implemented in this specific context, which means few opportunities for the EFL learners to enhance their metacognition could be provided from this feedback approach and they also expected changes to the peer feedback practice in their writing classes. Weiqiang (2014) found that the participants' perceptions of peer feedback on their EFL writing changed over time. The findings showed that the students' perception of the usefulness of peer feedback decreased over time. Parthasarathy (2014) had a training session for the student participants which focused on five aspects of writing: content, organization, language (grammar and vocabulary), spelling and punctuation. After the training, the students' compositions were assessed and the results proved their improvement. The study indicated that peer feedback could be an alternative to teacher feedback. Allen

and Mills (2016) stated that when poorer language students were partnered with competent student reviewers, the fewest suggestions were made. Also, those peers tended to revise their final draft when comments were made by the competent commenters. Liu and Carless (2006) suggested integrating peer feedback with peer assessment – the strategies to involve students in peer feedback activities and creating an environment for peer feedback to happen. To encourage students to give and receive feedback constructively and effectively, peers ought to emphasize peer feedback's usefulness instead of prioritizing in giving marks to each other's work. Nelson (2004) found that unclear comments made their classmates dissatisfied with the comments on their work and might resist revision later on. He also gave advice on how to give valuable comments, especially asking the questions with "Why". Moreover, the peer feedback provider has to make his or her comments meaningful and useful.

In a nutshell, many studies have found that peer feedback can help enhance learners' writing with the training of using it. However, many studies also revealed that peer feedback requires careful design and procedure. The teacher should be also flexible in grouping students.

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **3.1. Research design**

The study is an experimental study and uses only quantitative method to collect the data. In order to evaluate the impact of email-writing instructions on the students' competency in writing emails (one group with conventional method and the experimental group with the peer feedback strategy), the researcher conducted a pre-test which was used as an initial record for comparing with their post-test results later on following the instruction. The data of the pretest and post-test results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - version 22 (SPSS). Then, for the perception analysis, the author employed the quantitative method to analyze the experimental participants' perceptions on employing peer feedback in their final email-writing after receiving peer feedback instructions.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The study recruited two groups of English-majored students at University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City (UEH) by using convenience sampling method. All of them were directly instructed by the researcher. The controlled group included 42 students and the experimental group consisted of 42 students. All of them were willing to participate in the treatment. These students originated from various backgrounds. Ten of them resided in Ho Chi Minh City and the rest came from other provinces, especially from the south of Vietnam. Only five of them came from the north of Vietnam. Of 84 participants, 65 were males and the rest were females. Their English proficiency was equivalent to A2 level according to the Common European Framework for Reference. That means they can understand daily communications in English. They all began studying English from their 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and continued to study it up to the time of the study. When they took part in this investigation, they were in their General Business English class, so again they are exposed to English.

#### **3.3. Materials**

The textbook entitled *Market Leader*, a business teachers' resource book - pre-intermediate (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) by Cotton et al. (2012) was used as the main resource to teach these two groups of the students. The book is an integrated skill one, so the students are trained to use all four language skills. Since the core course book does not have a variety of email purposes, the researcher also used a supplementary website extracted from IELTS Tutor – Formal and Informal Registers in English language (2021). The material consists of useful vocabulary, formulaic expressions, grammar and email formats of formal and informal emails. The samples are well-described. Then, as the experimental group was trained on using "peer feedback" to give comments on each other's email products, the researcher also lent support from Oshima and Hogue (2007), who contributed their useful peer-editing worksheet to this activity.

#### **3.4. Instruments**

The author employed two instruments. The first instrument is the email writing pretest and post-test as the sources for analysis. To obtain these emails, the author conducted an email writing pretest and post-test for both groups. The criteria used to rate these emails were adopted from the rubrics of the Cambridge test for B1 level. Furthermore, to measure their email-writing performance, the author adopted a 20-point email scoring rubric which comprises four main domains: Area 1: Content (worth 5 points); Area 2: Communicative Achievement (worth 5 points); Area 3: Organization (worth 5 points); and Area 4: Language use. To obtain more information about the experimental participants, the researcher also employed another tool to collect the participants' perspectives on peer feedback

giving during peer-feedback activities. To do this, a questionnaire was designed to elicit the responses from the experimental group participants. The questionnaire contains two parts: Part one is about the participants' demographic data (i.e. address, gender, years of learning English). The second part of the questionnaire, which was adapted from several related studies, concerns the usefulness of peer feedback providing from the participants' viewpoint. Each response is rated using a five-point Likert Scale (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree and 5: strongly agree).

### ***3.5. Procedure of the treatment***

There were six class meetings during the intervention, each of which contained a session to teach writing business emails. Each writing session lasted 100 minutes in the whole time allowance of 250 minutes in each meeting. These class meetings took place once a week over a period of one and a half month. The arrangement for the treatment included the following steps: In the first meeting, the instructor, also the researcher of this project, started with conducting the pre-test. The students were provided with guided words and phrases to write their emails. The pretest was conducted in two classes in the same week. The researcher explained the purpose of the pre-test whose score would be used as 20 percent weight of their in-class ongoing assessment grade, so they all tried to do their best to obtain a good grade. The time allowance for this pre-test was 30 minutes. All the participants in each class were seated separately to prevent them from copying each other's work. They were not allowed to use dictionaries or any English materials. The pre-test email scripts of these 84 students were collected for analysis and comparison later on with their post-test emails. In the second class meeting, the researcher had the students write their first business email. This email served as the announcement of a software company introducing identity cards for certain staff within their apartment. This second meeting was seen as a crucial session as all the participants were introduced with the email format, formulaic expressions and grammar used to write such emails. The participants had 30 minutes to complete the task individually without consulting each other's ideas. In the control group, the participants did not join any peer-feedback activities, while their counterparts, the experimental group benefited from peer-feedback giving activities. The participants in the experimental class were provided with an editing worksheet to write down their comments on their classmate's email. They worked closely together in groups of 2 or 3, which could help reduce shyness in providing and receiving their peer's comments. Each group had 10 minutes to read and find out important features such as email purpose, language, format of the email. Then, they wrote their comments on the editing worksheet and gave it to their friends when finishing commenting. All the participants who received the comments would revise their first draft which would be then submitted to the instructor for reference and marking. In the third meeting, the instructor spent some time reminding what the students needed to improve. To allow this email writing and peer-feedback practice to occur, the instructor spent 2 periods of the class time (100 minutes per meeting) each week in a period of 4 consecutive weeks (not including the week for pre-test and one delayed week for post-test) practising such activities. This same time allowance was applied to the control group. After finishing their first draft email writing, the participants in the control group handed in their emails and then listened to the instructor's comments as a whole class; no peer feedback was involved. The instructor immediately picked up some of the students' emails randomly and commented on these emails and asked the students to copy down what they needed to improve for their current emails and future ones.

For both research groups, in the third meeting, the instructor spent some time reminding what the students needed to improve before moving to writing the second email. Then at the fourth meeting, the process took similar steps as they were in the second class meeting. They wrote a requesting email. The fifth meeting class took the same steps as what they did in the second, third, and fourth meeting, but this time they were asked to write a complaint email to their boss. The difference between the two groups was only described in the second meeting. In the sixth meeting, the participants were asked to sit for the delayed post-test which lasted 30 minutes. The students were provided with guided words and phrases to write emails. They were seated similarly to the arrangement in the pre-test to prevent plagiarizing. The test-takers were not allowed to refer to any dictionaries or materials.

### ***3.6. Data collection and analysis***

For the pretest, 42 emails in the control group and 42 emails in the experimental group were collected for analysis. The author looked at the email scripts provided by the participants by both groups. For the post-test, the author analyzed the email scripts provided by the participants of the two groups. The researcher used the rubric of writing an email to rate these students' email writing performance. Then, the scores of the pre-test and post-test of both groups were processed with SPSS software to find out the mean score of each criteria. The process of analysis of

these emails from the pre-test and post-test took the researcher approximately two weeks to finish. After that, the scores of both tests were compared within the same group and then between the two groups. Finally, the researcher started to run the SPSS for the internal reliability of the responses to the questionnaire and then for the mean score of the experimental groups' individual responses regarding the usefulness of peer-feedback giving.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics (Source: Author)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.923	.924	14

The result of this internal reliability proves that the questionnaire is reliable to be used for further analysis.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Findings

#### 4.1.1. Students' email-writing tests

The tables below show the results of the email writing pre-test and post-test of the control and experimental groups.

Table 2. Comparison of the performance between the two groups

Writing tests	Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	sig
Pre	Control	42	11.86	.872	0.04	.217	.829
	Experimental	42	11.90	1.12			
Post	Control	42	13.40	.964	0.86	3.92	.000
	Experimental	42	14.26	1.04			

The maximum mean score located for both tests is 20. As can be seen from Table 2, the overall mean score of the control group obtained from the pretest is 11.86 with standard deviation of .872 while that of the control group reached 11.90 with standard deviation of 1.12. Hence, the mean scores of the two groups at the pre-test are not quite different, which is considered suitable for the study, especially when the study employed the treatment in hope to improve the experimental group's email writing skills.

After the intervention, the results from Table 2 indicate that the performance of the experimental group surpassed its counterpart ( $M = 13.40$  and  $M = 14.26$  respectively). There is a significant difference with  $\text{sig.} = .000$ .

Table 3. Comparison of the four criteria between the two groups before the study

Features	Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	T	sig
Content	Experimental	42	3.19	.397	0.02	.282	.779
	Control	42	3.17	.377			
Communicative Achievement	Experimental	42	2.98	.412	-0.02	.330	.742
	Control	42	3.00	.221			
Organization	Experimental	42	3.14	.354	0.02	.320	.750
	Control	42	3.12	.328			
Language use	Experimental	42	2.60	.497	0.03	.219	.827
	Control	42	2.57	.501			

Table 3 describes the criteria mean scores of the two groups in terms of content, communicative achievement, organization, and language use in the pre-test. Regarding the results of the control group, the overall mean scores of some criteria among the experimental group are slightly higher than those of the control group such as content (3.19, 3.17, respectively), organization (3.14, 3.12, orderly), and language use (2.60, 2.57, in order). The control group's

result is just slightly better than its counterpart in the communicative achievement area (3.00, 2.98). However, the difference of the four areas is not significant with sig. values of over 0.05. It can be explained that the performance of the two groups before the treatment is quite similar regarding these four aspects.

*Table 4. Comparison of the four criteria between the two groups after the study*

Features	Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	T	sig
Content	Experimental	42	3.79	.415	0.22	2.13	.036
	Control	42	3.57	.501			
Communicative Achievement	Experimental	42	3.69	.468	0.15	2.24	.028
	Control	42	3.45	.504			
Organization	Experimental	42	3.67	.477	0.24	2.23	.028
	Control	42	3.43	.501			
Language use	Experimental	42	3.12	.328	0.17	2.40	.019
	Control	42	2.95	.309			

When looking at the results in Table 4, it can be seen that the mean scores of each area were improved after the instruction. The mean score of each area illustrated the development following the treatment. The difference is significant with all sig. values of below 0.05.

*Table 5. Paired sample test of the four criteria in the control group before-after the study*

Features	Test	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	T	sig
Content	Pre-test	42	3.17	.377	0.40	5.28	.000
	Post-test	42	3.57	.501			
Communicative Achievement	Pretest	42	3.00	.221	0.45	5.82	.000
	Post-test	42	3.45	.504			
Organization	Pre-test	42	3.12	.328	0.31	4.29	.000
	Post-test	42	3.43	.501			
Language use	Pre-test	42	2.57	.501	0.86	5.02	.000
	Post-test	42	3.43	.501			

Table 5 shows the detailed results of the email writing pre-test and post-test among the control group. The results regarding all the criteria from the post-test are higher than those of the pre-test with the mean difference of content: 0.40, communicative achievement: 0.45, organization: 0.31, and language use: 0.86.

*Table 6. Paired sample test of the four criteria in the experimental group before-after study*

Features	Test	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	sig
Content	Pre-test	42	3.19	.397	0.60	7.76	.000
	Post-test	42	3.79	.415			
Communicative Achievement	Pre-test	42	2.98	.412	0.71	9.12	.000
	Post-test	42	3.69	.468			
Organization	Pre-test	42	3.14	.354	0.53	6.72	.000

	Post-test	42	3.67	.477			
Language use	Pre-test	42	2.60	.497	0.52	6.71	.000
	Post-test	42	3.12	.328			

Table 6 demonstrates a more specific result of the email writing pre-test and post-test in the experimental group. The results of all the criteria in the post-test are higher than those of the pre-test with the mean difference of content: 0.60, communicative achievement: 0.71, organization: 0.53, and language use: 0.52. The mean scores of the post-test are recorded to be higher than those of the pre-test.

#### 4.1.2. Students' perceptions on peer feedback providing

As can be seen, the questionnaire is reliable for further investigation with Cronbach's Alpha, .923 as seen in Table 1 in the methodology section.

Table 7. The participants' responses to peer-feedback providing in email-writing

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel email writing is more interesting.	42	3	5	4.29	.508
I feel email writing is easier.	42	3	5	3.79	.565
I feel I can use appropriate moves and sub-moves in email writing according to the purpose.	42	3	4	3.48	.505
I feel more active and motivated when I write emails.	42	3	5	3.79	.565
To improve my email writing skills, I would like to have more feedback from peers.	42	4	5	4.45	.504
I can improve my email writing in general.	42	3	5	4.26	.544
I can reduce my English grammatical errors.	42	3	5	3.86	.521
I can arrange ideas logically.	42	3	4	3.48	.505
I can use linking words better in emails.	42	3	5	3.79	.565
I can use connective devices flexibly, such as firstly, secondly, thirdly, but, etc. in writing emails.	42	3	5	3.88	.504
I can use more appropriate words in my writing products, e.g. formulaic expressions in emails.	42	2	4	3.24	.576
I can avoid repetitive words.	42	2	4	2.98	.680
I can avoid spelling mistakes.	42	4	5	4.43	.501
I can use variety of English grammatical structures.	42	3	5	3.74	.544

Table 7 presents more detailed information on the EFL learners' opinions about peer-feedback technique in their email writing. The first question in the questionnaire can be seen as a motivational one "I feel email writing is more interesting", which obtained the mean score (M) of 4.29 and the standard deviation of .508. The following items were supported or strongly supported by the experimental group: "I feel email writing is easier" (M = 3.79), "I feel I can use appropriate moves and sub-moves in email writing according to the purpose" (M = 3.48), "I feel more active and motivated when I write emails" M = (3.79), "To improve my email writing skills, I would like to have more feedback from peers" (M = 4.45), "I can improve my email writing in general" (M = 4.26), "I can reduce my English grammatical errors" (M = 3.86), "I can use linking words better in emails (M = 3.79), "I can use connective devices flexibly, such as firstly, secondly, thirdly, but, etc. in writing emails" (M = 3.88), "I can avoid spelling mistakes" (M = 4.43), and "I can use variety of English grammatical structures" (M = 3.74). The other items



in the questionnaire, albeit receiving no ‘strong disagreement or disagreement’, obtained the mean scores of approximate 3.0, meaning these content items were not strongly advocated by the participants.

#### **4.2. Discussion**

The positive results allowed the author to begin implementing peer-feedback practice in her class to verify if it was effective in helping her students write business emails. After a four-week treatment, the author had 42 experimental students write an email for 30 minutes. Then, she also had 42 students in the control group write the same email for 30 minutes. All the test procedures were secured. The post-test results of the two groups showed an increase in the mean scores, and the mean differences within groups increased, which means after a conventional instruction, the students in the control group were able to advance their email-writing. However, the students in the experimental group obtained quite higher mean scores compared to their counterparts in the control group. Their intra-group mean difference was also significant (0.86). Such results can suggest that peer-feedback successfully helped these students in email-writing. These students had been trained on using how to provide their peers with their feedback in four weeks and many of them worked very hard. The author also recognized that they were thinking carefully by asking each other’s opinions before writing their comments on the paper. This attitude more or less contributed to the success of providing peer feedback and facilitating their email writing before handing it to the teacher.

The results obtained from the peer-feedback treatment confirming the positive effects on the students’ email writing skills resonate with the results from many of the related studies.

The results are aligned with the findings by Parthasarathy (2014), who emphasized that the participants after receiving peer-feedback were able to provide their peers with satisfied comments. Yu and Lee (2016) found out that with the help of mother tongue, especially with low-proficiency students, peer-feedback can help ameliorate their writing. The current positive results are also advocated by Huisman et al. (2018), who discovered that their participants were satisfied with using peer-feedback in their writing. The participants in the study conducted by Khalil (2018) were found to support peer-feedback application in writing. Uymaz (2019) found that the participants in the study produced improved essays in the post-test. Sirikarn (2019a, 2019b) found that peer-feedback helped more than that. The feedback users can develop their critical thinking skills, social skills, and intellectual reasoning through peer-feedback collaboration.

Regarding the attitudes towards the application of peer-feedback technique, the author believed that the participants were satisfied with the utilization of peer-feedback. Many of the mean scores and reliability of individual responses to the questionnaire supported this confirmed statement. Then, the study’s findings support the use of peer-feedback as found in the studies carried out by Weiqiang (2014), who found the participants in the study preferred using peer-feedback in their writing classroom. Yu and Hu (2017) discovered in their interviews with the participants that many of them were keen on using peer-feedback. For example, one of them said “It’s always better to give than to receive”, “Reviewing others’ work can help me reflect on my own writing and my ways of drafting English essays”. Additionally, Sirikarn (2019a, 2019b) asserted that the participants had a worthwhile experience for social interaction and intellectual development through working with their peers.

Although some studies have confirmed that peer-feedback can be used positively in the classroom, it has to be designed and developed carefully and used flexibly in class. For example, like what Liu and Carless (2006) suggest, peer-feedback needs transparent assessment, appropriate strategies, and a cozy atmosphere. Nelson (2004) states that a peer-feedback provider needs to give clear and useful comments on the classmate’s work. Nguyen (2016) also claims that the students asked for changes in using peer feedback and in practice of it in their writing classes.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

After the treatment and the one week-delayed post-test, the experimental students achieved better results than their placement test and their post-test result was found to be better than that of their counterparts who were instructed traditionally. The control group students also had their post-result higher than that obtained from their placement test. Then, in order to see how they thought about the peer-feedback providing, the author would also like to conduct a fourteen-question survey on their opinions about peer-feedback providing during their email writing activities. The result has proved that the experimental students are into using peer-feedback in helping each other to shape their emails.

### 5.2. Recommendations

The author would like to recommend the following aspects when conducting peer-feedback activities in the classroom. In order to have an effective feedback activity, the classroom teacher has to design a careful task (Liu & Carless, 2006). The task has to be about what the teacher wants to test their students to motivate learners in completing the task. Then, the teacher needs to provide a clearly-described rubric which helps define each criterion clearly and understandably. Next, he/she needs to plan all the steps involved in giving peer-feedback. This can include time allowance for each group to finish giving each other their comments (Nelson, 2004). This can include the strategy the teacher uses to designate each group which can be a mixture of males and females, or an assortment of lower and upper English proficiency students, and so on.

### 5.3. Limitations of the study

Hardly does the study avoid limitations. The current study has some limitations to be considered. First, as the study was conducted at the time of Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, some of the students in the class were absent for one week during the treatment. Then, these students were asked to read and give their feedback to the designated papers the day later, which made the author feel at rush with the classtime, sometimes. Next, the author was unable to collect a larger sample due to the Covid -19 pandemic context and the hybrid-instruction applied in some of the classes, so these 42 samples might not be generalized to other groups of students. One more limitation is that some of the students were found to be quite passive; as they did not very much engage in giving their feedback to their peers, but instead they tended to nod their head to show their approval frequently. By all accounts, some future research should take these problems into consideration to produce a more sound result.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Materials used in the procedure

Pretest	
	Read this part of a letter from John Biggs, who is the president of a business club.
1 <sup>st</sup> meeting	<p>As President of the Clifton Business Club, I would like to invite you to speak at our annual dinner on 5 July. The dinner which starts at 7.30 pm, will be held at the Mayflower Restaurant, Clifton.</p> <p>I hope that you are able to accept the invitation and would be grateful if you could give me the subject of your talk, so that I can include it on the invitations to our members.</p> <p>I look forward to receiving your reply as soon as possible.</p>
	<p>Write an email to Mr. Biggs:</p> <p>Accepting the invitation.</p> <p>Telling him the subject of your talk.</p> <p>Asking how long the talk should be.</p> <p>Enquiring whether accommodation will be arranged for you.</p> <p>Write about <b>80-100</b> words. Do not include postal addresses.</p>
2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting	Write an email to the Head of the Chamber of Commerce of one country you would like to choose to build a factory. You should introduce your company, present the reasons why you choose the country and suggest a possible meeting in order to discuss the proposal further.
3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting	Writing a letter of enquiry

You are Mr. Keith Liekerman, Marketing Manager of Vegetables Supreme. From the notes below, write a letter of enquiry to Mr. Fidel Englebert asking for the price list and some details about the product.

- + say who you are & show interest in purchasing and selling organic vegetables.
- + enquire some details about the product (*where the vegetables are grown and how to ensure that they are organically grown & providing regular supply of vegetables delivered fresh everyday*).
- + ask for the price list.

Replying to an email of enquiry

You are *Antonio McGuire, Regional Manager of Rainbow Farms*. Read the following email of enquiry written on February 10, 20XX, and from the notes below write a reply to the email.

4<sup>th</sup> meeting

Dear Sir or Madam  
 With reference to your advertisement of coconut oil in yesterday's *New York Times*, could you please send me a copy of your latest catalog?  
 Thank you for your prompt response.  
 Yours faithfully,  
 Rachel

Notes:

- + thank for enquiry.
- + mentioning: *finding attached product catalogue, hoping information provided can answer the query, contacting for further help / clarification if need be.*
- + close the email.

Andrea receives the following email from Pierre who works at Stockholm informing you about some changes of the next meeting with his company.

5<sup>th</sup> meeting

From: pierre.johnson@stockholm.com  
 To: varaandrea@gmail.com  
 Dear Andrea,  
 Thanks for sending the schedule.  
 Unfortunately, we have to change our plans owing to unexpected problems here at headquarters.  
 We cannot leave on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> as we intended. Instead, we are leaving for Budapest on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> on the same flight and returning to Stockholm on the Saturday morning.  
 The performance evaluation is very important. We want to have at least two full hours for that. The meeting with Ms. Koltai cannot be after that, either later in the day or the day after that, whichever is more convenient.  
 Apart from that, feel free to make any other changes you like. I apologize for the inconvenience this may cause you. Looking forward to seeing you soon.  
 With best wishes,  
 Pierre

Write an email to all Sales staff in your company. You should

- inform them of the change of time.
- encourage everybody to be there.
- apologise for possible inconvenience.

## Post-test

Read this note you have received from your boss.

Mary Brown at Head Office called to invite staff from our branch to have a tour around their new building. Could you reply? 20 people definitely want to go.

She wants to know which department we'd be most interested in seeing. She didn't say anything about what time the tour would start. Could you please check?

Thanks.

6<sup>th</sup> meeting

Write an email to Ms. Brown:

Thanking her for the invitation to the Head Office.

Telling her how many people are planning to go.

Saying which departments people would like to see.

Asking about the time of the visit.

Write about 80-100 words. Do not include postal addresses.

### Appendix B: Questionnaire on peer feedback providing

Dear students,

To help us, teachers, maximize our teaching expertise, the researcher would like to take your valuable time to answer the questionnaire related to the peer-feedback strategy (type of activity used to help students comment on each other's work in class using a rubric). Your responses will be kept for this investigation purpose and kept confidential.

There are 14 items in this questionnaire.

For each item, please indicate whether you (1) *strongly disagree*, (2) *disagree*, (3) *neutral*, (4) *agree*, or (5) *strongly agree* for these statements.

No.	Contents	SD	D	N	A	SA
	<i>After practicing peer feedback,...</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1	I feel email writing is more interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I feel email writing is easier.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel I can use appropriate moves and sub-moves in email writing according to the purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I feel more active and motivated when I write emails.	1	2	3	4	5
5	To improve my email writing skills, I would like to have more feedback from peers.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I can improve my email writing in general.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I can reduce my English grammatical errors.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I can arrange ideas logically.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I can use linking words better in emails.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I can use connective devices flexibly, such as <i>firstly</i> , <i>secondly</i> , <i>thirdly</i> , <i>but</i> , etc. in writing emails.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I can use more appropriate words in my writing products, e.g. formulaic expressions in emails.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I can avoid repetitive words.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I can avoid spelling mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I can use a variety of English grammatical structures.	1	2	3	4	5

Again, thank you very much!