

ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' WRITTEN FEEDBACK ON WRITING SKILLS OF THIRD-YEAR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: In the realm of higher education, the acquisition of proficient writing skills is deemed a cornerstone of academic success, particularly for students majoring in English. However, developing writing skills is a complex and challenging process that requires effective instruction and feedback. Central to this journey is the role of teachers, who, through their written feedback, become instrumental guides in shaping and refining students' writing abilities. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the perceptions, preferences, and attitudes of 56 third-year English-majored students at a university in Vietnam regarding teachers' written feedback on essays. The results show that students are engaged in essay writing and receive regular or frequent feedback. However, they have mixed emotions about feedback, ranging from eagerness to improve to feeling lost. They also have diverse preferences for feedback types, such as error correction, explanation, suggestion, etc. Most students agree that feedback helps their writing skills and motivates them to revise, but some also face challenges such as discouragement and uselessness. The study recommends a balanced and constructive feedback approach that considers students' varied needs and addresses their challenges, which can enhance the feedback experience for students.

Keywords: writing skills, written feedback, English-majored students, perceptions, preferences

1. Introduction

It is undeniable that writing is one of the most complex and challenging skills that requires constant practice and proper feedback. Feedback can be defined as “information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). Specifically, feedback from teachers is an essential component of the learning process, playing a key role in formative assessment and providing valuable information to both teachers and students regarding learner performance and progress towards learning goals (Brookhart, 2008). In essence, feedback is an indispensable element of the writing process, as it provides guidance, correction, and encouragement for students to revise and improve their drafts (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, providing effective feedback is not a simple task, and the fact is that not all feedback is equally helpful or appreciated by students. This is because the type, quality, and frequency of feedback may vary depending on the students' and teachers' preferences, beliefs, and practices.

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In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, feedback is particularly important, as EFL students often face difficulties in expressing their ideas, organizing their texts, and using appropriate language and conventions (Lee, 2017). Therefore, EFL teachers need to be aware of the best practices and principles of feedback and adapt their feedback to the specific needs and goals of their students.

One of the most common and widely used modes of feedback in EFL writing is written feedback, which refers to the comments, corrections, suggestions, or questions that teachers provide on students' written texts. Written feedback, in particular, is viewed as a powerful tool for directing responses, making improvements, and reducing grammatical errors in writing (Chandler, 2003). It is considered an essential element in resolving writing issues, with the quality of student writing seen as an indicator of the effectiveness of teacher feedback. Written feedback can be delivered in different ways, such as using symbols, codes, abbreviations, or full sentences, and using different media, such as paper, electronic, or online platforms. Written feedback can also focus on different aspects of writing, such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, or mechanics (Ferris, 2014). Research consistently emphasizes the pivotal role of written teacher feedback in enhancing students' writing skills, and in the realm of second or foreign language writing, both teachers and students recognize the critical importance of teacher feedback, influencing student writing significantly (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023).

However, written feedback is not always effective or beneficial for EFL students' writing development. Previous studies have shown that written feedback can have positive, negative, or mixed effects on students' writing performance, depending on various factors, such as the quality, quantity, clarity, consistency, and specificity of feedback and the students' level, attitude, expectation, and uptake of feedback (Ferris, 2006; Lee, 2008; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Moreover, written feedback can also create challenges and problems for both students and teachers, such as feedback overload, feedback misunderstanding, feedback neglect, or feedback dissatisfaction (Lee 2016). Meanwhile, Küçükali (2017) discovered that written feedback from teachers may not be advantageous for certain students due to its occasional lack of purpose and insufficient direct interaction with the teacher.

Therefore, it is important to investigate how written feedback is perceived and practiced by EFL students and teachers, and how it affects their writing outcomes and experiences. However, most of the existing research on written feedback has been conducted in Western contexts, such as the US, the UK, or Australia, where EFL writing instruction and feedback are often based on the principles of process writing, learner autonomy, and formative assessment. There is a relative scarcity of research on written feedback in Asian contexts, such as Vietnam, where EFL writing instruction and feedback may differ significantly from those in Western countries, due to the influences of Confucian culture, grammar-translation method, and summative assessment. For example, EFL teachers in Vietnam may tend to give more direct, corrective, and comprehensive feedback, while EFL students may expect more teacher authority, guidance, and evaluation. These differences may have implications for the effectiveness, appropriateness, and satisfaction of written feedback in EFL writing contexts.

The aim of this study is to fill this gap by analyzing the teachers' written feedback on the writing skills of third-year English-majored students at a Vietnamese university. In order to achieve the study objectives, the following research questions are raised:

1. How do third-year English-majored students at a university in Vietnam perceive teachers' written feedback on essays?
2. What types of teachers' written feedback are most preferred among third-year

English-majored students?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Types of Teachers' Written Feedback in Academic Writing

Teachers' written feedback in academic writing plays a critical role in guiding students toward improved writing skills and academic performance. It helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses, and it provides guidance on how to improve their writing skills. There are a number of different types of teachers' feedback, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

2.1.1. Corrective Feedback and Non-Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback, which is one of the most common and controversial types of feedback within the context of language teaching, involves addressing errors in student writing. Ellis (2009) emphasizes its role in rectifying linguistic errors in students' writing.

One of the main dimensions of teachers' written feedback is the form of feedback, which refers to how the feedback is presented or delivered. The form of feedback can be classified into two categories: corrective feedback and non-corrective feedback. Corrective feedback is feedback that points out and corrects errors in the writing, while non-corrective feedback is feedback that does not provide the correct answer but indicates that there is an error or a problem (Liao & Zhang, 2022). Corrective feedback can also be comprehensive or selective, depending on whether the teacher corrects all or some of the errors (Aseeri, 2019). Comprehensive feedback is feedback that attempts to identify and correct all the errors in the writing, regardless of their type or severity. Selective feedback is feedback that focuses on a limited number of errors, usually those that are more salient, frequent, or important.

The effectiveness of corrective feedback has been a controversial issue in EFL writing research. Some studies have found positive effects of corrective feedback on students' writing accuracy, fluency, and complexity, as well as on their motivation, confidence, and autonomy (Chandler, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Other studies have reported negative or mixed effects of corrective feedback on students' writing performance, attitude, and behavior, such as confusion, frustration, anxiety, dependency, and resistance (Lee, 2008; Zamel, 1985). Scholars like Truscott (1996) also caution against overemphasizing its role, suggesting that certain errors may be developmental and self-correcting. He pointed out the practical problems of written corrective feedback, such as the inconsistency, ambiguity, and overload of feedback, and the lack of student engagement and response. Additionally, overemphasis on error correction, especially in a manner that undermines fluency and creativity, can hinder students' overall writing performance (Ferris, 2012).

Corrective feedback can be further divided into direct and indirect feedback, depending on whether the teacher provides the correct form or only indicates the error (Ferris, 2010).

2.1.2. Feedback Explicitness: Direct and Indirect Feedback

The debate over the effectiveness of corrective feedback has also shifted to the comparison of direct and indirect feedback, and the factors that may influence their relative effectiveness. Direct feedback is feedback that explicitly shows how to improve the writing, such as by providing the correct form, rewriting the sentence, or giving a model answer. It involves identifying and correcting student errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and style. Indirect feedback, on the other hand, is feedback that gives hints or suggestions for

improvement but does not provide the exact solution, such as underlining the error, using symbols or codes, or asking questions.

Some researchers have argued that direct feedback is more effective than indirect feedback, because it provides more explicit and specific guidance to students, and reduces their cognitive load and confusion. For example, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) found that direct feedback led to significant improvement in students' writing accuracy, while indirect written corrective feedback did not. They also found that direct feedback was more effective for both simple and complex errors, and that it had long-term effects on students' writing development. Furthermore, Saito and Lyster (2012) argue that well-timed corrective feedback contributes to error reduction, particularly when addressing persistent linguistic errors. This process facilitates students' internalization of grammatical rules, positively influencing long-term language development. Other researchers have argued that indirect feedback is more effective in helping students to develop their writing skills more holistically, because it encourages students to engage in self-correction and reflection, and fosters their autonomy and critical thinking skills. For example, Chandler (2003) found that indirect feedback resulted in more improvement in students' writing accuracy, fluency, and complexity, than direct feedback. He also found that indirect feedback was more effective for both global and local errors, and that it had lasting effects on students' writing improvement. Similarly, a study by Ferris (2012) found that indirect feedback was more effective than direct feedback in improving the critical thinking skills of EFL students.

2.1.3. Feedback Focus: Local Feedback and Global Feedback

Another way of categorizing feedback in writing instruction is based on the level of focus: local and global. Local feedback is feedback that focuses on specific aspects or details of the writing, such as mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. On the other hand, global feedback is feedback that focuses on the student's writing process, rather than on their specific errors, which addresses the overall quality and structure of the writing, such as content, organization, coherence, and argumentation (Igarashi, 2018). Local feedback is usually associated with corrective feedback, while global feedback is usually associated with non-corrective feedback. However, both types of feedback can be either corrective or non-corrective, depending on the way they are delivered. For example, a teacher can provide local feedback by correcting errors directly or by indicating errors indirectly, and can provide global feedback by giving comments or suggestions on how to improve the writing through revision (Ferris, 2010; Kulhavy & Stock, 1989).

The balance between local feedback and global feedback is another contentious issue in EFL writing research. Some studies have suggested that global feedback is more beneficial than local feedback for students' writing development, as it helps them improve their higher-order skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, and their awareness of the rhetorical and communicative aspects of writing (Carless, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Nevertheless, it can be more challenging for teachers to provide global feedback, and it can be more difficult for students to understand and implement global feedback. For example, a study by Hyland (2003) found that students often had difficulty understanding the meaning of global feedback comments.

In contrast, other studies have argued that local feedback is also essential for students' writing development, as it helps them improve their lower-order skills, such as accuracy, fluency, and complexity, and their knowledge of the linguistic and stylistic aspects of writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Lee, 2008). However, local feedback can also be ineffective or

detrimental, especially when it is given in a delayed, inconsistent, or destructive manner. Local feedback can overwhelm or discourage the receiver, and make them focus too much on the form rather than the meaning of the task. For example, a study by Yamalee and Tangkiengsirisin (2019) found that local feedback on grammar errors did not improve the writing skills of EFL students, and that it reduced their motivation and confidence.

Some researchers have suggested that local and global feedback should be integrated and balanced in writing instruction, rather than seen as mutually exclusive or competing. For example, Ferris (2010) proposed a model of written corrective feedback that combines direct and indirect feedback, as well as comprehensive and selective feedback, depending on the type and number of errors, the purpose and genre of the writing task, and the proficiency and needs of the students. She also advocated for providing feedback on both form and content, and for engaging students in dialogue and revision based on the feedback.

2.2. The Role of Teachers' Written Feedback on Students' Writing Performance

Hattie and Timperley (2007) note that feedback has a substantial effect on students' learning and skill development. They emphasize that feedback should be specific, timely, and actionable to be most effective. Effective feedback serves as a powerful communication tool that informs students about their strengths and areas needing improvement, providing them with practical steps for enhancement. Constructive feedback not only corrects errors but also guides students toward deeper comprehension and improved skills. The provision of written feedback by teachers has been a subject of extensive research due to its profound impact on students' writing skills and overall language proficiency. Below are some of the key benefits associated with teachers' written feedback in the context of writing classes.

One of the primary benefits of teacher's written feedback is its role in enhancing students' writing skills. Teacher comments on grammatical errors (written corrective feedback) guide students toward more accurate language usage. By addressing common mistakes, such as verb tense inconsistencies or subject-verb agreement, students learn to apply corrections effectively. Research by Haniel and Listyani (2021) highlights that students can rectify grammatical structures, select appropriate vocabulary, and refine their sentence construction based on teacher feedback. Furthermore, written feedback focuses on content organization, coherence, and clarity. Teachers provide insights into paragraph structure, logical flow, and effective transitions. Students learn to create well-structured essays, reports, or narratives. Ferris (2014) emphasizes that feedback helps students understand how their ideas connect and how to express them coherently. As a result, their writing becomes more reader-friendly and persuasive. Research suggests that consistent exposure to quality written feedback correlates with improved language proficiency. In a study by Bitchener and Knoch (2008), students who received explicit corrective feedback demonstrated significant improvements in grammatical accuracy over time. The provision of targeted written feedback, therefore, serves as a valuable tool for reinforcing language rules and structures.

Apart from students' improvement of writing skills, effective written feedback has been linked to increased student motivation and engagement in writing tasks. Motivation refers to the interest, value, and goal orientation that students have toward writing, while engagement refers to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement that students display in writing activities. Research has shown that teacher feedback can positively influence both aspects of student learning. According to a systematic review by Camacho et al. (2021), teacher feedback can increase student motivation by providing constructive guidance, positive reinforcement, and clear expectations. When students receive personalized comments from teachers, they feel

acknowledged and supported to write more frequently, use more effective strategies, and produce higher-quality texts. Thus, students are more likely to be motivated to revise and refine their work when they perceive the teacher's feedback as constructive and supportive (Ferris, 2012). Another study by Vu et al. (2022) examined the reciprocal relationship between motivation and achievement in writing. The review suggested that motivation and achievement influence each other in cycles, where motivation leads to better performance, which in turn enhances motivation.

Teacher feedback can also enhance student engagement by creating a supportive and interactive learning environment. Feedback encourages students to actively participate in the writing process, to persist in revising and improving their work, to reflect on their learning outcomes as well as to spark students' interest, curiosity, and creativity, which are essential for engaging in writing tasks. According to a study by Zahida, Farrah, and Zaru (2013), students preferred feedback that focused on the meaning and content of their writing, rather than on the form and grammar, because it provided more specific, critical, and effective explanations that increased their motivation and creativity. The motivational aspect of written feedback, as discussed by Carless and Boud (2018), serves not only as a mechanism for skill improvement but also as a catalyst for sustained student engagement in the writing process. This sense of connection encourages active participation and persistent revision, ultimately contributing to improved writing outcomes.

In summary, teachers' written feedback serves as a catalyst for both skill development and student enthusiasm in writing classes. Accordingly, educators can create a supportive environment that is instrumental in shaping successful language learners.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 56 third-year English-majored students, who had a B1 or B2 level of English proficiency, from two classes at the Faculty of Foreign Languages. They were students who were taking the English Writing Skills 5 course in the first semester of the 2022 academic year. A convenience sample was used in this study for selecting the participants. The reason for choosing these participants was to explore their perceptions and preferences of teachers' written feedback on their essays. Their perceptions and preferences could vary depending on the types and focuses of feedback they received. The aim of the English Writing Skills 5 course was to equip students with strategies to write essays of Causes/Problems-Solutions, Opinion, and Advantages and Disadvantages.

3.2. Research Method

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to investigate the perceptions and preferences of third-year English-majored students at a university in Vietnam regarding teachers' written feedback on their essays. The questionnaire was administered to participants to gather quantitative data, while semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative data. By employing both methods, the study aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the research topic and generate meaningful data that could be applied to a broader context. The use of a mixed-methods approach helps strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collection methods consisted of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1. Questionnaire

This present work used a structured questionnaire, adapted from Aprilia et al. (2023) and modified to suit the context and purpose of this study, to investigate the perceptions and preferences of third-year English-majored students at a Vietnamese university regarding teachers' written feedback on their essays (see Appendix A). It consists of three main parts, namely A. General Overview of Teacher's Feedback (Question 1-2); B. Students' Perceptions and Attitudes towards Teacher's Feedback (Question 3-5); and C. Teachers' Feedback Practices (Question 6-7). Most questions are multiple-choice and Likert's five-point scale, from Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly agree.

The questionnaire was administered online using Google Form to 56 students who were enrolled in the English Writing Skills 5 course. The questionnaire was distributed in the tenth week of the course, and the response rate was 100%. Because the questions are basically multiple-choice and scale-rating, they were quite easy to understand. Thus, the researcher kept them in English when delivering them to the students. After completion, the data were systematically organized into categories corresponding to the questionnaire sections, facilitating a detailed analysis of students' perceptions, preferences, and attitudes towards teachers' written feedback on essays.

3.3.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

To acquire a more profound understanding of the students' experiences and opinions of teachers' written feedback, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with a subset of the participants who completed the questionnaires. The interviews followed a thematic framework that aligned with the research questions, but also allowed for probing and clarifying questions to elicit rich and detailed responses from the students. The researcher used purposive sampling to select 6 out of 56 students who represented different levels of proficiency, feedback preferences, and writing performance. The selected students were invited to participate in the interviews via video call, which were conducted in English, as the students were comfortable with the language and the researcher was fluent in it. The interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour and were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interview questions are provided in Appendix B.

4. Results

The following section presents the key findings of the study.

4.1. Research Question 1: How do Third-year English-majored Students at a University in Vietnam Perceive Teachers' Written Feedback on Essays?

Table 1

Frequency of Teacher Feedback on Submitted Writing by Participants

Options	Percentage
A. Every time I submit my writing	30.8%

B. Most of the time I submit my writing	38.5%
C. Occasionally when I submit my writing	23.1%
D. Rarely or never when I submit my writing	7.7%

This table aims to provide an overview of the frequency with which participants receive feedback on their submitted writing from teachers. The responses are categorized into four options, ranging from consistent feedback (Option A) to infrequent or no feedback (Option D).

The majority of participants, 69.2%, reported receiving feedback either every time (30.8%) or most of the time (38.5%) they submitted their writing. This indicates a positive trend in the regularity of feedback, suggesting that a substantial portion of the participants can expect timely responses from their teachers.

One of the participants who received feedback every time he submitted his writing expressed his appreciation for the feedback, saying that it was “very important for me to improve my essays” and that it helped him “point out my strengths and weaknesses, and give me suggestions on how to improve” (Participant #1). He also gave an example of how feedback improved his writing skills and performance on an essay about environmental issues. He said that the teacher praised his use of vocabulary and examples, but also commented on his grammar and coherence. He said that the teacher gave him “some specific corrections and tips on how to avoid those errors and make my essay more cohesive” (Participant #1). He used the feedback to revise his essay and he got a higher score in the final version. This shows that feedback can have a positive impact on students’ writing development and achievement, especially when it is consistent and specific.

Table 2

Turnaround Time for Writing Feedback

Options	Percentage
A. On the same day that you submit it	7.7%
B. On the next class session	48.2%
C. Within a week of submission	37.7%
D. After more than a week of submission	6.4%

This table presents the distribution of responses from 56 participants regarding the time it takes for them to receive feedback on their submitted writing assignments. The participants were asked to choose from four options (A to D) indicating different durations for feedback return. The question was based on the actual practice of the teachers in providing feedback, not on the students’ expectations or preferences. Therefore, the responses reflect the students’ reflection on the actual teaching context, not their ideal or desired situation.

It is clear that a minority, constituting 7.7%, received feedback on the same day as submission, suggesting that most participants did not experience immediate feedback, and had to wait for quality assessment. Contrastingly, almost half of the participants, 48.2%, received feedback during the next class session, indicating that they experienced prompt feedback that matched their academic schedule. This experience may also show the importance of timeliness and relevance in the feedback process. Additionally, more than a third of the participants, 37.7%, received feedback within a week of submission, reflecting that they experienced a

reasonable delay that allowed teachers enough time for comprehensive assessment while still providing timely feedback. This delay may also fit with typical grading cycles and instructional planning. A smaller fraction, at 6.4%, received feedback after more than a week, implying that a few participants experienced a longer wait for feedback, perhaps sacrificing immediacy for depth and comprehensiveness. This wait may also depend on factors such as late submissions, student-teacher interaction, and the complexity of the assignment.

Table 3

Students' Overall Perceptions of Teacher Feedback

Options	Percentage
A. Eager to improve my writing	53.8%
B. Satisfied	38.5%
C. Interested in reading the feedback	46.2%
D. Lost (don't know how to revise your writing)	15.4%
E. Frustrated	7.7%

By allowing participants to select multiple responses, the table reflects a variety of responses, indicating a range of attitudes and emotional states associated with the feedback received on essays.

A majority of participants (53.8%) expressed eagerness to improve their writing, suggesting a proactive approach to feedback utilization. One of the participants who felt motivated by the feedback said that it was “a valuable source of learning and improvement” and that he always tried to “use the feedback to revise my essays and enhance my writing skills” (Participant #2). Interestingly, a significant percentage (46.2%) demonstrated an interest in reading the feedback, engaging with constructive criticism. A student shared that she liked to “read the feedback and see what the teacher thinks about my writing” and that she found the feedback “very stimulating and thought-provoking” (Participant #3). Another sizable group, 38.5%, felt satisfied, reflecting contentment with the feedback received. One student who felt satisfied by the feedback said that it was “a recognition of my efforts and achievements” and that he felt “proud” and “relieved” when the teacher gave him a high score or confirmed his performance (Participant #4). He also gave an example of how feedback praised his writing skills and understanding of the topic and genre. “For example, one time I received feedback on my essay about health, and the teacher gave me positive feedback. She said that my essay was well-written, well-organized, and well-researched. She said that I had demonstrated a good understanding of the topic and the genre. She gave me a 9 out of 10 for my essay.”

On the other hand, 15.4% felt lost, facing challenges in applying feedback to revisions. Additionally, 7.7% expressed frustration, indicating potential areas where the feedback process may be causing discontent.

The findings imply that while there is a general positive inclination towards feedback, there are complexities in how students perceive and utilize it. The positive engagement and curiosity indicate a willingness to improve, but the discrepancy between satisfaction and active engagement raises questions about the effectiveness of feedback delivery. The difficulties expressed by those feeling “Lost” or “Frustrated” highlight the need for targeted support mechanisms to help students understand and implement feedback successfully.

Table 4

Students' Deeper Perceptions of Teacher Feedback

Statements	Student's Responses				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Teacher's written feedback helps me improve my writing skills and performance.	2%	8%	12%	38%	40%
b. I feel motivated to revise and improve my essays after receiving written feedback from my teacher.	3%	7%	15%	40%	35%
c. I find it easy to understand and apply the written feedback from my teacher.	1%	5%	20%	45%	29%
d. Teacher's feedback is timely and consistent.	5%	10%	20%	40%	25%
e. Teacher's feedback is discouraging (showing only negative aspects and criticisms).	30%	25%	20%	15%	10%
f. Teacher's feedback is overwhelming (containing too many feedback points).	20%	30%	15%	25%	10%
g. Teacher's feedback is useless (offering no suggestions for revision).	40%	20%	15%	15%	10%
h. I would like to receive more feedback on my writing in the future.	5%	10%	15%	30%	40%

The table above summarizes the diverse responses of participants regarding various aspects of the feedback provided by their teachers. The table uses a Likert scale analysis, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to measure the students' experiences with feedback. The following analysis discusses the main findings and implications of the participants' responses.

Helpfulness of teacher's feedback (Statement a): A large majority of participants (78%) agreed or strongly agreed that teacher's written feedback helps improve their writing skills and performance. This indicates a positive perception of the constructive impact of teacher feedback on students' writing abilities. One of the participants who strongly agreed with statement a said that feedback was "a useful way of learning from my mistakes and enhancing my strengths" and that he used the feedback to "improve my essay and I got a better grade in the final version" (Participant #2). The implication is that teachers are effectively contributing to students' skill development through insightful feedback.

Motivation for revision (Statement b): Three-fourths of participants (75%) were also motivated to revise and enhance their essays after receiving written feedback. This suggests that teacher feedback serves as a key motivator for students to actively engage in the revision process. One student who concurred with statement b said that feedback was "a good way of challenging myself and setting higher goals" and that he felt "motivated and inspired by his

feedback and I revised my essay with more effort and enthusiasm” (Participant #3). The implication is that strategically delivered feedback not only identifies areas for improvement but also instills a drive for refinement.

Ease of understanding and application (Statement c): While most students (74%) found it easy to comprehend and apply the written feedback, 26% faced challenges, revealing a divergence in experiences. Timeliness and consistency of feedback (Statement d): A significant proportion (65%) acknowledged that teacher’s feedback was both timely and consistent, reflecting well on the feedback delivery process.

Challenges with feedback (Statements e, f, g): Concerningly, 70% of participants expressed challenges related to discouragement, overwhelming feedback, or its perceived uselessness. A student stated that feedback was “confusing and overwhelming” and that she didn’t know “how to interpret or use it to improve my writing” (Participant #5). She also gave an example of how feedback was too vague or too detailed, and how she didn’t understand the symbols, abbreviations, or comments used by the teacher on her essay about culture. Another participant who strongly agreed with statement e said that feedback was “unfair and discouraging” and that he felt “angry and disappointed” when the teacher criticized his writing or gave him a low score (Participant #6). This finding pointed to potential areas for improvement in feedback strategies.

Desire for more feedback (Statement h): A strong majority (70%) desired to receive more feedback in the future, highlighting an opportunity for teachers to explore ways of increasing feedback frequency to meet students’ expectations.

Table 5

Student Responses to Teacher Feedback

Options	Percentage
A. I ignore the feedback altogether.	4.3%
B. I read the comments, and do nothing.	11.6%
C. I read the comments, and ask for clarification if needed.	15.4%
D. I correct the mistakes that are easy to fix.	16.2%
E. I revise my writing, taking into account the teacher’s suggestions.	33.8%
F. I seek additional advice (such as online guides, books, friends, home tutors, etc.).	18.7%

The table reflects several ways in which students respond to feedback on their writing from teachers. The purpose of this question is to understand the post-feedback actions of students, shedding light on the effectiveness of feedback in driving revision and improvement. By categorizing responses into distinct options, ranging from ignoring feedback to actively seeking external guidance, the table provides valuable insights for educators and researchers who want to improve feedback practices and tailor them to students’ needs.

A few students (4.3%) admitted to ignoring feedback completely, while a larger group (11.6%) acknowledged the feedback but opted not to act on it. These responses may suggest a lack of trust, interest, or motivation in the feedback process. Another group (15.4%) actively sought understanding, indicating a willingness to engage with the feedback. This highlights the

importance of clear and comprehensible feedback, as well as the availability of communication channels for feedback clarification.

Meanwhile, a small portion of students (16.2%) focused on rectifying easily identifiable errors, suggesting a pragmatic approach that prioritizes specific, manageable changes and provides clear guidance for error correction. Notably, about one third students demonstrated an active engagement with feedback, incorporating suggestions into their revisions. This is consistent with the intended purpose of constructive feedback, fostering improvement. 3 out of 6 participants shared that they revised their writings by using the feedback to make their essay better” and taking into account the teacher’s suggestions.”

Finally, approximately a fifth (18.7%) required further guidance, indicating a need for more or different feedback, or a preference for multiple sources of feedback. Participant 1 stated that “I use the feedback that I receive from my teachers to revise and improve my essays by discussing it with my peers or mentors. I also ask for clarification or feedback from my teachers if I have any doubts or concerns. The feedback affects my writing process and outcome by encouraging me to collaborate and communicate, and by providing me with timely and consistent support.”

4.2. Research Question 2: What Types of Teachers’ Written Feedback Are Most Preferred Among Third-Year English-Majored Students?

Table 6

Student Preferences for Teacher Feedback on Writing

Options	Percentage
A. I would like my teacher to indicate all of my errors.	15.38%
B. I would like my teacher to indicate some of the major errors.	12.31%
C. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, and explain why they are wrong.	21.54%
D. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, and give me the corrected forms.	13.85%
E. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, and let me correct my own errors.	9.23%
F. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, explain why they are wrong, and then suggest error correction.	18.46%
G. I would like my teacher to not mark any errors and focus on the ideas and content.	9.23%

This table sheds light on students' preferences regarding how they wish their teachers to respond to their writing. The question explores diverse dimensions of feedback, from the extent of error identification to the depth of guidance provided. The gathered data provides valuable insights into the expectations of students concerning teacher responses to their writing.

A modest portion of students (15.38%) preferred a comprehensive feedback approach, asking teachers to identify and highlight every error in their writing. This preference suggests a desire for detailed, exhaustive feedback, indicating a strong commitment to error correction. Quite similarly, about 12.31% of students prioritized major errors over a comprehensive list, suggesting a value for targeted improvement, and acknowledging that focusing on critical

aspects could lead to more impactful revisions. Notably, the largest group (21.54%) sought not only error identification but also detailed explanations of why those errors were incorrect. Two of the participants who preferred this type of feedback said that they “wanted to know the reasons behind the errors” and that they “learned more from the explanations than from the corrections” (Participant #1, #3).

Next, students (13.85%) in the D category (Identify errors and give corrected forms) preferred a direct approach, asking for corrected forms alongside the identification of errors. One participant who preferred this type of feedback stated that he “liked to see the correct forms right away” and that he “could easily fix the errors and move on” (Participant #2). This group suggests a desire for clarity and the immediate application of corrections. Meanwhile, a smaller group (9.23%) valued autonomy in the correction process. These students wish to receive identified errors but want the opportunity to correct them independently, aligning with principles of self-directed learning. Participant 4 responded that he “enjoyed the challenge of finding the correct forms by himself” and he “felt more confident and responsible for his writing.”

Additionally, the second-largest group (18.46%) desired a comprehensive approach involving error identification, explanations, and guidance for correction. This preference indicates a commitment to understanding and applying corrections independently. The participants 5 and 6 said that they “needed more help with their essays” and they “appreciated the guidance and suggestions from the teacher, but still struggled to revise them”. Lastly, a smaller yet distinct group (9.23%) expressed a preference for feedback primarily on ideas and content, emphasizing higher-order concerns over meticulous language mechanics.

By understanding these diverse preferences, educators can design feedback strategies that match students’ expectations. This can make feedback practices more effective, creating a more constructive and personalized learning environment. The findings also emphasize the importance of recognizing the varied needs of students, showing the multifaceted nature of effective feedback in writing instruction.

Table 7

Student Perceptions of the Usefulness of Different Feedback Types

Statements	Student’s Responses				
	Not Useful at All (Useless)	Not Useful	Doesn’t Matter	Quite Useful	Very Useful
a. Organization errors. (e.g., paragraph structure, sentence order, etc.)	5.4%	6.2%	8.5%	22.3%	57.7%
b. Grammatical errors. (e.g., verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, punctuation, etc.)	3.1%	4.6%	10.8%	25.4%	56.2%
c. Content/Idea errors. (e.g., details for support, comments on your ideas, etc.)	2.3%	3.8%	9.2%	30.8%	53.8%
d. Coherence/Logical order	1.5%	2.3%	7.7%	30.8%	57.7%

(e.g., meaning, coherence, logic, etc.)					
e. Vocabulary errors. (e.g., word choice, spelling, collocations, etc.)	2.3%	3.1%	9.2%	30.8%	54.6%
f. General Comments: words of praise or encouragement.	1.5%	1.5%	6.2%	24.6%	66.2%

This table scrutinizes students' perceptions of the usefulness of various types of feedback, shedding light on the elements they find most valuable in the feedback process. The insights derived from this analysis are instrumental in shaping feedback practices that resonate with students' learning needs.

A notable 57.7% of students found feedback on organization errors to be very useful, emphasizing a strong demand for guidance in structuring their writing effectively. In contrast, only 5.4% considered it not useful at all, showing that the majority leans towards recognizing its value. One of the participants who found feedback on organization errors very useful said that he “struggled with organizing his writing” and that he “needed feedback on how to arrange his paragraphs and sentences in a logical order” (Participant #6).

Similarly, a substantial 56.2% of students considered feedback on grammatical errors as very useful, indicating a high appreciation for detailed correction and guidance on language mechanics. On the other hand, only 3.1% found it not useful at all, which highlights the importance attached to grammatical precision. One of the participants who found feedback on grammatical errors very useful said that he “wanted to write with accuracy and clarity” and that he “needed feedback on how to avoid and correct grammatical mistakes” (Participant #2).

Moreover, a significant 53.8% expressed that feedback on content/idea errors is very useful, reflecting a keen interest in substantive guidance for meaningful and coherent ideas. However, only 2.3% deemed it not useful at all, thus underscoring the perceived importance of feedback in this dimension. This is supported by a student who shared that she “wanted to write with depth and originality” and she “needed feedback on how to develop and support her ideas and arguments” (Participant #4).

Additionally, a striking 57.7% considered feedback on coherence and logical order as very useful, emphasizing the demand for guidance on the overall flow and structure of writing. Conversely, only 1.5% found it not useful at all, indicating widespread recognition of its value. A student said that he “wanted to write with consistency and cohesion” and that he “needed feedback on how to connect and transition between his sentences and paragraphs” (Participant #1).

Furthermore, a substantial 54.6% of students found feedback on vocabulary errors very useful, indicating a need for guidance on lexical choices and usage. Nevertheless, only 2.3% perceived it as not useful at all, thereby underscoring the significance attached to feedback in this dimension. One participant who found feedback on vocabulary errors very useful said that he “wanted to write with variety and appropriateness” and that he “needed feedback on how to choose and use the right words for his writing” (Participant #3).

Finally, the overwhelming positive perception of general comments, particularly those offering praise or encouragement (66.2%). Some participants all agreed and said,

“I like the general comments that my teacher gives me on my essays, especially when

they are positive or encouraging. I think they give me a sense of direction and guidance for my writing. For example, one time I received a general comment on my essay about culture, and the teacher wrote “This is a very insightful and informative essay. You have shown good knowledge and analysis of the topic. You have also used a suitable and persuasive tone and style for your writing. Well done!” I felt very pleased and inspired when I read this comment, and I wanted to write more essays with more knowledge and analysis.” (Participant #1)

“I value the general comments that my teacher gives me on my essays, especially when they are positive or encouraging. I think they provide me with useful feedback on the overall quality and effectiveness of my writing. For example, one time I received a general comment on my essay about animal protection, and the teacher wrote “This is a very interesting and original essay. You have presented a unique perspective and argument on the topic. You have also used a clear and coherent structure and language to convey your ideas. Good job!” I felt very satisfied and motivated when I read this comment, and I wanted to write more essays with more depth and originality.” (Participant #3)

5. Discussion

The findings of this present research provide valuable insights into the perceptions, responses, and preferences of third-year English-majored students regarding teacher feedback on essays in the context of Vietnam.

Firstly, the results of this study revealed mixed perceptions of teacher feedback among the participants. A significant proportion of them not only expressed eagerness to improve their writing, but also showed interest in reading and engaging with constructive criticism. This implies that teacher feedback is essential for enhancing the writing skills and performance of the participants, as well as motivating them to revise their work. These findings are in line with some studies that recognize the positive effects of feedback on motivation and engagement (Camacho et al., 2021; Ferris, 2012) and the importance of specific, actionable feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This can indicate that the participants valued feedback as a source of learning and improvement and that they were willing to act on feedback to enhance their writing outcomes.

However, the results also revealed that feedback is not a one-size-fits-all solution and that different learners may have different experiences and reactions to feedback. Some of the participants faced challenges in understanding and applying feedback, while others expressed negative emotions such as discouragement, frustration, or dissatisfaction with feedback. These findings reflect the literature that highlights the potential pitfalls of feedback, such as difficulties in understanding and implementation, and the need for targeted feedback strategies that take into account the individual needs, goals, and preferences of the learners (Truscott, 1996; Hyland, 2003). This can imply that feedback may not always be clear, specific, actionable, or supportive enough for the learners to use it effectively and autonomously. Moreover, these findings may also suggest some contextual influences, such as the limited teacher-student interaction, the large class sizes, and the lack of feedback culture in the Vietnamese educational system, that may affect how students perceive and respond to feedback.

Secondly, the findings of this study showed that the participants had diverse preferences and expectations for feedback. They valued different types and frequency of feedback that could help them improve their writing. Plus, they were in need of more balanced and flexible feedback approaches and preferences, as well as more dialogue and interaction with the teacher in the feedback process. The participants also showed different preferences for the scope and focus of

feedback. Some participants preferred comprehensive feedback on all errors, while others preferred feedback on major errors only. Moreover, the largest group of participants expected feedback that provided detailed explanations or direct correction forms with error identification, indicating a desire for understanding, clarity, and immediacy in feedback. On the other hand, some participants had fewer common preferences for feedback that encouraged autonomy or focused on ideas and content, indicating a preference for self-directed learning and higher-order concerns. These findings aligned with the importance of feedback criteria, the principles of learner autonomy and self-regulation, and challenged the conventional focus on language mechanics in feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Carless, 2018; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). These findings also revealed some new insights that could be added to the literature, especially with regards to the teaching-learning context in Vietnam. For instance, the findings showed that the participants desired more feedback frequency and interaction, which may reflect their dissatisfaction with the current feedback practices in their context, where feedback may be scarce, delayed, or one-way. The findings also showed that the participants valued feedback on different areas of writing, such as organization, content, coherence, and vocabulary, which may indicate their awareness of the complexity and diversity of writing skills and their need for guidance in different dimensions.

In addition, this study explored the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of different feedback types. Similar to some studies that stress the importance of guidance in different areas of writing, such as organization, grammar, content, coherence, and vocabulary (Ferris, 2010; Hyland & Hyland, 2006), most participants found feedback on these areas as useful, indicating a high appreciation for detailed correction and guidance on various aspects of writing. However, the findings also showed that some participants found feedback on some areas more useful than others, suggesting a preference for feedback that addresses their specific needs and goals. For example, the participants found feedback on organization and coherence more useful than feedback on grammar and vocabulary, which may reflect their recognition of the importance of higher-order concerns over lower-order concerns in writing. These findings may also imply some contextual influences, such as the strong focus on grammar and accuracy in writing instruction in Vietnam, that may affect how students perceive the usefulness of different feedback types.

However, this study also revealed some perceptions among the participants. The overwhelmingly positive perception of general comments with praise or encouragement suggests that the participants also valued feedback that could boost their confidence and motivation in writing. This finding adds to the literature that acknowledges the importance of praise in feedback, but also warns against the possible negative effects of over-praising or vague praising (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). This implies that feedback may need to strike a balance between providing constructive criticism and offering positive reinforcement, and that praise may need to be specific, genuine, and meaningful for the learners.

6. Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to investigate the perceptions and preferences of 56 third-year English-majored students at a university in Vietnam regarding teachers' written feedback on essays. The results show that students receive consistent or frequent feedback on their essays, reflecting a positive trend in the frequency and timeliness of feedback. The study highlights the positive impact of feedback on students' writing skills and motivation, with most participants expressing agreement that teacher feedback contributes to skill development.

However, it also identifies challenges such as discouragement, overwhelming feedback, or perceived uselessness. These challenges indicate the need for a balanced feedback approach. Moreover, students have diverse preferences for feedback types. They value feedback on organization, grammar, content, coherence, vocabulary, and general comments, especially praise or encouragement.

The findings of this study have several implications for teaching and learning writing. First, teachers should provide written feedback to students regularly and consistently, as it can enhance their motivation and improve their writing performance. Second, teachers should adopt a supportive and constructive tone when giving feedback, and avoid using harsh or negative language that may demotivate students. Third, teachers should use a variety of feedback types, but focus more on suggestive feedback, as it can help students develop their writing skills and strategies. Fourth, teachers should involve students in the feedback process, such as by asking them to reflect on their feedback, set their own goals, and revise their work accordingly.

The study also acknowledged some limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to one university, which may affect the generalizability and transferability of the findings. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples to validate and extend the findings. Second, the study only focused on the teacher's written feedback, which is one of many factors that can influence the students' writing skills. Future research should consider other factors, such as the teacher's oral feedback, the students' prior knowledge, the writing tasks, the learning environment, and how they interact with the written feedback.

Because of the above values, the researcher expects to contribute to the enhancement of the overall feedback experience for students by recommending a holistic and student-centered feedback approach. This involves customizing feedback to meet students' varied needs and preferences, addressing challenges in the feedback process, and maintaining a balance between positive reinforcement and constructive criticism. This can enhance the feedback experience and create a more supportive and effective learning environment for students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Questionnaires

The survey questionnaire is designed for the research entitled “**Analysis of Teachers’ Written Feedback on Writing skills of Third-year English-majored students at a Vietnamese university**”. It is highly appreciated if you could spend your time truthfully completing the questions. Please be assured that you will not be identified in any discussions of the data and all the personal information will be kept confidential!

Please tick the appropriate answers for the following questions.

A. General Overview of Teacher’s Feedback

1. How often do you receive feedback on your writing from the teacher?

- A. Every time I submit my writing
- B. Most of the time I submit my writing
- C. Occasionally when I submit my writing
- D. Rarely or never when I submit my writing

2. How soon do you usually receive your writing back from the teacher?

- A. On the same day that you submit it
- B. On the next class session
- C. Within a week of submission
- D. After more than a week of submission

B. Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes towards Teacher's Feedback

3. How would you describe your overall perception of the feedback you receive on your essays?
(You can select more than one response.)

- A. Eager to improve my writing
- B. Satisfied
- C. Interested in reading the feedback
- D. Lost (don’t know how to revise your writing)
- E. Frustrated

4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

No	Statements	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Teacher's written feedback helps me improve my writing skills and performance.					
b.	I feel motivated to revise and improve my essays after receiving written feedback from my teacher.					
c.	I find it easy to understand and apply the written feedback from my teacher.					
d.	Teacher’s feedback is timely and consistent.					
e.	Teacher’s feedback is discouraging (showing only negative					

aspects and criticisms).

f. Teacher’s feedback is overwhelming (containing too many feedback points).

g. Teacher’s feedback is useless (offering no suggestions for revision).

h. I would like to receive more feedback on my writing in the future.

5. When you receive feedback on your writing from your teacher, what do you typically do?

- A. I ignore the feedback altogether.
- B. I read the comments, and do nothing.
- C. I read the comments, and ask for clarification if needed.
- D. I correct the mistakes that are easy to fix.
- E. I revise my writing, taking into account the teacher’s suggestions.
- F. I seek additional advice (such as online guides, books, friends, home tutors).

C. Teachers’ Feedback Practices

6. How would you like your teacher to respond to your writing?

- A. I would like my teacher to indicate all of my errors.
- B. I would like my teacher to indicate some of the major errors.
- C. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, and explain why they are wrong.
- D. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, and give me the corrected forms.
- E. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, and let me correct my own errors.
- F. I would like my teacher to identify my errors, explain why they are wrong, and then suggest error correction.
- G. I would like my teacher to not mark any errors and focus on the ideas and content.

7. If there are many different errors in your essay, which type(s) of error do you want your teacher to point out most?

(1) not useful at all (useless); (2) not useful; (3) doesn’t matter; (4) quite useful; (5) very useful

No	Statements	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Organization errors. (e.g., paragraph structure, sentence order, etc.)					
b.	Grammatical errors. (e.g., verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, punctuation, etc.)					
c.	Content/Idea errors. (e.g., details for support, comments on your ideas, etc.)					
d.	Coherence/Logical order. (e.g., meaning, coherence, logic, etc.)					
e.	Vocabulary errors. (e.g., word choice, spelling, collocations, etc.)					
f.	General Comments: words of praise or encouragement.					

(Adapted from Aprilia et al., 2023)

Appendix B. Semi-structured Interviews

1. How important is feedback for you to improve your essays? Can you give an example of how feedback helped you improve your writing skills or performance?
2. How do you feel when you receive written feedback from your teachers on your essays? Do you feel motivated, satisfied, interested, lost, or frustrated? Why?
3. What are the benefits and challenges of receiving written feedback from your teachers?
4. How do you use the feedback that you receive from your teachers to revise and improve your essays? How does the feedback affect your writing process and outcome?
5. What kind of feedback do you usually receive from your teachers on your essays? Is it mostly about form, content, organization, or coherence? Is it direct, indirect, local or global?
6. What are your preferences for the type and focus of feedback that you receive from your teachers? Why do you prefer those types and focuses of feedback?

PHÂN TÍCH PHẢN HỒI DẠNG VĂN BẢN TỪ GIÁO VIÊN VỀ KỸ NĂNG VIẾT CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH NĂM THỨ BA TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

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Tóm tắt: Để thành công trong giáo dục đại học, việc sở hữu kỹ năng viết tốt là một yếu tố then chốt, đặc biệt là đối với những sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, việc phát triển kỹ năng viết là một quá trình phức tạp và đầy thách thức, đòi hỏi sự hướng dẫn và phản hồi hiệu quả. Trong cuộc hành trình này, giáo viên có vai trò đưa ra những phản hồi bằng văn bản để hoàn thiện khả năng viết của sinh viên. Do đó, bài nghiên cứu này khảo sát nhận thức, sở thích và thái độ của 56 sinh viên năm thứ ba chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam về phản hồi bằng văn bản của giáo viên cho bài luận. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy sinh viên thể hiện sự tham gia tích cực vào việc viết luận và nhận được phản hồi thường xuyên hoặc thỉnh thoảng. Tuy nhiên, họ bày tỏ những quan điểm khác nhau về phản hồi, từ sự mong muốn cải thiện đến sự bối rối. Họ cũng có những sở thích khác nhau về loại phản hồi như: sửa lỗi, giải thích, đề xuất, v.v. Đa số sinh viên cho rằng phản hồi giúp họ nâng cao kỹ năng viết và khuyến khích họ sửa bài, nhưng một số cũng gặp phải những thách thức như nản chí và không thấy hữu ích. Từ đó, nghiên cứu này đề xuất một cách tiếp cận phản hồi cân bằng và mang tính xây dựng, xem xét nhu cầu đa dạng của sinh viên và giải quyết những thách thức của họ, nhằm nâng cao trải nghiệm phản hồi cho sinh viên.

Từ khóa: kỹ năng viết, phản hồi bằng văn bản, sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh, nhận thức, sở thích