

# A Study of Facebook-Based Peer Comments on L2 Writing

Vu Phi Ho Pham<sup>1,\*</sup> Anh Nguyen Thi Hoai<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University, Vietnam

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Foreign Languages, College of foreign economic relations, Vietnam

\*Corresponding author. Email: [ho.pvp@vlu.edu.vn](mailto:ho.pvp@vlu.edu.vn)

## ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, various studies have contributed to research around Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) tools such as Facebook Group as an alternative method for teaching English writing. In the review of Facebook in the L2 writing process, the study has found that the advent of Facebook integrated into a conventional writing class further necessitates the need for scrutinizing how to shape the quality of comments posted on Facebook Group and how to make use of these given comments in writing. This study explores Facebook-based peer comments on EFL students' writing revisions, which may aid in answering how Facebook-based peer comments help learners improve their writing. This study's contribution is to address writing teachers that play an essential role in applying technology into their writing classes to help students with peer commenting activities and students who actively take advantage of Facebook Group in learning outside classrooms.

**Keywords:** *peer comment, writing revision, Facebook-based.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

L2 pedagogy has recently grown to strengthen its interest in a process-focused approach that focuses on preparing, drafting, evaluating, and revising [34,60]. Peer comment/peer feedback/peer response/peer review has been employed extensively at the reviewing and changing stages in L2 writing classrooms to facilitate students' writing development. According to Liu and Hansen [22], peer comment is the exchange of compositions among interactants for written comments, oral comments, or a mix of oral and written comments. The pair feedback is used as a written comment in this report. The subject of comment can be different from local-global (for example, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics) (e.g., content, rhetoric, and organization). A substantial number of studies have substantiated the helpfulness of peer comments integrated with academic coursework. They have presented that peer feedback may develop student writers' awareness of the audience [2], trigger cooperation [18], facilitate writing revision [53], and provide students with many different writing styles [21,44]. Some scholars have also found that learners would have the capability to give in-depth and

wide-ranging reviews if they were trained for peer feedback activities [11,14,21-22].

With the integration of technology into writing classrooms, electronic peer comment in which learners can share their ideas via the asynchronous or synchronous online environment has become an alternative to traditional (face-to-face or paper-based) peer comment. Previous studies have reported that CMC encourages collaborative writing in the realm of the L2 writing process and facilitates learners' interaction in giving e-peer comments [5,15,17]. A growing research community has centered on L2 writing classrooms' pedagogical capabilities to incorporate Facebook (FB). These studies have found that using FB-based peer feedback offers L2 learners ample opportunities to practice and develop their writing skills [45-47,56].

In Vietnam, ever since the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) in January 2020, education undertaken synchronously on CMC platforms has become more imminent than ever before. However, the online environment limits students' interaction, especially peer feedback activities during the regular writing-class time. To solve this problem, employing CMC asynchronously via peer response outside the classroom is more likely a workable solution [31,41]. Taking advantages of the

popularity of Facebook among young Vietnamese users [51], this study provides an exciting opportunity to advance the knowledge of investigating the integration of Facebook Group - a feature on Facebook and peer response to explore the differences in the number of feedback and subsequent writing revisions, which far to little attention has been paid to.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***1.1. Theoretical framework***

Peer feedback activities in the L2 writing setting are informed by four major theoretical concepts: social-cultural theory, collaborative learning theory, writing process approach theory, and interactionist theory of L2 acquisition [54]. *Vygotsky's* [29] *social-cultural view* draws attention to social interaction's importance. The Proximal Development Zone - a distance between the possible development level for writers and their rapid development with the guidance and support of both experts and new learners - is a central concept in this theory that is intimately connected with peer-reviewed practices. In other words, in ZPD, students are encouraged to give peer feedback in the process of accomplishing writing tasks. *Collaborative learning theory* also emphasizes peer communication in acquiring some kinds of knowledge [22,25]. Many research studies have reported that collaborative learning motivates students to complete their writing tasks through learning resources from their peers [3,22,27]. Also, Liu & Hansen [22] posits that peer comments are a type of collaborative work that may potentially create more opportunities for learners to collaborate with their peers to improve a writing draft through revisions. In terms of the joint writing revision, another theory named Online Community of practice (CoP) explains that the learning process is formed by engaging learners in meaningful learning practices, which characterizes learning in CoP as a dynamic process of the participant [23]. Besides, this theory focuses on learners' identity. Razak and Saeed [39] have found that learners' sense of identity is shaped by the meaning of practice activities and learners' relationship to peers and the community itself. From CoP, it is suggested that researchers can further explore the connection between quantity and quality of peer feedback and learners' relationship to peers and community. A process-oriented writing approach, described as a multiple activity approach such as ideas generation, knowledge organization, drafting, reading and reviews, and revising and editing [55], emphasizes readers' role in writing [27]. According to Hedge [55], students and teachers in a writing class can be readers who question and provide ideas and language to help others' writing products be clear and organized. This is consistent with the concept of Hyland & Hyland [27], who believes that peer review was an essential element in the writing process approach.

Another theoretical basis for peer reviews in writing is the relationship between L2 acquisition. Ferris [9] found that group work among L2 learners developed communicative competence and enhanced the effectiveness of language learning [27,33]. Also, many studies have identified several advantages of group work. First, engaging students in interactional feedback activities can provide students with opportunities for practice and comprehensible input [27]. Also, Liu & Hansen [22] claimed that group work, as peer comment, pushed learners produce meaningful output and communication. Therefore, it has been shown, the practices of peer comments have gained L2 from writing and revising and writing as part of the peer review in terms of the use of language. In summary, the above theories justifying the use of peer response activities in writing classes all admit that engaging learners in peer comment practices perform a vital role in the learning process and knowledge construction.

### ***1.2 Related studies***

#### ***1.2.1. Peer review as a facilitator in writing***

Numerous theories above are supported the use of written peer feedback in L2 writing instructional classrooms. A large volume of published studies describes the practical benefits of peer review for L2 writers. Villamil et al. [43] highlight that peer review can help learners move from other-regulation to complete self-regulation. To be specific, students can receive assistance (peer review) from peers in other-regulated stages; then, they control those comments (external actions) to independently solve their writing problems in self-regulated steps. Several studies have revealed that peer responses are as effective as teachers' feedback in helping learners improve their drafts directly and less critically [6,26,41]. In the study of Patchan and Schunn [35], it is identified that giving feedback is determined by the quality of texts and the ability of reviewers. According to Cho and Cho [59], the texts' higher rate is the fewer criticisms writers receive. Besides, in Berg [11] and Prochaska [13], research evidence suggests that training sessions shape providing peer comments. In other words, students trained for peer response activities tends to give high-quality feedback to their peers. Significantly, the results from the research study in Berg [11] show that qualified pair response groups have more content and significant change than orthographic or grammar (global questions) peer response groups (local issues). Another importance of peer comment training with guidelines is that it shows viewers' common concerns concerning the text being reviewed [58]. Not all student writers can consistently identify issues and provide suggestions for their peers. For instance, problems found in low-level learners' writing might be entirely possible found in high-level students' writing. With the assistance of the guidelines, students are navigated to place on what they are

expected to emphasize, such as significant areas of feedback (local or global feedback) and common types of feedback (evaluation, clarification, suggestion/advice, alteration, explanation, and confirmation) [57]. Some scholars have investigated that peer response can facilitate students' writing and is fruitful to the instructor on the grounds helper response activities help reduce teachers' workload [22, 45].

### *1.2.2. Computer-mediated peer review*

With the emergence and expansion of CMCs, peer review is becoming a new dimension in written classrooms, namely e-food. There have been three trends of research on e-peer feedback [27]: (1) software-generated response, which replaces direct human response, (2) technology-enhanced peer feedback by which human responses through technology, and (3) the differentiation among forms of e-feedback. This research considers the (2) and (3) strands of the study. In this analysis, the CMC sense applies to asynchronous online text exchanges. Asynchronous peer feedback is rendered to students' convenience as peer replies outside the classroom [31]. Many review studies have examined the effectiveness of asynchronous feedback in writing. Guardado and Shi [33] investigated how e-feedback via board postings affects Japanese L2 learners. The study found that many peer responses were not integrated into revisions because students were uncertain about the comments' quality. Hence, two researchers suggest that writing instructors train students to interact with readers. Also, Lee [12] examined students' peer feedback using a web-based bulletin board. The results showed that students generated more peer responses in web-based bulletin boards than face-to-face interaction.

Furthermore, Fisher et al. [50] have found that peer review through the Bulletin Board system could help learners improve their writing skills. Peer feedback effectiveness through asynchronous weblog postings has been exemplified in the Liou and Peng report [19]. Results showed that students made more revision-oriented comments and more successful revisions, although they were not readily available for peer comments. The usefulness of blogs for providing peer review on writing classes has been investigated in various studies. Dippold [7] found that both writers and reviewers received benefits from peer feedback activities. Besides, he mentioned that it was necessary for more training to enable student writers and readers to use the blog as a learning tool.

Similarly, the findings of Gedera [8] led to the conclusion that all Malaysian respondents in a private university had positive attitudes towards peer review through blogs. According to Pham and Usaha [57], though students commented on global areas more than those on local sites, it was uncertain that the revision-oriented comments were more significant in the

worldwide area. Tuzi [15] attempted to examine the impact of peer comments on revision through a databased-driven website developed by the researchers. The study found that students preferred oral comments generated in class to e-peer comments generated outside class on the website, but e-peer comments led to more revisions than oral comments did. Lee [28] used Wikis in his elementary Spanish course to promote collaborative writing. The results indicated that scaffolding through peer response played a vital role in the L2 writing process in developing students' writing skills. The study suggested that student writers should be given instructions during the revision process and hints for useful feedback from their writing instructors. In summary, based on previous studies' findings, many advantages to students in writing classes can be derived from using the asynchronous CMC mode as peer feedback tools.

### *1.2.3. Facebook in writing*

In general, Facebook (FB) has recently become the world's most popular networking site. According to Statista [51], 65 million Vietnamese, mainly aged 18 to 34, are currently Facebook users. It is believed that FB gave learners a good learning choice in-class and out-of-class time. For instance, Majid et al. [4] hold the view that FB has the great potential to offer students opportunities to collaborate with peers and exchange comments in writing synchronously and asynchronously, resulting in a positive impact on supporting students learning processes and outcomes. Therefore, Facebook must be incorporated into the writing class, particularly by using FB as a platform for the asynchronous exchange of peer comments among students.

There has been a considerable amount of publication in the L2 writing classrooms about using FB's pedagogical advantages. It is believed that FB offered the availability of effective collaboration among student writers by possibly engaging learners to construct knowledge and involve in the learning process [49]. Yunus et al. [36] proved that raising the level of interaction between teachers - students and students - student by using FB, made instructors discussing assignments with their learners outside of the classroom possible. Besides, Pham [40] mentioned that collaboration via Facebook facilitated learners' language production. Using e-comments on FB, students were provided an interactive environment to improve their writing skills by exchanging peer feedback and revising drafts. Besides, Majid et al. [4] found out that students favored using blended scaffolding strategies through FB rather than mere chalk and talk in improving the writing process and writing performance. Also, Sulisworo et al. [10] proved that students' writing skills after implementing blended learning using FB showed good results, particularly in shaping and organizing ideas. Albert's finding [1] provided a significant contribution to the presentation of

students' encouragement to use FB. He showed that integrating Facebook into a writing class academically improved learners and helped enhance their inherent motivation to study writing. Moreover, Yunus et al. [36] mentioned that students were motivated to devote hard effort to writing high-quality comments if they had a larger audience. This also encouraged timid learners to actively engage in peer response activities. Andini [30] examined the contribution of the Facebook Group (FG) and learners' perception using FG in writing in a high school case study. Interview data gained from 3 students (purposive sampling) at 11<sup>th</sup> grade revealed that students hold positive attitudes toward expressing ideas on FG and also felt motivated by receiving their peer feedback. However, FG just contributed to the pre-writing activity. Bani-Hani et al. [37] used FG in teaching writing. It aimed to research the understanding and attitudes of EFL university students and the efficacy of FG both in their pre-writing (brainstorming ideas) and in their development writings. It was found that FG could help teach EFL writing.

Furthermore, student writers could improve their vocabulary and spelling by reading group members' posts. Rodliyah [46] identified how FG could be integrated into ELT via e-dialogue journal writing. The findings indicated that the learners responded positively to contributing their journal on FG for interaction. They made a good improvement in their writing skills, especially in grammar and vocabulary.

Previous studies also dealt with the field of FB-based peer comments. They mainly concentrated on how FB-based peer response activities affect student writers' writing quality, students' attitudes and perceptions of peer comment activities via FB, and the extent to which students incorporated peer review into revisions. Via a blended teaching approach, Shih [47] explored the results of combining FB and peer evaluation with 23 EFL English significant participants. They had to place their writing in FBs and comment on community members' essays in various communities (7 writing assignments in total). Data collected from a pre and post-test, a questionnaire, and in-depth interviews revealed that FB - integrated blended learning more effectively enhanced lower-level students' writing. Furthermore, learners took a positive attitude to utilize FB to give and take peer responses in their writing classes. This research's limitation was a limited sample size and an absence of a control group.

Yusof et al. [24] conducted action research to examine peer response use at the planning stage (outlining) of writing. Twenty-three students were trained on giving comments before generating public comments on chosen outlines posted on the teacher's FB Notes. Useful comments were pressed the "Like" button. Data collected from students' comments on FB and interview responses showed that learners could provide constructive feedback to their peers with guidance from the instructor. Comments based on FB pairs proved useful to help peers develop their outlines and initial drafting.

The study of Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi [56] gave an account of the effects of using the platform of FB for writing discussion and grammar instruction. 83 Low Intermediate EFL students carried out this study from Nakhon Pathom University, Thailand. Data from student grammar and writing discussions on FB and interviews show that English Grammar has served to help FB debate on a large scale. Students have displayed constructive attitudes towards FB as a grammar and writing tool.

Wichadee [52] traced integrating FB-based peer feedback in students' writing, the nature of comments made by learners, and learners' attitudes toward the use of FB for peer response. Thirty students in 6 groups were asked to post their writings on FB and comment on the group's paper, then revise their drafts and post them on FB. Data from first and final drafts of students, written remarks, questionnaires, and interviews suggested that students concentrate more on feedback quality than on grammar errors. Furthermore, the FB comments had a significant influence on revised draft changes. Finally, a review of the interviews showed that FB peer examinations were used in the English class positively.

In order to compare the effects of FB writing versus paper-and-pen on improving L2 writing, lexicological richness, and grammatical precision, Dizon [16] analyzed data from 30 Japanese students, both in control groups (paper and pen and experimentation group (FB)). Data collected from at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the treatment three written assignments indicated that the experimental group made further writing fluency gains.

Pham et al. [45] conducted quasi-experimental research with students trained how to give comments in control and experimental groups (FB and paper-and-pen groups) from the University of Science in Ho Chi Minh City to compare peer e-feedback to regular peer feedback. The study results showed that while the pair commentary by both groups significantly influenced their quality of writing, peer e-feedback exceeded conventional feedback.

The study by Inderawati et al. [48] aims at contributing to the increasing field of FB-based peer responses by exploring (1) student feedback on FB, and (2) student feedback efficiency, and (3) student feedback characteristics. Data were collected from 48 students who commented on the Sriwijaya University, Indonesia, in writing class. The results showed that the above three research goals were very successful.

Some authors also published papers about the benefits of FB based-peer comments on FG, an available feature on FB, in writing classes. In 2015, Razak and Saeed [39] conducted a qualitative study to investigate peer writing revision among EFL Arab students in an FG. To identify the revisions of text by students, recognize students' contribution to their written texts and their students' online sense outside the college school classroom, gather data from original and revised texts, and e-feedback from 14 university students. The

conclusions indicated that a significant revision was used, which contributed to material, unity, organization, language, and mechanics to improve the writing of the students, including the addition, replacement, elimination, permutation, aggregation, and delivery. The students' sense of an online learning community was also encouraged by online review activities since they created an engaging, friendly educational environment, formed connections, and sustained them through mutual interest and an enhanced sense of belonging. Also, Nguyen and Dao [42] conducted a quasi-experiment examining FG's benefits as an online medium in writing class. Fifty-two high school students (FG) in Ho Chi Minh City were divided into the control and experimental groups (FG). Experimental students had to post and communicate with their peers and instructors through their homework through FG (comments). Data collected from pre and post-test and questionnaires presented that the use of FG had positive impacts on students' writing outcome. In addition, students hold positive attitudes toward using FG for educational purposes.

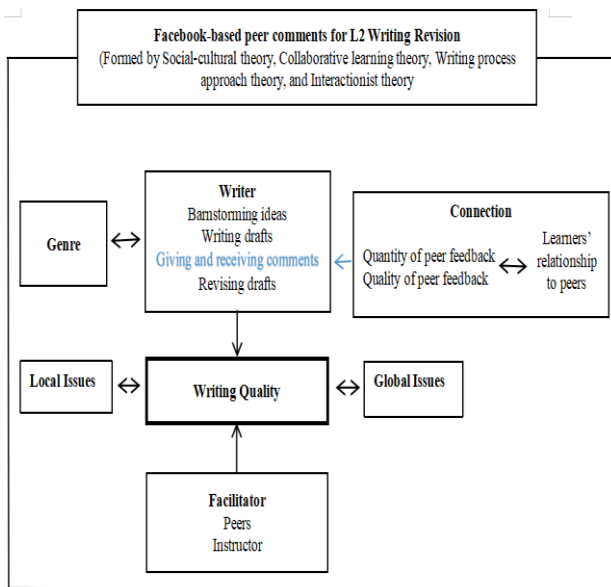


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

### 3. CONCLUSION

The task of this study is to review the pedagogical benefits of using FB, especially using FB-based peer comments in L2 writing classrooms. A systematic literature review above was conducted to prove that integrating FB in classroom-based writing courses can assist L2 learners in their writing process by using peer feedback. However, few authors in Vietnam have been able to draw on FB-based peer feedback in a writing context. The purpose of this article is to discuss teachers who play an important role in the application of technology in their own writing classes to support students in peer review activities and also students who are actively using Facebook Community in outside classroom learning.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors contributed equally.

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