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FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

GRADUATION PAPER

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROBLEMS
FACED BY FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT
FELTE, ULIS WHEN DOING PEER REVIEW
IN ACADEMIC WRITING**

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ABSTRACT

Peer review has recently become an important component of both L1 and L2 writing classes due to its cognitive, affective, social and methodological benefits (Rollinson, 2005). In the context of ULIS, peer review is widely used as a tool to help students correct their drafts; however, there has not been much research into the problems that might reduce the effectiveness of the activity. This study aims at investigating the current problems that first-year students at FELTE, ULIS face when doing peer review in academic writing classes. The participants included 45 mainstream first-year students from two classes majoring in English Language Teacher Education and their two writing teachers. Data were collected via three instruments: observation of documents, survey-questionnaire (for student participants), and interview (for teacher participants) so as to triangulate the information from various aspects. The results showed that the students experienced

troubles with all the seven potential problems, but the four most serious ones are *lack of training from teacher, limited knowledge of English, imbalance between the two types of comments*, and *low learners' investment*. Teachers' attitude toward peer review, as well as their perceptions of the problems face by students, was also deeply analyzed. Finally, some suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the peer review activity were made for academic writing teachers and first-year students.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CEFR</i>	<i>Common European Framework of Reference</i>
<i>EFL</i>	<i>English as a Foreign Language</i>
<i>ESL</i>	<i>English as a Second Language</i>
<i>L1</i>	<i>First Language</i>
<i>L2</i>	<i>Second Language</i>
<i>ULIS</i>	<i>University of Languages and International Studies</i>
<i>VNU</i>	<i>Vietnam National University, Hanoi</i>

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, brief information about the paper is provided. Six main points presented are (1) statement of the problem and rationale for the study, (2) aims and objectives, (3) method of the study, (4) significance of the study, (5) scope of the study and (6) organization of the study.

1.1. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

As technological advancements enable people around the world to interact with each other spoken as well as written, cross-language communication becomes more and more necessary. English has grown to be a language of international communication and therefore has been widely taught in many countries, including Vietnam. Of the four English language skills, writing is attached great importance. It is emerging as one of the most essential skills that students have to master in both second and foreign language education. The view of writing in traditional language classes as a means to support and reinforce patterns of language use is being replaced by the concept that “writing in a second language is a worldwide enterprise in and of itself” (Weigle, 2002, p. 1).

Along with the growth in the importance of writing, teachers have been seeking new techniques to apply. One of the techniques often practiced in writing classes is peer review, which requires students to give comments, usually in written form, on their peer’s writing drafts. Peer review has been considered an important component of both L1 and L2 writing classes due to its cognitive, affective, social and methodological benefits (Rollinson, 2005), as well as its potential ability to ease the time constraint that many EFL writing instructors have to face. Moreover, peer review helps encourage students to think more deeply about how to phrase their comments as a reviewer; and at the same time, to revisit written comments as many times as they want for revision as student writers (Rollinson, 2005).

In the context of University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), peer review has been widely used as a tool to help students correct their drafts before submitting the final drafts to their teachers for further comments and assessment. As early as the first semester of the first year, students are required to

do peer review. However, there have been only a limited number of studies into the field of peer review in general, and peer review among first-year students in particular at ULIS. Phan (2007) conducted a study on peer written feedbacks in writing portfolio by third-year students. Tran (2007) researched into the use of peer written feedback in the first-year writing class, but she just concerned with the situation of using peer review as well as students' attitudes and reactions to peer review. Nguyen (2008) went one step further with her study into how first-year students at the English Department (the former name of FELTE) in ULIS were affected by peer written feedback and whether such kind of feedback improved students' drafts and their writing skill or not.

However, it is not always the case that peer review brings as many benefits as expected to the students. Leki (1990) expresses the view that:

Many native speaker composition classes and increasing numbers of ESL composition classes use small group work and peer responding to improve writing. Teachers who have used peer responding are generally convinced of its usefulness, but many are unaware of the special problems ESL writers and readers face when asked to comment on a classmate's writing. (p.5)

Despite the potentially problematic nature of peer review, there is hardly any study focusing solely on the problems that first-year students are likely to face when doing peer review in the context of ULIS. Therefore, the researcher conducted this research, entitled ***An investigation into the problems faced by first-year students at FELTE, ULIS when doing peer review in academic writing*** with a view to obtaining some insights into such a helpful but potentially difficult task of peer review among first-year students.

1.2. Aims and objectives

The researcher aimed at investigating the problems that first-year students possibly face when doing peer review in the academic writing class. Students' self-reflection and teachers' perceptions of the problems were collected via questionnaires and interviews, and then compared to see whether there was any mismatch in their perceptions of the problems. A detailed observation of documents – the writing pieces by students with peer comments – was carried out to investigate thoroughly such problems. Basing on the analysis of the collected data,

discussion and suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the peer review activity were proposed.

The objectives above can be summarized in the two following questions.

- (1) *What are first-year students' perceptions of the problems that they face when doing peer review in the academic writing class?*
- (2) *What are the teachers' perceptions of the problems that their first-year students face when doing peer review in the academic writing class?*

1.3. Significance of the study

With this study, the researcher expected to gain insights into the problems that first-year students at FELTE, ULIS have when doing peer written review in academic writing, as perceived by the students themselves and their teachers. Once completed, the research would serve as a source of reference for those who wish to have a more precise look at the peer review activity of first year students and to exploit it in more appropriate ways. More importantly, the findings are primary resource for later researchers and educators in designing programs or courses of treatment to improve the situation on a larger and more practical scale.

1.4. Scope of the study

The study focused on the problems that first-year students face when doing peer review in academic writing. In this study, the researcher would specifically look into peer reviews in written form, and focus on the process when students take on the role of a reviewer.

Student participants of the study consist of 45 current first-year mainstream students from two classes at FELTE, ULIS. This number of students was well-represented because it accounts for one-fourth of the population. In addition, there was the participation of two academic writing teachers of those classes. Teachers' ideas and judgments were of great contribution to the research as they provided another source to triangulate the results collected from the questionnaires responded by the students, and from observing the students' drafts.

1.5. Method of the study

The researchers employed three types of data collection instruments, which are *questionnaire*, *observation of documents*, and *semi-structured interview*. Data collected from the *questionnaires* and by *observing documents* helped to answer research question one, which is about the students' perceptions of the problems, and data collected *interviews* with the two teachers helped investigate teachers' perceptions of the problems that their students face when doing peer review.

In this study, the researchers adopted both quantitative and qualitative design. Quantitative procedures were used to analyze instrument-based information collected from the *questionnaires* and *observation of documents*, and qualitative procedures were employed to analyze data collected from *interviews*.

1.6. Organization

There are three parts in this research paper:

Part 1: Introduction: This part presents *the rationale, aims, participants, the scope, method, and the structure* of the research. The *two research questions* are also included in this part.

Part 2: Development. This part consists of three chapters.

Chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework, which focuses on the problems that students might face when doing peer review in academic writing.

Chapter 2 gives information about *the setting of the research, sampling method, participants' information, data collection instruments, and data analysis methods* of the research.

Chapter 3 presents, analyzes, and gives discussion about the findings that were obtained from the interviews, the questionnaires and the observation process. In addition, discussion and implications are made based on the findings.

Part 3: Conclusion: This part summarizes the main points discussed in this study. It also mentions the *limitations of the study* and includes *recommendations and suggestions for further studies*.

PART II: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents information about the background theory of this study in two main parts. The first part gives definitions of key terms. The second part presents review of related studies, and the theoretical framework.

1.1. Definition of key terms

1.1.1. The writing skill in L2 acquisition

The uses to which writing is put by different people in different situation are so varied that no single definition can cover all situations (Purves, 1992; Camp, 1993, White, 1995, as cited in Weigle, 2002). Thornbury (2005) defines writing as a productive skill that involves a hierarchy of sub-skills ranging from the most mechanical (handwriting or typing legibly) to the ability to organize the written text and lay it out according to the conventions of the particular text type. According to Thornbury (2005) when writing, writers need to be able to:

- produce grammatically accurate sentences;
- connect and punctuate these sentences;
- select and maintain an appropriate style;
- signal the direction that the message is taking; and
- anticipate the reader's likely questions so as to be able to structure the message accordingly. (p. 248)

In order to master and employ all the aforementioned skills in a single writing piece, a writer needs an extensive knowledge base, not only at the level of vocabulary and grammar, but also at the level of connected discourse. It is also required that he/she is familiar with a range of text types, such as informal letters, instructions or product descriptions. Behizadeh & Engelhard (2011) perceives writing as a fundamental aspect of academic literacy and communicative competence in the current educated world while Sokolik (2003, as cited in Gonca, 2012) views writing as not only a physical act but "...the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clearer to the reader". Giti (2011) sees writing as a complicated process which involves a number of cognitive and metacognitive activities, for instance, brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting, and revising. According to Omaggio Hadley (1993, as cited in Giti, 2011), writing requires composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of

information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts, as in expository or argumentative writing. Therefore, it is best viewed as a continuum of activities that range from the more mechanical or formal aspects of writing down on the one end, to the more complex act of composing on the other end (Giti, 2011). Of the four fundamental language skills in the language learning process, “competent writing is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be acquired for native speakers of the language as well as for foreign/second language learners” (Hamp and Heasly, 2006, as cited in Luu, 2010).

1.1.2. Peer review and peer written feedback

Peer review is also referred to as peer editing, peer feedback or peer response. There are several versions of definition of this term. Topping, Smith, Swanson & Elliot (2000, as cited in Matsuno, 2009) define peer-assessment as an arrangement for peers to consider the level, value, worth, quality or successfulness of the products or outcomes of learning of others of similar status. Liu & Hansen (2002) perceive peer review as:

...the use of learners as sources of information, and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing. (p. 1)

Regarding the use of peer review, Witbeck (1976) states that peer review is often used in writing courses. And concerning the form of the activity, teachers will have to choose between having the students provide feedback in oral or written form. This study only focused on peer written feedback for two main reasons: (1) the research was conducted in a writing class; and (2) peer written feedback brings a lot of benefits to students, as mentioned by Rollinson (2005):

- it gives both readers and writers more time for collaboration, consideration and reflection than is normally possible in the cut and thrust of oral negotiation and debate;
- it avoids time being wasted on unimportant issues, and reduces possible friction, defensiveness or negative interaction;
- it provides the reader with a written record for later consideration;
- it gives students further practice in being explicit, detailed, persuasive and audience-focused in their writing; and
- it gives teacher a better chance of closely following the progress of individuals and groups, both in terms of feedback offered and revisions made (p. 24).

1.2. Approaches to writing

Currently, the two most popular approaches to writing are product approach and process approach. Giti (2011) expresses the view that it would be impossible to say with any certain which of the two processes are more effective or more optimum and that the idea of seeking the best method is misleading. In fact, all the different approaches to writing are complementary to and compatible with each other (Hyland, 2002, as cited in Yang, 2005).

1.2.1. Product approach

The product approach to writing focuses on the end result of the act of composition, i.e. the letter, essay, story and so on (Nunan, 1989). Teachers who subscribe to this approach pay more attention to the legibility, grammatical correctness, the main points, the supporting details, rather than to the process in which those things are created. The focus during a lesson will be on copying and imitation. McDonough and Shaw (1993) also agree with Nunan's points of view. They state that the emphasis of product approach is on accuracy of the finished product, not on the process. The process is only the writer's concern. White (1988), Jordan (1997) and Escholz (1980) (as cited in Mekhlafy, 2009) all expressed their concern over the shortcomings of this approach. They believe that it provides little insight into actual processes involved in managing to arrive at the final product.

1.2.2. Process approach

Zamel (1976) was one of the first scholars to recognize writing as a process. Since then, many researchers have been motivated to rate the value of process-oriented writing in second language pedagogies (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Min, 2006; Tsui & Ng, 2000, as cited in Wang, 2009). In the process approach, writing is viewed as a process starting with a writer selecting a topic to write about, organizing the ideas to convey to the readers, drafting and revising the content, and finally ending with the final publication. Rather than being linear and non-interactive, the writing process is pictured as a "dynamic, nonlinear, and recursive" procedure encompassing back-and-forth peer and teacher intervention (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Sharing the same viewpoint, Reid (1993, as cited in Mekhlafy, 2009) theorizes that "the product, the final paper will never again be the solitary

focus of these composition classes; but it (process approach) has assumed its rightful position - at the end of a significant number of intermingled, recursive writing processes." In the process approach to writing, the act of writing is focused as much on the means whereby the completed text was created as on the end product itself (Mekhlafy, 2009). In many cases the writer starts out with only the most ambiguous notion of topic. The ideas are then refined, developed and transformed as the writer writes and rewrites. The process approach empowered its learners, thereby enabling them to make clearer decisions about the direction of their writing (Jordan, 1997, as cited in Mekhlafy, 2009). Clenton (2003, as cited in Mekhlafy, 2009) shares the same opinion when stating that:

...it is no longer required to offer a shining example of the model; the teacher becomes a facilitator in providing formative feedback during the process of each student's composition.

Correspondingly, this approach encourages students to assume greater responsibility for making their own improvements, as opposed to the miming of a pre-determined model.

1.2.3. Process approach and peer review

Rollinson (2005) composes the findings of some recent studies on writing:

- good writing require revision
- writing should involve multiple drafts with intervention response at the various draft stages
- peers can provide useful feedback at various levels
- training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing
- teacher and peer feedback is best seen as complementary (p. 24)

The findings of Rollinson suggest a close connection between peer review and the process approach. As mentioned above, the process approach to writing, which focuses more on the process a writing product is created than on the product itself, has become more popular with writing teachers recently. A writing process consists of different stages in which the writer needs to make refinements to the drafts. And some intervention response (Rollinson, 2005) is required for a student to refine the draft. One of the sources for a writer to consult when revising his draft is his peers, as peers can provide useful feedback at various levels (Rollinson, 2005).

1.3. Peer review and problems when doing peer review

1.3.1. Types of peer written feedback

When doing peer review, a reviewer has to focus on and respond to a variety of features of his or her peer's writing pieces. Those features can range from something "big" such as the content and the organization to something "small" like the language form. All of those features have direct effects on the quality of the writing and thus are what the writer as well as the reviewer should bear in mind. Although different scholars might have different names for those features, the "big" features are generally called *global feature* and the small feature are called *surface feature* (Dawit, 2003). As a result, feedback on *global feature* is known as *global feedback* and feedback on *surface feature* is *surface feedback*.

1.3.1.1. Global feedback

As discussed above, teachers who subscribe to the process approach to writing often require their students to go through a variety of steps before submitting the final version. Though it might depend on different real-life situation, theoretically, the first improvement to on the writing piece should be *global revisions*, which address *content*, *organization* and *unity* – the larger element of writing (Hacker, 1992, as cited in Dawit, 2003). The *global revisions* and *feedback* affect part of a text that is longer than a mere sentence (Hacker, 1992 as cited in Dawit, 2003). Therefore, during peer review practice, it is advised that students first try to focus on global features and have global feedbacks.

1.3.1.2. Surface feedback

The surface features of writing include capitalization, grammar usage, punctuation and spelling. Although they play a role in creating a refined and smooth piece of writing, they should not receive prior treatment in the editing and proofreading process, as they do not affect the overall meaning of the writing very much (Dawit, 2003). Consequently, it can be implied that surface feedbacks should be made after the global ones and should not receive as much attention from the reviewers as global ones.

1.3.2. Main phases in peer review

Hansen & Liu (2005) divided the activity of peer review into three main

phases, which are (1) *before peer response* (or peer review) (2) *during peer response*; and (3) *after peer response*. **In the first phase**, *before peer review*, both teachers and students should make all the necessary preparations for the peer review activity to go on smoothly. This is when students receive inputs and training, e.g. on how to give and receive peer comments, from the teachers. **In the second phase**, *during peer response*, students take on the role of a trained teacher, read and detect mistakes and errors in their peer's drafts. In other words, students read and give comments on their friend's writings. **In the third phase**, *after peer review*, students read and evaluate the comments they receive from their friends and decide whether to take those comments or not and think of ways to revise their writings.

1.3.3. Benefits of peer review

That peer feedback is a beneficial activity in the writing class is among the conclusions that many scholars agreed upon. Researchers have come up with various positive reasons for the application of peer review.

As for students, peer review is helpful to them both as peer readers and peer writers (Rollinson, 2005). It was revealed in two studies, by Rollinson (1998, as cited in Rollinson, 2005) and Caulk (1994, as cited in Rollinson, 2005) that peer readers can provide useful feedback with at least 80% of the comments of the participants found to be useful. In addition, peer writers revise their pieces of writing quite effectively on the foundation of comments from their peer readers.

Peer review can help to give student writers a larger audience group, instead of just their teacher, which can enhance their motivation for writing (Mangelsdorf, 1990, as cited in Dawit, 2003). Moreover, peer review provides student writers with different views and opinions on their writing, and at the same time, encourages students to read critically their own pieces of writing. Rollinson (2005) confirms this with his statement that student writer can become more critical readers and revisers of their own drafts as a result of being critical of others' drafts.

The fact that the natures of comments from peers and teachers are different is another good point of peer review. Caulk (1994, as cited in Rollinson, 2005) characterized peer feedback as more specific and teacher feedback as more general

and therefore, peer feedback can be seen as complimentary to teachers' feedback. Furthermore, as classmates, peer readers and peer writers share quite similar perspectives and problems. Students may feel less threatened by peer feedback and less obliged to take such feedback.

As for teachers, it is obvious that peer review activity helps to cut short their workload. Dheram (1995, as cited in Dawit, 2003) says that peer feedback "reduce the teachers paper work, the endless hours of grading students' essays" (p. 12). Ur (2005) claims peer review as a good timesaving means for teacher to employ when they need to correct a large number of written works. Although it is likely that students do not have the ability to point out all the good qualities or drawbacks of an assignment, they will detect at least some of them. He also sees critical reading for style, content and language accuracy as a valuable exercise in itself for students.

Ferris & Hedgcock (2005) summarize the benefits of peer review as follows:

- Students can take active roles in their own learning.
- Students can "reconceptualize their ideas in light of their peer's reactions"
- Students can engage in unrehearsed, low-risk, exploratory talk that is less feasible in classroom and teacher-student interactions.
- Students receive "reactions, questions, and responses from authentic readers"
- Students receive feedback from multiple sources.
- Students gain a clearer understanding of reader expectations by receiving feedback on what they have done well and on what remains unclear.
- Responding to peers' writing builds the critical skills needed to analyze and revise one's own writing.
- Students gain confidence and reduce apprehension by seeing peers' strengths and weaknesses in writing.
- Peer response activities build classroom community.

Table 1.1: Benefits of peer review (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 226)

1.3.4. Potential problems when doing peer review

Beneficial as it is to developing students' writing skill, peer review is not without its critics. Leki (1990b) was among the first pioneers to acknowledge the problems that students might face when doing peer review (See table 1.2 below).

- Students sometimes focus too heavily on "surface concerns" or editing, neglecting larger revising issues.
- Students can provide vague, unhelpful comments.
- Students may be hostile, sarcastic, overly critical, or unkind in their criticisms of their classmates' writing.
- Students feel uncertain about the validity of their classmates' responses.
- In peer group discussions students may struggle with their own listening comprehension skills or with the peer's accent,

- Lack of L2 formal (rhetorical) schemata may lead to inappropriate expectations about the content and structure of peers' texts, which can then result in counterproductive feedback that leads writers further away from U.S. academic expectations.

Table 1.2: Potential problems when doing peer review (Leki, 1990b, p.9)

In her research, Leki generalizes that the potential problems involving in peer review activities emerge partly from the students' lack of experience in using techniques like peer review and partly from the different rhetorical expectations that language learners bring with them when they are responding to a text. Liu and Hansen (2002) summarize the benefits and constraints of peer review in table 1.3.

	Cognitive	Social	Linguistic	Practical
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exercise thinking 2. Take active role in learning 3. Engage in 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance communicative power 2. Receive authentic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance metalinguistic knowledge 2. Explore linguistic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applicable across student proficiency levels
Constraints	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uncertainty concerning peers' comments 2. Lack of learner 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discomfort and uneasiness 2. Lack of security in negotiating 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Too much focus on surface structure 2. Lack of L2 formal schemata 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time constraints 2. Counter-productive feedback

Table 1.3: Benefits and constraints of peer review (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p.8)

Italo (1999, as cited in Dawit, 2003) found out in his research that the participants tend to be more reluctant to respond to their peers' drafts, thinking themselves not qualified enough to give comments. Thus the effectiveness of the activity is likely to be negatively affected. Mangelsdorf (1992, as cited in Dawit, 2003) expresses his concerns for another problem related to the peer review activity. Compared to teachers' comments, students are less willing to take their peers' feedback for fear that their peers are not good enough critics. Some students' failure to collaborate is also a problem. Hermann (1989, as cited in Dawit, 2003) reports that some of the students in his research were unable, unwilling, and even ill-advised to follow their peer comments in improving what they had written.

1.4. Theoretical framework

The framework below is about seven potential problems that students might face when doing peer review. It was adapted from Liu & Hansen (2002) and Leki (1990b). The researcher used this theoretical framework throughout this research.

1.4.1. Before peer review

a. *Lack of training from teachers*

Rollinson (2005) claims that training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing. However, there are cases when teachers just ask their students to do peer written comment without providing appropriate guidance on what to do and how to do it. As a result, students, especially those who never had any experience of doing peer review, might have a hard time struggling with their peer's writing. Leki (1990b) shows her concerns about the bad influences of lack of L2 formal schemata, which, in this context, refers to the presentation of the theory on doing peer review. She perceives it as a factor leading to the reviewer's inappropriate expectations about the content and structure of peers' texts. This miss-expectation consequently gives rise to counterproductive feedback that leads writers even further away from academic expectations. Leki also draws teacher's attention to the fact that students might misunderstand the purposes for peer feedback and thus are uncomfortable with it.

b. Bad interaction between the writer and reviewer

Kamimura (2006) attaches great importance to the nature of interaction in peer review when stating that it decides whether peer feedback results in substantial revisions. If student writers put on a cooperative manner in the peer review activity, they have a more probable tendency to consider their peers' comments during the revision stage (Nelson & Murphy, 1993). On the contrary, if students put on a defensive manner in the peer review activity or even have very little interaction with the reviewers, they are less likely to make use of their peers' feedbacks. The "environment" where a writer interacts with a reviewer is very important, as it will partly influence the interaction between the two subjects of the peer review activity. By "environment" here the researcher wants to refer to both the physical and spiritual context in which the students start doing the peer review for the first time on, rather than the any specific setting of one peer review session only.

1.4.2. During peer review

a. Limited knowledge of English

Limited knowledge of English is clearly among the problems that worry teachers when they want to apply peer review activity in their writing classes.

Villamil & Guerrero (1998) believe that “among practitioners, there seems to be a lingering feeling that L2 students are not knowledgeable enough to detect and correct errors in the target language” (p. 491). This burden seems less serious in a class where there is little variation in learners’ language level; however, in a class where learners differ greatly in their level of English, this proves to be a real challenge. It is even counterproductive if the writing teacher of such class adopt inappropriate scheme when doing peer review. For example, if the teacher just chooses a random scheme, in which students choose peers’ drafts to read critically in random; or an “in-turn” scheme, in which students alternatively collaborate with each other to do peer review, there is a great likelihood that students of different language proficiency work together. It is impossible that less advanced students and more advanced students will benefit similarly from the activity.

b. Low learners’ investment

Learners’ investment plays a significant role in the success of any activity applied in a class, not just peer review. Investment here does not refer to financial issues, but the time and effort. Students are still in the process of equipping themselves with knowledge, and therefore their ability to give one another helpful feedback is unavoidably limited. This, thus, calls into question the time and effort needed to implement peer response (Leki, 1990; Nelson & Carson, 1998). If students do not put enough effort into the activity, the chances are that they can never get the most of it.

c. Time constraint

It does not matter whether the comments are in form of spoken or written, peer review is still a time-consuming process (Rollinson, 2005). The peer review activity involves multiple tasks; first, a reviewer have to read a draft and make notes; then it is often the step when the reviewer has to double-check whether he has understood it right, by collaborating with another reviewer or consulting sources of reference. Finally it is time for the reviewer and writer to meet and discuss. Based on the description of Rollinson (2005), the researcher has summarized the process of doing peer review into figure 1.1:

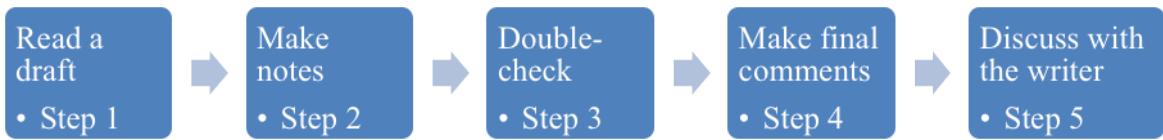


Figure 1.1: Steps while doing peer review

Although it is not compulsory to carry out all the five steps, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the peer review activity, reviewers are recommended to do accordingly. Consequently, the process will consume a significant amount of time. If a teacher does not give students enough time to do peer review for their friends' writings, he or she would risk reducing the efficiency of the supposed-to-be useful activity. However, it is not always the teacher's responsibility if students do not pay enough attention to the activity, keep postponing it until there is too little time left for being a good reviewer of their friends' drafts. Whether it is the students or teachers' responsible, time constraint is still one of the problems that needs attention when teachers decide to employ peer review activity in their writing classes.

d. Lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism

One of the problem of peer review mentioned by Leki (1990b) is that students can either provide vague, unhelpful comments or students may be hostile, sarcastic, overly critical, or unkind in their criticisms of their classmates' writing. Ur (2005) expresses his concerns on the same aspect, but in a contradict way to Leki's, when he states that students may feel uncomfortable when they have to give negative comments on their friend's drafts. Leki's idea seems to be more suitable for western L2 learners while Ur's concerns appear truer to oriental L2 learners. Sharing the same opinion, Wang (2009) claims that one problem with Asian students is that they often choose to give indirect comments, avoid criticizing and disagreeing with their peers for the purpose of group harmony. Passive interaction style is often considered a commonplace phenomenon influenced by collectivist cultures widely spread in Asia. Having the same conclusion on the nature of Asian students, Carson & Nelson (1996) state that when interacting with members of their groups, collectivists will generally work toward maintaining group harmony and mutual face-saving to maintain a state of cohesion. Due to the collectivist culture in

Asia, the ultimate goal of group interaction and group work is the union and harmony among the members (Carson & Nelson, 1996). In their research on Chinese EFL learners, those share the collectivist culture with Vietnamese students, Carson and Nelson found out that:

Although the students in this study perceived the goal of writing groups as criticizing each other's drafts, the Chinese students were reluctant to do so, recognizing, it seems, that making negative comments on a peer's draft leads to division, not cohesion, in a group. They were, for the most part, more concerned with the group's social dimension than with providing their peers with suggestions to improve their essays. (p. 18)

It can be said that Asian learners have a tendency to feel uncomfortable when criticizing or disagreeing with members in their peer review group. They are also careful not to claim themselves as the ones with more knowledge or expertise.

e. Imbalance in the types of comments

According to Ur (2009), the normal order in which components of an original writing piece should be paid attention to is as follows:

- *the content*: whether the events and ideas are what the students are required and significant and interesting to the readers
- *the organization and presentation*: whether the ideas are put in an order that is easy to follow
- *language forms*: whether the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation are acceptably accurate (p. 170)

Having the same point of view with Ur, Keh (1990, as cited in Dawit, 2003) identifies the content, organization and presentation – those belong to global features - as Higher Order Concerns (HOCs). Although teachers are aware of the importance of the content and organization of a writing piece, many of them have the habit of confining themselves mostly to language forms in their feedback, which implicitly shows the superior importance of language forms to the students. Ur (2009) mentions three main reasons for this preference while giving comments:

- Mistakes in spelling or grammar catch the eye and seem to demand to be corrected they are very difficult to ignore.
- Students also want their language mistakes to be corrected.
- Language mistakes are far more easily and quickly diagnosed and corrected than ones of content and organization. (p. 170)

Teachers, who have received specialized training in marking and commenting on students' papers, still have the preference to spot out errors and mistakes in language forms Leki (1990a, p. 60) suggests that writing teachers often face the

criticism of: being too general, i.e. giving comments like “be specific” all the time; being too specific, i.e. giving advice that is only restricted to a context; and focusing too heavily on surface features. It is easy to understand why ultimately this results in the student’s forming the same preference when doing peer review. In some cases a student’s writing is problematic in the most critical aspect – the content, however, what receives the most comments and suggestions is the language form. Leki (1990b) expresses the same opinion when she states that students sometimes focus too heavily on “surface concerns” (p.9) or editing, neglecting larger revising issues.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented information relating to the topic of the study. It has mentioned the approaches to writing; the definition and the importance of peer review; types of peer feedback; and the potential problems students face when doing peer review. The following chapters will focus on the study - its methodology and findings – under the light of the theories discussed above.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the method employed to carry out the study is presented. Information about the setting of study and participants is also included.

2.1. The setting of the study

The study was conducted at the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS) – Vietnam National University, Hanoi. ULIS is regarded as one of the most prestigious Vietnamese universities in training teachers of languages, especially English, as well as translators and interpreters. In order to enter ULIS, all the students have to pass the University Entrance Examination organized by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training in July each year. Students who want to major in English Language Teacher Education are arranged into classes of about 25 students. Those students are good at doing grammar, vocabulary and reading exercises – those that are like the exercises in the University Entrance Exam. However, their experience

of using the other three language skills is very limited. They are expected to be at pre-intermediate level.

The population of the study consists of about 175 first-year students majoring in English language teacher education at FELTE, ULIS. After a renovation from the academic years 2012-2013, students spend their first two years attending intensive courses in English to get to the level of C1 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), instead of the 3-year scheme from 2011 backwards. As the time is compressed and the quality remains the same, students are required to do more work than the previous generations right from the time they started the courses. In the first year, the 2012's freshmen were expected to develop to level B1 and B1+ in the CEFR. They are learning two English subjects: academic and social English, both of which include the writing skill. It is clearly stated in the new 2012 course outline that, "partner and group work is central to enhancing students' language skills and content learning".

2.2. Sampling method

The researcher employed cluster sampling (Henry, 1990; Panneerselvam, 2004) in this study so as to ensure that this study generates reliable and valid results. Henry (1990) characterizes cluster sampling as a method in which each member of the study population is assigned to a group or cluster, and then clusters are selected at random and all members of a selected cluster are included in the sample. Panneerselvam (2004) shares the same point of view when he defines cluster sampling as a sampling technique "in which the population is divided into different subgroups called clusters such that the members within each cluster are dissimilar in terms of their attributes, but different clusters are similar to each other" (p. 491). Cluster sampling is seen as extremely beneficial when a full list of individuals in the population is unavailable but a list of clusters is available.

2.3. Participants

In the whole process this research was conducted, from when data were collected via questionnaires, observation of documents, and interview, to when the findings were analyzed, and when the last suggestions were given, all the participants in this research were not identified by their real names or initial letters, but instead, they are coded with numbers and letters to make sure that the ethical principle was always maintained.

2.3.1. Student participants

The researcher got a list of all the seven mainstream classes and then randomly selected two of the classes to investigate the situation of problem when doing peer review among them. As stated above, 45 students out of about 175 were chosen to participate in this study. As this was a medium-scale study, 45 students were enough to guarantee the validity and reliability.

During semester 1 in academic English, those students were assigned to write about familiar topics such as *travelling*, *self-identity* and *honesty*. They were free to choose their own patterns of organization, and there was not much restriction in the type of writing. They could choose to write a letter, a paragraph or an essay. During semester 2 – the time when this study took place, although the topics were still familiar and varied, such as *education*, *agriculture* or *cities*, the patterns of organization as well as the type of writing became restricted and systematic. Throughout this semester, students were required to write paragraphs, not full essays. The paragraphs were of different types of organisation, such as cause-and-effect, opinion, and for-and-against. In both semesters, students were required to do peer review for each of the pieces of writing. They would submit two drafts: first draft one week after they receive the topic and second draft with peer comments a week after they submitted the first draft.

The setting of the study is summarized in the table 2.1 and figure 2.1.

	First Class	Second Class	Total
<i>Number of students</i>	27	26	53
<i>Actual number of students responding to the questionnaires</i>	21	24	45
<i>Expected number of drafts</i>	27	26	53
<i>Actual number of drafts collected</i>	21	24	45

Table 2.1: Summary of the setting of the study

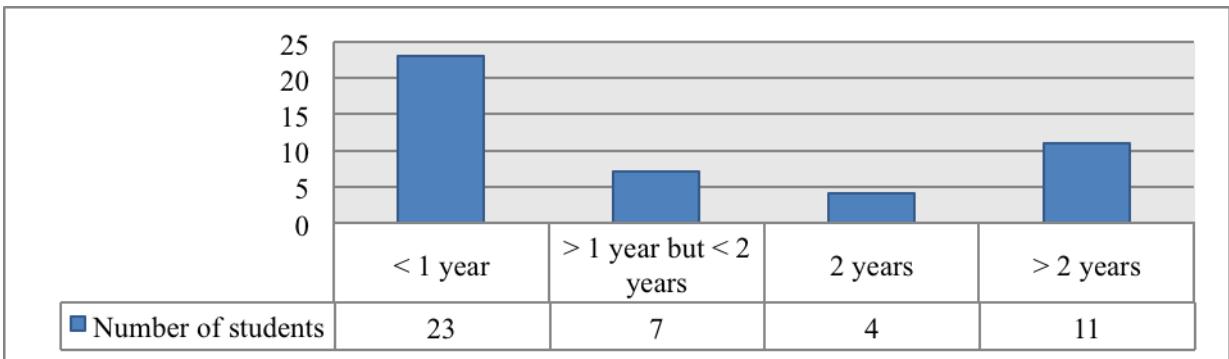


Figure 2.1: Students' experience with peer review

Figure 2.1 shows students' experience with peer review. Regarding the experience that the student participants had with doing peer review, 63% of the students reported that they had done peer review before they entered ULIS.

2.3.2. Teacher participants

After two classes had been chosen, the researcher contacted the teachers who were in charge the academic writing subject to conduct interviews. The researcher decided to choose those teachers because they were the one who directly work with the participants and therefore knew best about the students' problems when doing peer review.

Teacher of the first class has not had much teaching experience. 2012-2013 is the first year he has officially taught first-year students. He used to be a student of the fast-track division, FELTE, ULIS, where peer review is widely exploited with high teachers' expectations from students. Teacher of the second class has more experience of working with first-year mainstream students. She also graduated from FELTE, ULIS, but not from the fast-track program.

2.4. Research instruments

2.4.1. Questionnaire

Oppenheim (1992) regards questionnaire as an important instrument of research, a tool for data collection with the typical function of measurement that is connected with the aims of the overall research plan and objectives. Brown (2001, p.6) seems to agree with the idea when saying that questionnaires are “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among

existing answers". Makey & Gass (2005, p.92) consider questionnaire "one of the most common methods of collecting data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants".

In this research, questionnaire was chosen as one of the data collection instruments as it allowed the researcher to collect students' self-evaluation and feedback on the problems they face when doing peer review in writing. With this instrument, the researcher aimed at getting straightforward information from the samples. With cluster sampling, it was easy to administer as well as collect the questionnaires. The researcher also gave careful explanation to the participants about why the information was being collected and how beneficial their response would be to the study.

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was constructed with carefully designed items based on the literature reviewed and the setting of this study.

In the questionnaire, there were 23 items in total. The researcher made every attempt to be sure that the items could be easily comprehended by the participants, and therefore decided to translate all of them into Vietnamese. Obviously, this did not affect the reliability and validity of the research but instead, enhance these two qualities, because the primary purpose was to investigate the problems that students have when doing peer review, not to examine English reading skill. After the questionnaire had been designed, the researcher made contact with some teachers and students for permission to pilot the questionnaire. Advice from the supervisor and other teachers who were in charge of academic writing in Division 1 at FELTE, ULIS proved to be invaluable. Overall, the researcher had to experience three main rounds of piloting before finally reaching the point when the final version of the questionnaire was made.

In the first round, the researcher submitted it to the supervisor for comments and further refinement.

In the second round, the teacher piloted the questionnaire with one first-year class whose major was English Language. To a great extent they had the same

characteristics as the targeted population. After the session, the researcher asked the piloted students whether they had any comments and suggestions for the questions so that he could add some definitions as well as some explanation of important or uncommon terms. This was also when the researcher decided to create a Vietnamese version of the questionnaire so as to make sure that students could understand every single question.

In the third round, the researcher consulted the teacher who was directly in charge of the class where the pilot session was held for comments on the questionnaire.

Questionnaire description (See appendix A)

The questionnaire was designed partly based on the questionnaires by Brammer & Rees (2007) and Dawit (2003). At the beginning of the questionnaire is its name and a brief explanation on the purpose of it, as well as an introduction of the researchers and title of the study. The researcher also claimed that there was no RIGHT or WRONG answer. At the end, there is a thank-you note and spaces for the participants to write their personal information.

The main part of the questionnaire is divided into three sections A, B, and C with 23 items. In section A, there are six items for the researcher to obtain some background knowledge about the peer review activity held in the participants' academic English class. Section B, concerning two *before-peer-review* problems, includes 10 Items to investigate two potential problems, which are *lack of training from teacher* and *bad interaction between the writer and the reviewer*. Section C with 7 items was designed to dig deeply into five potential problems while students are doing peer review, which are *time constraint, low learners' investment, limited knowledge of English, imbalance in the types of comments, trust and willingness to provide criticism*. Table 2.2 summarizes the main features and the purposes of the 23 items in the questionnaire.

Section	Potential problems	Items
A. General information		Items 1-6
B. Before peer review	Lack of training from teachers	Items 7-10
	Bad interaction between the writer and reviewer	Items 11-16

<i>C. During peer review</i>	Limited knowledge of English	Item 17
	Time constraints	Item 18
	Low of learners' investment	Item 19
	Imbalance in the types of comments	Items 20-21
	Lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism	Items 22-23

Table 2.2: Detailed description of the questionnaire

2.4.2. Semi-structured interview

2.4.2.1. Semi-structured interview for teachers

Berger (2010) states that interviews enable researchers to obtain information that they cannot gain by observation alone. This method is a powerful means of both obtaining information and gaining insights. Hannan (2007) lists the outstanding strengths as follows:

- giving informants the chance to challenge the agenda set by the researchers, raising new issues, asking questions back
- flexibility - making possible changes in the order of questioning, the questions asked and the topics discussed
- allowing for long and complex responses
- allowing the researcher to dig in the meanings interviewees give to their behavior, assuring their motives and intentions

Case (1990) provides more details about one kind of interview, which is semi-structured interview, by adding that semi-structured interview is “conducted with a fairly open framework which allows for focused, conversational, two-way communication”. It contains more general questions in comparison with structured interview and those questions are often made during the interview. Semi-structured interview will help the researchers to understand thoroughly the answers provided by interviewees (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Sharing the same idea, Mason (2012) defines semi-structured interview as the interview with flexible and fluid structure.

In this study, the researcher conducted interviews with two teachers who were in charge of academic writing of two classes. The interviews helped to discover problems that students had when doing peer review from teachers' point of view. The semi-structured interview allowed for greater flexibility and more extensive responses, thus making it flexible in changing the questions or asking further questions to clarify the situation. The researcher can change the order of the questions in order to get more information from the interviewees.

Description of interview questions for teachers (See appendix B)

Similarly to questionnaire, interview was adopted to investigate the potential problems that students have before and while doing peer review, but this time the problems were perceived by the two teachers in charge of the classes. There are 12 questions in the set of questions used during the interview, and the first eleven of them are put into three parts, which are *general information*, *before peer review* and *during peer review*. Question number 12 was used to ask for additional information. Table 2.3 summarizes the questions and the potential problems that the questions were designed to investigate.

Part	Potential problems	Questions
<i>A. General information</i>		Questions 1-2
<i>B. Before peer review</i>	Lack of training from teachers	Questions 3-4
	Bad interaction between the writer and reviewer	Questions 5-6
<i>C. During peer review</i>	Limited knowledge of English	Question 7
	Time constraints	Question 8
	Lack of learners' investment	Question 9
	Imbalance in the types of comments	Question 10
	Lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism	Question 11
	Addition information	Question 12

Table 2.3: Detailed description of the interview questions

2.4.2.2. Semi-structured interviews for students

The researchers included the use of semi-structured interviews for students as a supplementary instrument for the survey questionnaire. Specifically, semi-structured interview was used only to clarify the information collected through question number 7 in the questionnaire (see Appendix A) regarding the training students received from their teachers. Ten students from each class were chosen to participate in the interviews.

2.4.3. Observation of documents

To investigate the problems faced by first-year students when doing peer review, this research employed structured observation method. Patton (1990) suggests that “a highly structured observation will know in advance what it is looking for and will have its observation categories worked out in advance” (p. 306). Documents prove to be a rich source of information for any researcher. Hill (1993, as cited in Patton, 2002, p.292) claims the importance of records,

documents, artifacts and archives to field research and evaluation. Patton (2002) backs up the idea with the statement that documents are valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interview. Documentary analysis enables the researcher to reach inaccessible persons or subjects (Cohen et al., 2007). In the research, it would be very difficult to get in personal contact with each participant due to the available time and resources. Thus, by observing documents, the researcher was able to conduct the research to the largest possible extent.

2.5. Procedures of data collection

Data from the questionnaires

Step 1: Organize in advance and ask for agreement from participant: In the appointment to collect the students' writing pieces, the researcher also asked for students' agreement to participate in the survey.

Step 2: Collect the data: Questionnaires were sent to the respondents one week after the collection of writing pieces. Instructions on the ways of responding to the questionnaire and explanation to confusing words were carefully given during the process.

Step 3: Evaluate the data collection process: After finishing the collection procedure at the first class, a report about the achievement and shortcomings of the process was made.

Data from the two interviews

Step 1: Contact: Firstly, the researchers contacted the two teachers to make sure they were available for our interview, agreeing on time and place.

Step 2: Interview: This was the most important step, in which the researchers interviewed the teachers and the interviews were recorded. During the interview, both the teachers gave lots of details for each question.

Step 3: Collect data: After having interviewed the teacher, the recording was transcribed for data, which was ready to be analyzed.

Data from observations of documents

Step 1: Organize in advance and ask for agreement from respondents: In this step, the researchers studied the timetables of the students and contacted the teachers to make appointments with the students at the appropriate locations and time. During the appointments, the topic, significance of the study and the reasons why students' support was needed was discussed.

Step 2: Collect the data: The students' drafts with peer comments were collected after the meeting.

2.6. Data analysis method

Quantitative Analytical Strategies – for data from questionnaires and observation of documents

As explained by Markey & Gass (2005), measures of frequency indicate how often a particular behavior or phenomenon occurs, and thus this type of descriptive statistics well applies for this study. The answers from the questionnaires were put in categories so that the researcher could calculate the frequency of each problem in doing peer review as perceived by the students.

Qualitative Analytical Strategies – for data from the interviews

With the purpose of comparing the findings from the interview with the results of the survey questionnaire to have a deeper understanding of the problems, the researcher considered qualitative analysis an effective data analysis method. Patton (2001) defines qualitative analysis as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative materials and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (p. 453). While quantitative method reports the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts, qualitative analysis illustrates the range of meanings of the phenomenon. Comparing the results from the interview with the findings from survey questionnaire enabled the researcher to investigate the problems in depth.

2.7. Procedures of data analysis

2.7.1. Data collected from questionnaires

Step 1: Prepare the data: On receiving back the questionnaires, the researcher had to carefully check each of them to see whether (1) that questionnaire was completed; (2) the answers given were relevant to the questions; and (3) the answers given were understandable and valid. Only after a questionnaire had met all the three criteria above could it be chosen for the next step.

Step 2: Report the statistics: In this step, the main task was to calculate the frequency of the problems that students had when doing peer review and how serious they were in comparison with other problems. Distribution was calculated to present the number of answers for each question.

Step 3: Visualize the data collected: As well as being reported in written form with detailed description and numbers, the statistics was visualized using a range of charts, graphs and tables. This made it so much easier to comprehend and compare the statistics.

2.7.2. Data collected from interviews

Step 1: Transcribe: In the first step, the information in audio form recorded on the phone during the session of interviewing the two teachers was transcribed into written form for convenience when analyzing.

Step 2: Choose relevant data: After all the interviews had been transcribed, the relevant data to the research questions were selected. The aim of this step was to link specific quotes to analytic concepts and categories.

Step 3: Analyze: Once the data had been prepared, the researcher chose qualitative methods to analyze the data based on the research questions and the purposes of the study.

Step 4: Conclude: Finally, the findings were reported, and discussion and implications were drawn accordingly. Information from the questionnaires and the observation process was combined to provide discussion.

2.7.3. Data collected from observation of documents

Step 1: Prepare the data: In this step, the researcher had to prepare the writing drafts of the students, checking whether they (1) were legible and (2)

contained peer comments. Then, it comes to the part when the researcher had to use number to code the drafts. Each document is given a number from 1 to 45.

Step 2: Gather data: After all the drafts had been prepared and coded, they were studied by the researcher. There were two rounds of observation in total.

Observation round 1

No.	Potential problems	What to observe
1 + 2	Imbalance in the types of comments Limited knowledge of English	<p>1. Global comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many comments are on the content? Of which how many are incorrect? • How many comments are on the organization? Of which how many are incorrect? <p>2. Surface comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many comments are on language usage (including grammar and vocabulary)? Of which how many are incorrect? • How many comments are on language form? Of which how many are incorrect?
3	Lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism	<p>3. How many critical comments on content and organization are there?</p> <p>4. How many critical comments are on language form and language usage?</p>

Table 2.4: Round 1 - observing scheme

Table 2.4 presents all the points that the researcher paid attention to in the first round of observation. In this round, using a scheme developed from the literature review, the researcher observed the documents to investigate three potential problems, (1) *imbalance in the types of comments*, (2) *limited knowledge of English* and (3) *lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism*. In this round, the researcher ignored all the other mistakes left unmarked by student reviewers, just focused on what had been identified and commented by them.

Observation round 2: This round consists of two main tasks.

Limited knowledge of English	What to mark	Detailed description
Global level	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether the paragraph fits the assignment - Whether ideas are comprehensible and related to the topic - Whether the paragraph shows thought and care
	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether the draft is in form of a paragraph - Whether the paragraph begins with a topic sentence that has both a topic and a controlling idea; and ends with an appropriate concluding sentence

	Surface level	Language usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grammar: whether all the structures, verb tense, preposition, and article are used correctly; - Vocabulary: whether the words are chosen and used appropriately;
		Language form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether there is a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark after every sentence. - Whether capital letters are used correctly. - Whether the spelling is correct.

Table 2.5: Round 2 – Task 1: marking scheme

In task 1, the researcher marked 45 paragraph-writing pieces for **global** and **surface** mistakes left unidentified by student reviewers. Before marking, the researcher discussed the marking scheme in detail with the two writing teachers of the class. Table 2.5 shows the scheme the researcher used to mark all the 45 documents collected from two classes. This marking scheme was created based on the literature that had been reviewed in chapter 2 and the *Paragraph scoring rubric* by Oshima & Hogue (2006) due to the detailed marking explanations it contained, which was superior to other scoring rubric the researcher could get access to.

After finishing marking 45 drafts, the researcher had a discussion with each of the two writing teachers to finalize the mistakes.

In task 2, when all the documents had been marked, and all the mistakes had been finalized with the help of two writing teachers the researcher had to count all the unidentified global mistakes and surface mistakes. Details are as follow:

Limited knowledge of English	<i>Level of mistake</i>	<i>What to count</i>
	Global level	mistakes in content
		mistakes in organization
	Surface level	mistakes in language usage mistakes in language form

Table 2.6: Round 2 - observing scheme

Step 3: Report and visualize the collected data: In this step, bar charts are used to show the number of four types of mistakes.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has focused much on the main parts of the study. It has demonstrated the setting of the study, population description, sampling method and the background of the participants. Information about the instruments, data collection and data analysis has also been discussed. In the following the findings and the discussion of the findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the study is presented and analyzed based on the theoretical framework. After that, discussion of the results is provided.

The findings of the study, as well as the discussion, are presented based on the framework. Information collected from questionnaires, the observation process and the interviews are shown in succession.

Research question 1: What are first-year students' perceptions of the problems that they face when doing peer review in the academic writing class?

Research question 2: What are the teachers' perceptions of the problems that their first-year students face when doing peer review in the academic writing class?

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Training from teachers

3.1.1.1. Results obtained from questionnaires

All the participants reported that they received training sessions on peer review in the first semester (when they were required to do peer review at ULIS for the first time). They commented on the training sessions to be brief and just touch upon the main points that they should notice when doing peer review.

The difference of the two classes lies in the second semester. In the first class, students said that their academic writing teacher did not go through any revision on how to do peer review, supposing that his students must have been familiar with the whole process after the first semester. To clarify the situation, the researcher conducted informal interviews with 10 students from each class. One of the interviewees from class 1 said:

My writing teacher this semester [semester 2 – they learned with a different teacher in semester 1] did not provide any instructions on peer review. He just assigned us the task to do peer review. However, we received some training from our teacher in semester 1.

In the second class, the academic writing teacher provided her students with a short session (about 15 minutes) on peer review before she required them to do the activity. She even went around the classroom to monitor and provided help to students when necessary. Only three out of 24 participants from class 2 reported receiving teacher's assistance the first time they did peer review in the second semester.

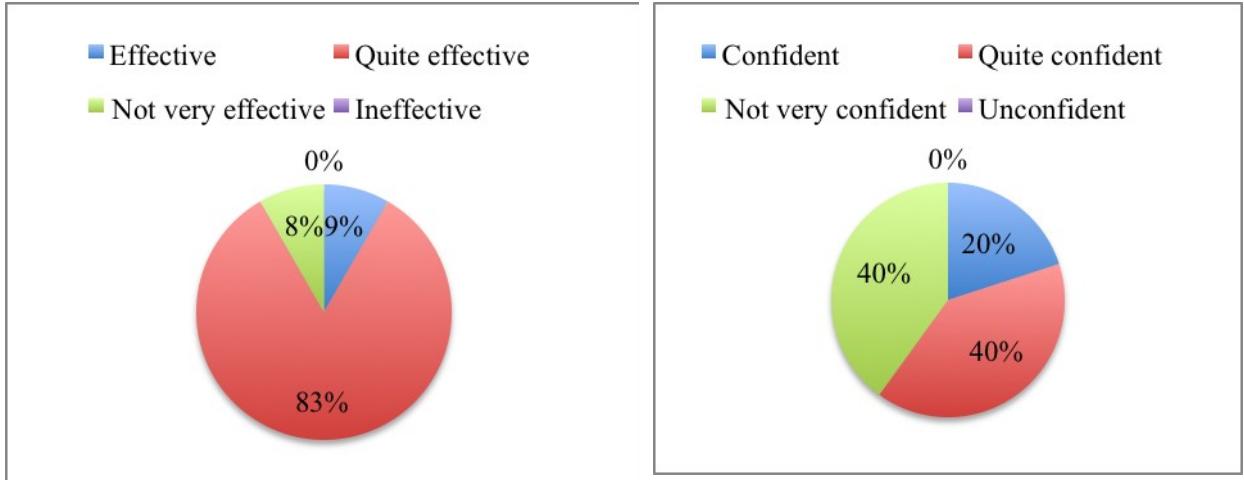


Figure 3.1: Students' assessment of the training they received from teacher

Figure 3.1 gives information on how students in the second class evaluated the training they received from their academic writing teacher in the second semester. It can be seen that 83% of the students, the majority of them, thought the training was *quite effective*. 9% of them affirmed the training session to be *effective* while slightly the same number of students had quite opposing opinion, stating that the training is *not very effective*. None of the surveyed students answered that the training was *ineffective*.

Figure 3.2 shows the level of students' confidence when doing peer review. It is clear from the pie chart that all of the participants in the research were confident when doing peer review; however, the level of confidence varied among them. Only 20% of the students showed firm belief in their ability to do peer review by stating that they were *confident*. 40% of the participants said that they were *quite confident*. The same number of participants reported that they were *not very confident*. There were no students who were *unconfident* when doing peer review.

Figure 3.2: Students' level of confidence when doing peer review

3.1.1.2. Results obtained from the interviews

Both teachers were not keen on the idea of giving detailed training for their students very much, fearing that this would consume the time for other activities. In addition, they assumed that students had been familiar with peer review. Teacher 1 said that:

I only provided some very quick instructions, requirements to be more exact, because they have been familiarized with this activity since the first semester...I did not provide any instructional materials on peer review. Moreover, the tight schedule doesn't allow me to do so.

In the interviews, teacher 2 explained that when monitoring the process, she provided help for some pairs randomly, because she did not have time for the whole class. Teacher 2 did provide more training than teacher 1, but this was not enough to improve the performance of the students, judging from the seriousness of other problems discussed below.

3.1.2. Interaction between the writer and reviewer

3.1.2.1. Results obtained from the questionnaires

Interaction between the writer and reviewer is reflected through students' attitude towards their partners when doing peer review and towards the environment where this interaction took place. This problem was investigated through question number 11 to question 16 in the questionnaire.

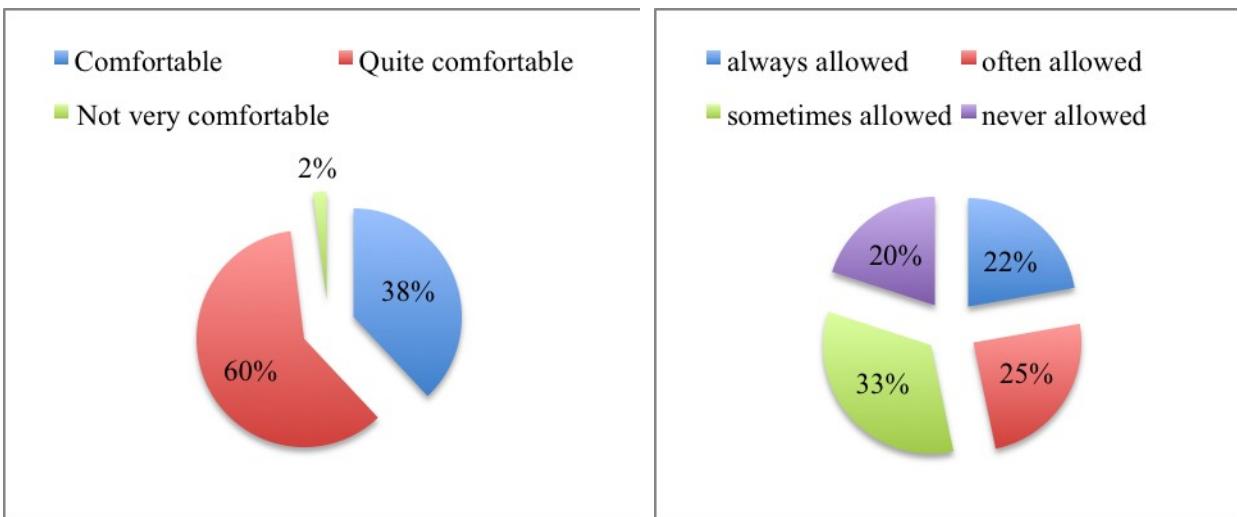


Figure 3.3: Level of comfort of the environment where the peer review activity takes place

Figure 3.4: Students' permission to choose peers to do peer review

Figure 3.3 summarizes information on the level of comfort reported by the participants. Most of the students, 42 out of 45, did peer review activities in class, while only three of them did peer review at home or at other places. On being asked to rate the level of comfort of the environment in which they did peer review, 38% of the respondents reported it to be *comfortable*. The majority of the respondents, 60% to be specific, were of the opinion that the environment was *quite comfortable*. Only 2% of the participants were a little dissatisfied with the environment where they review their friends' drafts by rating it to be *not very comfortable*. None of the participants in the research were *uncomfortable* with the environment.

Concerning the question whether students were allowed to choose friends to do peer review with, 80% of the students gave the answer *yes* and only 20% of them answered *no*.

Figure 3.4 above illustrates the frequency of students being allowed to choose friends to do peer review with. Of the 36 students who were allowed to choose friends to do peer review, 22% reported that they were *always allowed* to do so. 25% and 30% are respectively the percentage of students who were *often allowed* to choose peers and who were *sometimes allowed* to do so. Only 20% of them are *never allowed* to choose the people they would like to work with when doing peer review.

Of the 45 participants in the survey questionnaire, 22 **had never** done peer review with *a friend they personally did not like* while 23 **had ever** had to do so. This was caused by schemes to arrange students to do peer review of the teacher, which is presented in later parts in this chapter.

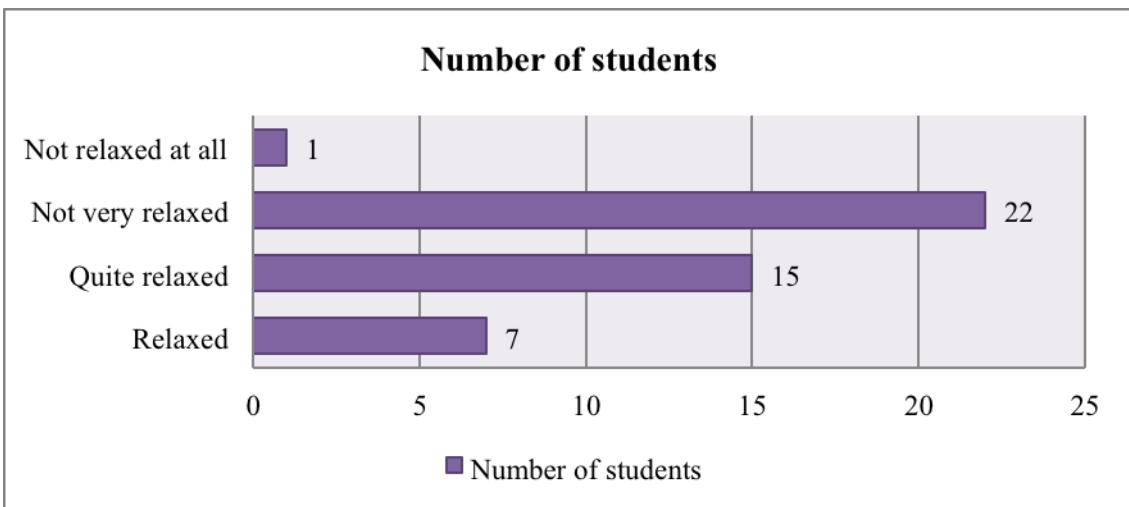


Figure 3.5: Student reviewers' feeling when doing peer review with a friend they personally do not like

Figure 3.5 depicts student reviewers' feeling when they had to do peer review with a friend they personally disliked. The most outstanding feature of figure 3.5 is that nearly 50% of the students – 22 – felt *not very relaxed* when doing peer review with a disliked friend. Just one student claimed to be *not relaxed at all* when he had to work with a friend he personally disliked. The rest of 44 students were somewhat relaxed to do so. 15 students reported to be *quite relaxed* and seven students reported to be *relaxed* when doing peer review with a friend they disliked.

It is also worth mentioning that when asked whether doing peer review for a friend they disliked would negatively affect the quality of the work, nine students said that it would. However, the number of students who had a contradictory opinion is three times greater than that. 27 out of 45 students said that doing peer review for a friend they disliked would not have any negative influence on the quality of the work.

3.1.2.2. Results obtained from the interviews

When asked to assess her students' feelings when doing peer review in their class, teacher 2 said that:

I think that they [students] are quite comfortable. Moreover, they can talk together about something useful.

Regarding the reason why most peer review activity took place in class, teacher 2 explained that this was her preference, because only in class could she

take control of the situation and push her students to do peer review more seriously. and provide help if necessary.

Actually, I want them to do peer review in class because when they do it at home I cannot control whether they actually do it carefully. Moreover, as there are mistakes that they cannot identify themselves, I can help them when necessary.

Teacher 1 had a different approach to peer review. Although he provided time for students to do peer review in class, he often encouraged them to do peer review at home to save time.

Concerning the schemes to arrange students into pairs or groups to do peer review, the two teachers had different ideas. While teacher 1 allowed his students to do peer review with whomever they like, admitting that he did not know the level of the students to make proper group and pair arrangement, teacher 2 adopted a random scheme. She might ask two students sitting next to each other to exchange their drafts to do peer review or, students sitting on two sides to exchange their drafts. Teachers 2 did not pay any attention to the level of the students, while teacher 1 sometimes recommended better students to the class for consultation.

With regards to cases in which two students who dislike each other having to work together, teacher 2 said that she did not know students' feelings towards each other and that this would not affect the quality of the work. "I don't know about their feelings towards others but personally, I don't think feelings would affect the activity." However, teacher 1 has some concerns:

I think if two students who personally do not like working with each other are forced to do so, it would somewhat affect the quality of the work. But in a big group, the effect would be less extreme.

3.1.3. Knowledge of English

3.1.3.1. Results obtained from questionnaires

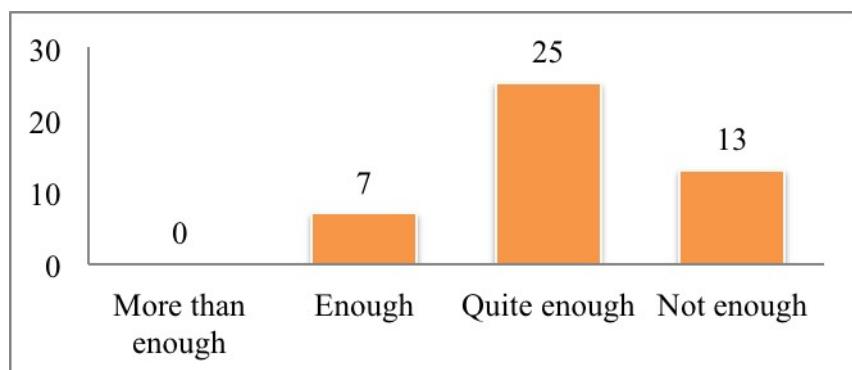


Figure 3.6: Students' self-assessment of their knowledge and skills for peer review

Figure 3.6 presents information about students' self-assessment of their knowledge and skills available for the peer review activity. As can be seen from the graph, the majority of the students, about 72%, rated their knowledge and skills to be more or less adequate for this activity to a certain extent. To be more detailed, seven out of 45 students thought that they had *enough* knowledge to carry out peer review for their friends. More than 55% percent of the students – that is 25 out of 45 – reported that they had *quite enough* knowledge and skills. 13 students assessed their knowledge and skills to be *not enough*.

3.1.3.2. Results obtained from observing writing drafts

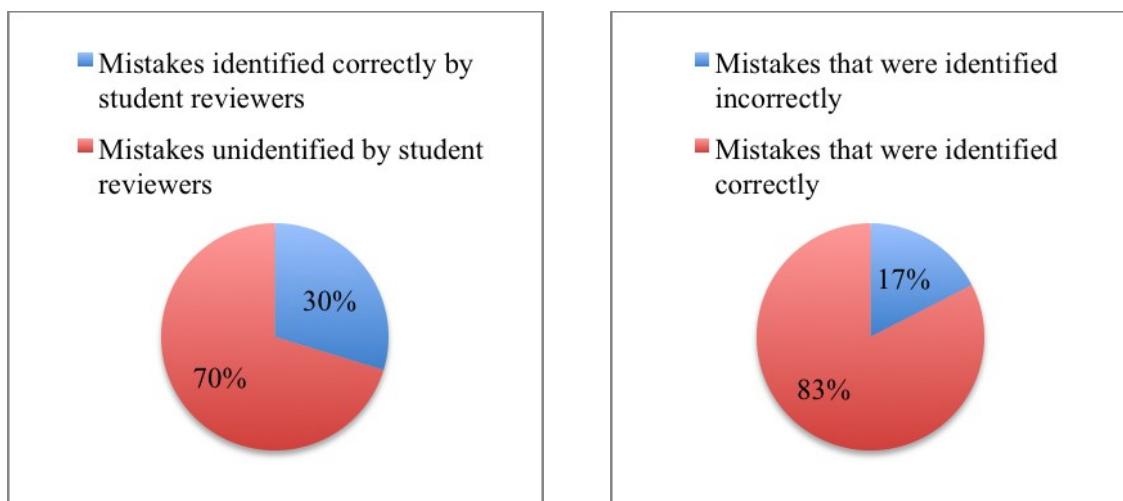


Figure 3.7: Mistakes that were

*unidentified and mistakes that were
identified correctly by peer reviewers*

Figure 3.7 shows the percentage of the mistakes that were *identified* and *unidentified* by the student reviewers, while figure 3.8 gives information on the percentage of mistakes that were *pointed out correctly* and mistakes that were *pointed out incorrectly* by them. In total, the researcher could identify 969 mistakes in *content*, *organization presentation*, *language usage*, and *language form* in 45 collected drafts. However, as is shown in figure 3.7, student reviewers could point out correctly only 30% of all the mistakes, which is equal to nearly 300 mistakes.

Figure 3.8: Mistakes that were

*identified correctly and mistakes that were
identified incorrectly by peer reviewers*

They left more than 600 mistakes *unidentified*. In addition, not all the mistakes pointed out by student reviewers were really mistakes. Some of the mistakes were still grammatically and lexically acceptable despite the fact that they sounded awkward. Specifically, student reviewers pointed out 349 mistakes. It can be seen from figure 3.8 that only 288 of the mistakes identified by students, constituting 83%, were incorrect and the rest 17% were not mistakes. In other words, 61 correct items were wrongly identified by student reviewers as mistakes.

3.1.3.3. Results obtained from interviews

With regards to students' knowledge of English, teacher 1 said "The language abilities of the students really vary." He added that while some students in the first class were really good and able to point out a lot of mistakes in their peers' drafts, others could not do that. The case of the second class is no difference when the second teacher commented:

The majority of the students can only point out grammatical and spelling mistakes, and they can hardly identify mistakes at sentence level, for example, run-on fragment, until I point those mistakes out. And for mistakes at higher level, like unity and coherence, it would be impossible.

3.1.4. Time and learners' investment

3.1.4.1. Results obtained from questionnaires

Aspects of peer review	More than enough	Enough	Quite enough	Not enough
The amount of time available for students to do peer review	0	16	23	6
The amount of effort students invest in the peer review activity.	0	16	26	3

Table 3.1: Students' self-assessment of the time available and their effort for peer review

Table 3.1 gives information on students' self assessment of the time available for them to do peer review, and the amount of effort they invested in the peer review activity. No students reported that the time available and their effort were *more than enough* for them. 16 students stated that *the available time and their effort* were *enough* for peer review. The majority of students stated that *the available time and their effort* was *quite enough*, with 23 students for time and 26 students for the invested effort. Six students thought that the time available for

them was *not enough* and three students reported that the effort they invested in peer review was *not enough*.

3.1.4.2. Results obtained from interviews

Regarding students' high rate of satisfaction of the time available for them to do peer review (39 out of 45 students said that the time they had was *enough* or *quite enough*), teacher 2 expresses her opinion that as most students often did peer review really superficially when there was no teacher's monitoring, even 5 – 10 minutes is enough for them.

If students are allowed to do peer review without pushing from the teacher, they will do really fast and carelessly. It will be really superficial. Sometimes they just need 5 minutes to do peer review but this 5 minutes is totally ineffective.

Both teachers shared the opinion that their students did not invest enough. Teacher 1 said that: "...I would assess based on the effort students invest. Some of them are really serious, but others are not." Teacher 2 also explicitly expressed her dissatisfaction of her students not trying hard enough when doing peer review:

...I expect that they would invest more effort. When there is a part that they suspect to be wrong, I hope that they will double-check, but the truth is that they don't always do so. They just feel that there is something wrong but they don't know why, and therefore, just leave it.

3.1.5. Types of comments

3.1.5.1. Results obtained from questionnaires

	Aspects	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
Global comments	<i>grammar</i>	26	15	4	0	0
	<i>vocabulary</i>	13	21	8	3	0
	<i>language form (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)</i>	13	11	18	4	0
Surface comments	<i>content</i>	9	13	16	7	0
	<i>organization and presentation</i>	4	13	24	4	0

Table 3.2: The frequency at which students comment on different aspects of a piece of writing

Tables 3.2 shows the self-reported frequency at which students comment on different aspects of a draft of writing. From table 3.2 it is clear that students focused

more on giving surface comments than global comments. Of the three types of **surface comments**, *grammar* received the most attention from students. About 60% of the students said they *always* provided feedbacks on *grammar* and 30% of them *usually* provide feedbacks on this aspect. 13 students said they *always* took notice of *vocabulary* and *language form*. Regarding **global comments**, *organization & presentation* received less notice than *content* when only four students said that they *always* commented on this aspect – only half of the number of students who always gave feedback on *content*. A similar number of students of 13 reported *usually* commented on *content* and *organization & presentation*.

Figure 3.9 below illustrates the orders of the student reviewers when asked to arrange four aspects of a writing piece (*language usage (grammar and vocabulary)*, *language form (spelling, punctuation and capitalization)*, *content*, *organization & presentation*) in descending order from *most important* to *least important* in giving comments. One-fifth of the students had the suitable answers when prioritizing *content* and *organization & presentation* over *language usage* and *language form*. The rest of the students gave unsuitable arrangements when they attributed more importance to *language form* or *language usage* than *content* and *organization & presentation*.

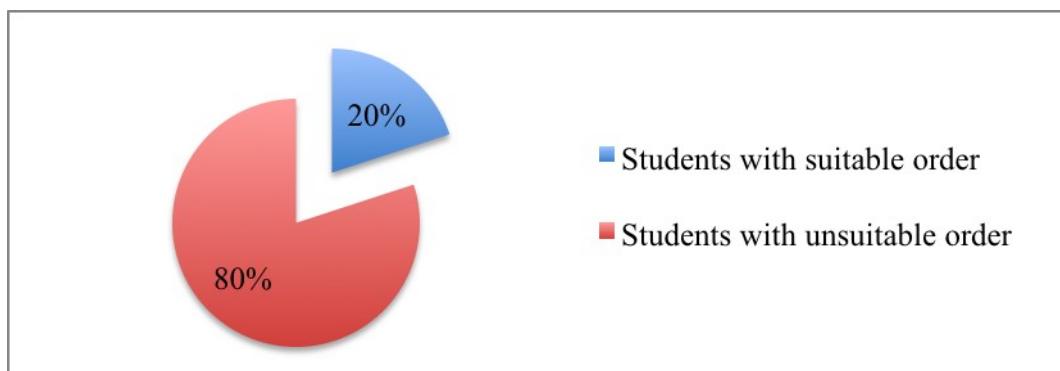


Figure 3.9: Percentage of students with suitable orders and unsuitable orders when asked to prioritize 4 aspects of writing drafts in giving comments

3.1.5.2. Results obtained from observing writing drafts

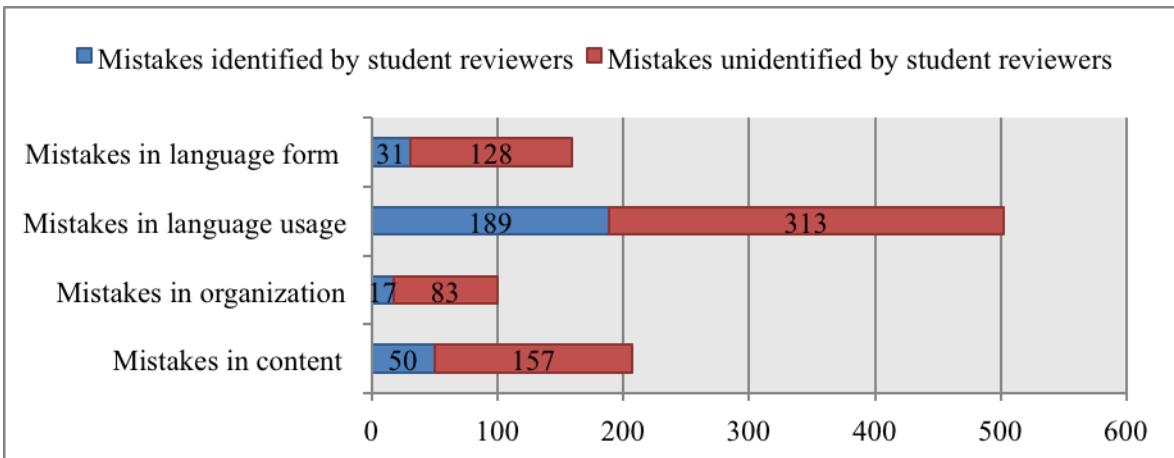


Figure 3.10: Types of mistakes identified and unidentified by student reviewers

Figure 3.10 depicts the number of mistakes in four aspects *organization*, *content*, *language form* and *language usage* identified and unidentified by students. In general, it can be seen that the proportion of **identified surface mistakes** to **unidentified surface mistakes** is nearly two times more than the proportion of **identified global mistakes** to **unidentified global mistakes**. Students were capable of pointing out nearly two-fifths of all mistakes in *language usage*, while only one-fifth and one-fourth of the mistakes in *organization* and *content* respectively were correctly pointed out by the students. Students could only pointed out only one-fifth of all the mistakes in language form, which was also a very low proportion.

3.1.5.3. Results obtained from interviews

The two interviewed teachers are aware of students' tendency to focus more on mistakes at **surface level**. Teacher 1 said that: "The majority of them focus on mistakes at **surface level**" and teacher 2 said "Of course there isn't a balance in the two types of comments, with more at **surface level**, and I don't expect them to be able to comment on **global features** now.".

3.1.6. Trust and willingness to provide criticism

3.1.6.1. Results obtained from questionnaires

Figure 3.11 illustrates the frequency at which students criticized a draft of writing. 18 out of 45 surveyed students reported that they *often* criticize a draft,

while 11 and 13 said that they *always* and *sometimes* criticized a draft respectively. Three students said that they never criticized their peers' writings.

Figure 3.12 shows the level of willingness of student reviewers when they have to criticize a friend's draft. 26 out of 45 self-reported to be *quite willing* while criticizing a peer's draft. The number of students who were *willing* to criticize is 9 and the number of students who were *not very willing* is 7. Three students said that they were *unwilling* when criticizing a draft.

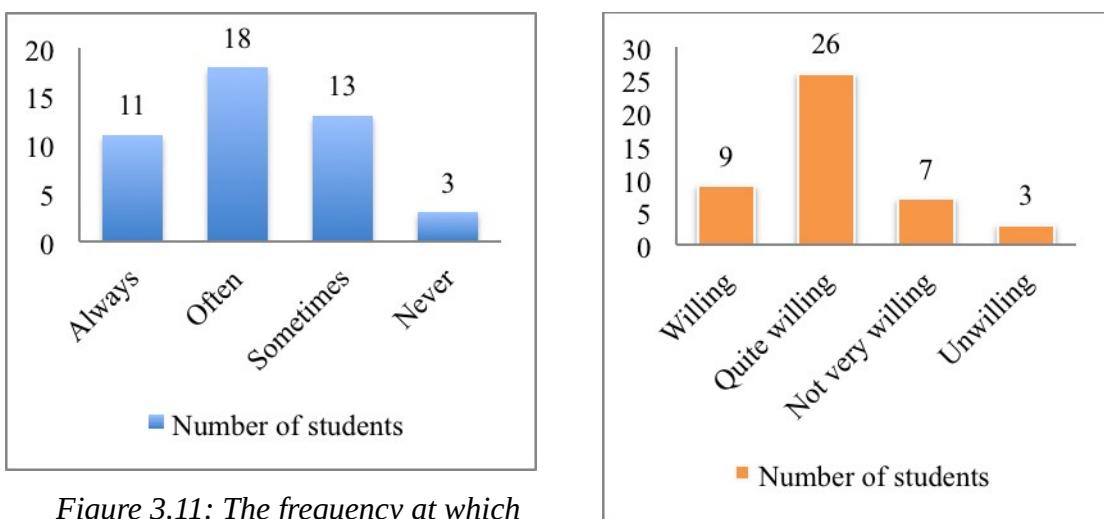


Figure 3.11: The frequency at which students criticize a draft of writing

Figure 3.12: Students' willingness to criticize a writing draft

3.1.6.2. Results obtained from observing writing drafts

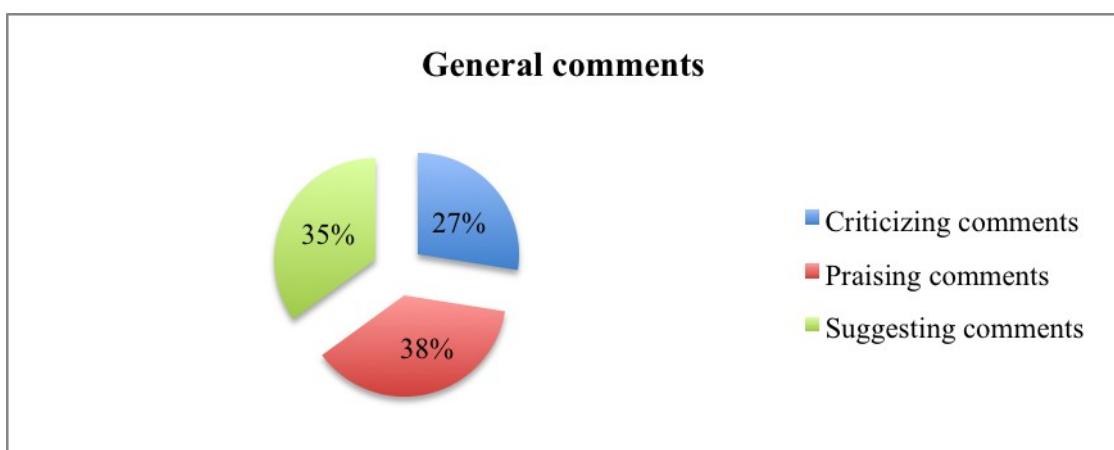


Figure 3.13: Types of general comments

Of the 45 writing drafts collected from the students, only 20 contained general comments, and there were 40 general comments in total. Figure 3.13 illustrates the percentage of three different types of general comments, which are *criticizing*

comments, *praising comments* and *suggesting comments*. As shown by the pie chart, the most common general comments, accounting for 38%, are *praising ones*, with which a student reviewer would congratulate their peer on something he/she did well. Coming next is *suggesting comments*, which makes up 35% of all the 40 general comments. The least popular comments are *criticizing comments*, constituting only 27% of the general comments.

3.1.6.3. Results obtained from interviews

Teacher 2 talked about the willingness to provide criticism of her students:

I see that they are really straightforward. Judging by their comments, I can say that they are quite willing to comment on the not-so-good point of their friends' drafts. Due to the fact that they have a lot of project together, I think that they almost have no difficulty in cooperating.

Teacher 1, however, seemed to have a quite different opinion. He thought that only some of the students are straightforward enough to provide criticism, not all. He put the blame on the fact that some students do not want to offend their friends, which he regarded as a pity because some students are good enough to spot the mistakes but they lack confidence to point the mistakes out for their friends.

Some of them are willing to criticize, some are not. They kind of do not want to offend their friends. A lot of them tend to use nice words and do not go straightforward to the point. So it is the case that some students are really good but they don't want to point out the mistakes of their friends. And I have also experienced this feeling before.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Training from teachers

It is clear that teacher's training and instructions play a critical role in the success of the peer review activity. This was especially true for the participants who had little or no experience with peer review before they entered ULIS. Teacher 2 acknowledged the difficulties of some students in doing peer review, "Some students complained, 'I've been reading for ages but I still can't find any mistakes'". In addition, the language level of students in both classes varied greatly, with the majority of the students being not confident enough when doing peer review. This was confirmed by both teachers. Teacher 1 described:

I think some good students are confident but the majority of the students are confused from time to time.

Teacher 2 gave more detailed account of the situation of her students:

When monitoring the process, I can see that for some mistakes, better students can point out to their friends very easily why those are wrong and how to correct. But in case of not-so-good students, although they know there's something wrong, they are not confident enough to suggest a correction or even to point mistakes out.

However, teachers' observations contradicted with students' self report. 80% of the students said that they were *confident* or *quite confident* while doing peer review. 20% of them said that they were not very confident and none were unconfident. This contradiction shows that students were not fully aware of their problems when doing peer review.

3.2.2. Interaction between the writer and the reviewer

The most common place where peer review takes place was within the two classrooms. From the self-report of the students as well as the remarks from the teachers, it can be stated that most students felt comfortable with the environment.

Teacher 1 said that:

I often encourage students to do peer review at home because of the limited time. In general they are really cooperative. But sometimes they are a little bit tired, maybe due to the workload, so they cannot do at home.

Despite his encouragement to his students to do peer review at home, very few students did so, according to the students' self-report. This proved that encouragement was not enough for students to work seriously.

In the questionnaires, students expressed their *not-very-relaxing* feelings when having to work with someone they disliked. One-fifth of the participants agreed that this would *negatively affect* the peer review activity. Regarding this situation, teacher 1 had a more appropriate approach than teacher 2. Teacher 1 let his students choose their partner because he did not know clearly the level of each student. Teacher 2, however, adopted a random scheme in putting students in pairs explaining that she did not know much about the feelings of the students.

3.2.3. Knowledge of English

From the findings, it can be seen that *limited knowledge of English* of students was a serious problem that degraded the effectiveness of peer review. There was a great mismatch between the students' awareness of their knowledge

and skills for peer review and their real performance. The results from the questionnaires showed that 72% of the students thought they had *enough* knowledge, but their real performance suggested an opposing truth when they could point out correctly just 30% of all the mistakes in total. In addition, 17% of the items they assumed to be wrong were actually acceptable. The two teachers were aware of the seriousness of the problem. However, they did not have any practical strategy to cope with the problem. Teacher 2 even accepted the limited knowledge of students as a nature of students at this level.

3.2.4. Time and learners' investment

Time constraints did not seem to trouble student reviewers much when 87% of the participants reported that the amount of time available was *enough* or *quite enough* for them to do peer review (in both classes, teachers give their students from 10 – 20 minutes to do peer review). However, as reported above, some students just need five minutes to do peer review, and their comments are all superficial. During the interviews, the researcher found out that students formed this bad habit because there were no rules in the class to make peer review an official activity. Teacher 2 said:

I only perceive peer review as a free activity instead of an assessment criterion. It is just for them to help each other to improve and I don't take it into consideration when I do the marking.

If there had been some rules, students would have worked more responsibly, even without pressure from their teachers.

With reference to the amount of effort students invest into the activity, 93% of the students said that the effort they invested is *enough* or *quite enough*. However, their academic writing teachers did not think so. Teacher 1 mentioned encouraging his students to do peer review at home, so that they could have more time for the activity, but 93% of the students reported doing peer review only in class. From this, it can be concluded that the students are not aware of their inadequate investment in the peer review activity, but the teachers have not done enough to raise students' awareness. As teachers were not satisfied, they should have taken more actions to solve the problems.

While talking about the available time, teacher 2 added some comments with reference to the time allotment for each writing session. She expressed her concern over the lack of time for students to master all the theory taught in a session, which is also worth considering.

They can't be perfect on the first attempt. They just have one week for each pattern of organization, which is clearly not enough. Therefore, it is likely that they make the same mistakes twice, and certainly they can't come up to our expectations.

3.2.5. Two types of comments

Imbalance in global comments and surface comments is another serious problem. This is reflected in both the results of the questionnaires and observation of writing drafts. This problem is a basic one, because right from the beginning, only 20% of the student participants knew that they should prioritize *global features* over *surface features*. Only one-fifth of all the mistakes in *organization* and one-fourth of all the mistakes in *content* were identified, which is a very low rate, in comparison with nearly a half of all *language usage* being identified. This clearly illustrates the tendency to comment on **surface level** of the students.

Although comments of any kinds are welcomed, it should be noted that in the process approach, more focus is placed on the process the product is created, not on the final written form; and that mistakes at **global level** are more targeted than those at **surface level**.

The two teachers did not have any intentions to solve this kind of imbalance. Both teachers did not think this imbalance would have any negative effect. Teacher 2 said, "In my opinion, this would not have any negative effect. I only perceive it as a weakness that I need to improve for them." Teacher 1 only considered it a minor weakness when he said: "Any improvement is appreciated. Each type of comment has its own benefits, and I only perceive this tendency as a minor weakness." Teacher 2 even did not have very high expectations of peer review. She was resigned to the fact that students comment very little on **global features**, "I don't have high expectations of the outcomes of peer review because it is hard for students to realize their mistakes." The teachers' low opinion of the activity and

their indifferent attitude to the problem of imbalance in the two types of comments caused it to be more severe.

3.2.6. Trust and willingness to provide criticism

Participants in the research did not appear to be reserved when they have to criticize a friend's drafts as they pointed out of a lot of mistakes on their friends' drafts, especially *language usage* ones. Moreover, 62% of all the counted general comments are *criticizing comments* and *suggesting comments*, while only 38% of them are *praising comments*.

Although it is undeniable that there were a lot of comments in terms of *language usage*, *language tense*, *content* and *organization*, those comments only accounts for 30% of the total mistakes. For 70% of the mistakes left, students either did not want to point some mistakes out or lack the skills and knowledge to do so. This leads to really low effective level of peer review. Moreover, the total number of general comments on the pieces was much too small, with fewer than half of all the pieces, 20 out of 45, receive general comments from the students. This clearly suggests that the students are not critical enough when doing peer review.

Teacher's conclusion

When asked to conclude and decide which of the seven problems would be most serious and need urgent solutions, teacher 1 gave the answer of *limited knowledge of English* and *lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism*.

The two most serious problems are (1) many students want to lessen the criticism in their comments and (2) they lack language skill to criticize the not-so-good point of their friends' drafts.

Teacher 2 thought that the greatest problem that hindered the performance of her students was only *limited knowledge of English*.

Summary

The chapter has presented major findings collected via three instruments, which are questionnaire, interview, and observation. After that, the discussion of those findings has been given. The next chapter will present summary of the findings and suggestions for teachers of English, based on the results discussed before.

PART III: CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of all the findings in this research as well as implications from the findings. Limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are also discussed.

3.1. Summary of findings

The research was conducted to investigate the problems that first-year students face when doing peer review in academic writing. Students' and teachers' perceptions of the problems were collected and carefully analyzed. The research has led to some deeper insights into the problems and possible suggestions to deal with such problems.

Firstly, it can be confirmed that first-year students experience a lot of trouble with all the seven problems. However, they are sometimes not aware that they have problem. For example, both teachers share the same opinion that their students' investment into the activity is not enough, and results from observation of documents prove the same problem, but only 13% of all students self-reported that.

Secondly, teachers have both different and similar attitude and expectations of peer review. While one might expect the students to work more on themselves and able to point out **global mistakes**, the other only wants the students to do peer review in class so that she can have control over the activity and does not expect students to be able to identify **global mistakes**. What both of them have in common is: (1) they do not consider peer review an official activity in the syllabus; (2) they do not have any incentive and punishment for students who do peer review well and badly; (3) they are both afraid that elaborating on peer review would cost them time for other activities; (4) they view some of the problems are just weaknesses. In summary, teacher 1 thinks that the most two most serious problems when first-year students do peer review are *limited knowledge of English* and *lack of trust and willingness to provide criticism*. Teacher 2 thinks that the greatest problem that hindered the performance of her students is only *limited knowledge of English*.

The researcher found that the four most serious problems that first-year students face in *before peer review* and *during peer review* processes are: (1) *Lack*

of training from teacher (2) Limited knowledge of English (3) Low learners' investment (4) Imbalance in the two types of comments.

3.2. Implications

From the findings of the research, the researcher wants to make six suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the peer review activity in academic writing class at ULIS. Generally, these implications and suggestions can be examined and explored by teachers themselves, in their own classrooms. With consideration and attention and some external rules, teachers would turn peer review into a really useful activity to help improve student writing ability.

(1) Teachers should make the values of the activity clear to the students, and therefore should provide explicit explanations on why time is spent on this task (Lee, 1997, as cited in Chiang, n.d.). One of the reasons why students do not appreciate peer review is that they cannot see the point in doing it. Hence, making the benefits of peer review clear to students is really crucial to the success of peer review activities. There are various ways for teachers to do this, for instance, they can show two versions of a paragraph, after peer review and before peer review to see how things improve.

(2) Teachers should provide more scaffolding when training students so that they can more actively participate in the interaction (Stanley, 1992, as cited in Chiang, n.d.). Both Teacher 1 and teacher 2 reported spending very short time on the introduction of peer review, worrying that they did have enough time for other activity. That is one of the problems that reduce the effectiveness of the activity. In order to have a useful peer review activity, a teacher should spend enough time instructing his students how to do it, what should be focused when giving comments. Two periods or more for introducing peer review is certainly not a waste of time as it is also suggested that teacher should model the peer response process (Rollinson, 2005). Good teacher training can at the same time helps to ease many other problems of the peer review activity. For example, if teachers had provided enough training, the difference between the number of **global comments** and **surface comments** would not be so great. *Learners' investment* could also be

increased if teachers made it clear to their students from the beginning the benefits of peer review and how to get the best out of peer review activities.

It is also necessary for teachers to discuss students' prior experiences with peer response and group work (Rollinson, 2005), and even to conduct a class survey to gather student information before introducing peer review (Chiang, n.d.). By this way, teachers can save time for important parts by skipping things that the students are already clear.

(3) Teachers should perceive peer review activity as an official activity in the writing class. Peer review should not be regarded as an unimportant activity which is only done once in a while or as a one off activity (Chiang, n.d.). That peer review is a useful activity to students both as writers and reviewers has been affirmed by many researchers (Rollinson, 2005; Caulk, 1994, as cited in Rollinson, 2005; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Therefore, it is reasonable for teachers to exploit peer review as an official activity. They can even include peer review in the assessment criteria in the writing syllabus (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005) in order to create some extrinsic motivations for the students to do it seriously. For example, they can give encouraging points to a student who has done good job as a reviewer, and mark down the student who does not do peer review carefully enough. Alternatively, teachers may encourage students to keep journals in which they write about their experience of and reactions to the peer review they engage in (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005). Students can learn as much from writing a paragraph as from commenting on a paragraph, and therefore, it is not time consuming to give students longer periods to do peer review. If teachers are afraid that they do not have enough time to cover the rest of the lesson plan, they can ask their students to do peer review at home. There is no need to fear that students will not have a serious attitude towards the activity, because there is already an incentive of good marks. If students still do not cooperate, the fault is totally theirs and they deserve to be penalized.

(4) Teachers can have high expectations of their students' performance when doing peer review. Teacher 2 in the interview said she was resigned to the fact that students did not have enough skill to do peer review and believed that only with her

help and pushing could they do peer effectively. This is definitely not a good approach to peer review, especially for students at university level. University students are expected to do a lot of self-study and not to rely too much on their teachers – who should play a role of facilitators and instructors. If there is anything unclear, students should be encouraged to double-check it themselves. There are many ways for them to do so on their own: look up in dictionaries, read reference books, or most commonly, search for it on the Internet. They have been given enough materials to improve their weaknesses in language skills. Especially, for those students who are being trained to be teachers of English, self-study is more important. Teacher should make peer review an official activity (as mentioned above) and force students to learn to be responsible for their drafts first, and then for their comments on friends' drafts.

(5) *Teachers need to convey the idea that peer review focuses on the writing process, not the written process through modeling* (Nelson & Carson, 1998). In other words, students should pay more attention to mistakes at **global level** rather than **surface ones**. It is necessary for students to be instructed not to give cryptic comments and looking for surface errors at an early stage (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Teacher should make students understand what is considered effective peer feedback and emphasis should not be placed on grammar only (Chiang, n.d.).

(6) *Teachers should let the students choose their partners* (Rollinson, 2005). So as to avoid the cases of students who dislike each other having to work together, teachers should allow students to choose whoever they want to work with as long as the outcomes of their cooperation are of good enough standard and they do not spend time together doing personal things. If appropriate, students can decide how groups and pairs should be formed (self- or teacher-selected), how groups should be managed, and so on. The more specific the rules are, the more effective peer review activity will be.

3.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

However carefully and thoroughly the research was conducted, there are some certain limitations that cannot be avoided.

First, due to the limited time and resources, the researcher could only conduct a study into two out of three phases of peer review, namely *before peer review* and *during peer review*. *After peer review*, an also very important phase in the peer review activity, was not within the scope of this study. Therefore, the researcher would recommend that further research should be done on this phrase. After the problems have been specified, it is even more necessary to find solutions to them, and thus, a study into solutions is always welcomed.

Second, although the number of participants was enough to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study, it would be better if more participants were involved, especially, teacher participants, as they would provide more insights into nature of the problems, as well as practical solutions to the them. It is highly suggested that other researchers conduct study on a larger or different population. For example, studies could be carried on second-year students to see whether the problems have been eased. It is also recommended that the research be done into the causes of the problems.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY OF PROBLEMS WHEN DOING PEER REVIEW

I am **Nguyen Huy Hoang** from class QH2009E1, and I am conducting a study entitled: **An investigation into the problems faced by first-year students at FELTE, ULIS when doing peer review in academic writing** as my graduation paper.

In order to carry out this study, I would be very grateful if you could spend some time completing the following questionnaire.

Note: All the following questions are set in the context of your academic writing class only. If there is anything unclear, please ask me for specifications.

For each of following questions, choose the answer or answers that best suits you. Remember that there is NO right or wrong answer. I just want you to share some of your experiences.

SECTION A: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. *Did you do peer review before you started learning at ULIS?*
A. Yes B. No
2. *When did you first do peer review?*
A. less than a year ago B. more than a year but less than two years ago
C. two years ago D. more than two years ago
3. *How often are you required to do peer review when there is an in-class writing?*
A. Always B. Usually C. Occasionally D. Seldom
4. *How often are you required to do peer review when there is a home writing?*
A. Always B. Usually C. Occasionally D. Seldom
5. *For each piece of writing, averagely how many times are you required to do peer review?*
A. One time B. Two times C. Three times
6. *Do you believe that peer feedback should be encouraged and practiced in writing classes?*
A. Yes, always B. Yes, sometimes C. No, not at all

SECTION B: BEFORE PEER REVIEW

7. *Did you receive any training / instructions from your teacher before the first time you were required to do peer review in your academic class this semester?*
A. Yes Continue with the next questions
B. No Skip questions 8 and 9
8. *How were you prepared to review a peer's writing? (You can choose more than one answer)*
A. I was given a handout on how to do peer review.
B. I was given a lecture on how to do peer review.
C. I watched the teacher do an example of peer review.
D. I was given a paper that demonstrated good peer review.

- 9.** How effective is the training on doing peer review that you receive from your teacher?
 A. Effective B. Quite effective C. Not very effective D. Uneffective
- 10.** How confident are you when you do peer review activity?
 A. Confident B. Quite confident C. Not very confident D. Unconfident
- 11.** Where do you often do peer review?
 A. In class B. At home C. At other places
- 12.** How comfortable is the environment where you do peer review?
 A. Comfortable B. Quite comfortable C. Not very comfortable D. Uncomfortable
- 13.** Are you allowed to choose the friend(s) you would like to do peer review with?
 A. Yes, always B. Yes, often C. Yes, sometimes D. No, never
- 14.** Have you ever had to do peer review with a friend you personally do not like?
 A. Yes B. No
- 15.** How do you feel when you have to do peer review with a friend you personally do not like?
 A. Relaxed B. Quite relaxed C. Not very relaxed D. Not relaxed at all
- 16.** Do you think doing peer review with a friend you personally do not like will negatively affect the effectiveness of the activity?
 A. Yes B. No

SECTION C: DURING PEER REVIEW

Questions 17-20: Rate the following aspect:

Aspects of peer review	More than enough	Enough	Quite enough	Not enough
17. Your knowledge and skills required to do peer review				
18. The amount of time available for you to do peer review				
19. The amount of effort you invest in the peer review activity.				

- 20.** This question is designed to discover the aspects of YOUR PEERS' WRITING that YOU often focus on when doing peer review.

How often do you comment each of the following aspects of your peers' writing? Rate on the scale:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| "Always" | for 5 times / 5 times |
| "Usually" | for 4 times / 5 times |
| "Often" | for 3 times / 5 times |
| "Sometimes" | for 1 – 2 times / 5 times |
| "Never" | for 0 time / 5 times |

Explanation: Supposed that you have done peer review 5 times. "4 / 5 times": means you comment on a particular aspect of your peers' drafts 4 times over 5 total times you do peer review.

	Aspects	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
1	<i>grammar</i>					
2	<i>vocabulary</i>					
3	<i>content</i>					
4	<i>organization</i>					
5	<i>language form (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)</i>					

- 21.** Arrange the aspects in the descending order that you should pay attention to when reviewing a writing piece (most important to least important)

 - A. grammar & vocabulary
 - B. language form (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)
 - C. organization
 - D. content

Besides complimenting your writing (e.g. "You have a well-written story), your friend can criticize your writing (e.g. "What you wrote is not what the topic requires! Rewrite everything!"?). Critical comments are comments that criticize your writing and point out that your writing is bad.

- 22.** Do you give critical comments on your peers' writing pieces?
A. Yes, always B. Yes, often C. Yes, sometimes D. No, never

23. How willing are you when you give a critical comment on your peers' drafts?
A. Willing B. Quite willing C. Somewhat willing D. Not at all

(If you have any more opinion of the peer review activity, you can write on the back of this page.)

You name: _____ Class: _____
Email address: _____ Telephone number: _____

(All your personal information will be kept confidential)

--- THANK YOU VERY MUCH ---

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

My name is Nguyễn Huy Hoàng from class 09E1. I am conducting a research entitled ***An investigation into the problems faced by first-year students at FELTE, ULIS when doing peer review in academic writing*** as my graduation paper.

With your prior agreement, today I am conducting this interview to collect data for my study.

This interview consists of three parts: general information, before peer review and during peer review.

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Do you employ “peer review” (PR) in your writing class? Normally for a draft, how many times do students do peer review?
2. Do you think this activity is effective? If you have to rate the effectiveness of this activity on a scale from 0 – 10, with 0 for *ineffective* and 10 for *extremely effectively*, how would you rate it?

After reviewing the literature, I discovered seven potential problems that can reduce the effectiveness of peer review activity and I have put them into two main stages when doing peer review, which are *before peer review* and *during peer review*.

PART B: BEFORE PEER REVIEW

Training from teachers

3. Before requiring your students to do peer review this semester, do you provide them with any training? If yes, what did you do?
4. Do you think your students are confident when doing peer review? Do they have any significant difficulty?

Interaction between the writer and reviewer

5. Where do PR sessions take place? Do you think students feel relaxed and comfortable in this place? Do you monitor the process?
6. How do you arrange students in a PR session? What do you think about cases in which two students who personally dislike each other having to work in pairs? Do you think this will have any native effect?

PART C: DURING PEER REVIEW

Learners' investment

7. Do you think students are serious enough when doing PR? Do you think students have invested enough time and effort into PR?

Knowledge of English

8. Do you think students' knowledge of English is enough to do PR? Can you estimate the percentage of mistakes successfully identified by the student reviewers to those unidentified?

Time

- 9.** How much time do you allow for PR? Do you think this amount of time is enough for students? Does this amount of time have any influence on the effectiveness of PR?

Trust and willingness to provide criticism

- 10.** Do you think students cooperate smoothly in PR sessions? Do you think students are willing to point out the weaknesses in their friends' drafts?

Types of comments

Global comments are comments on the *content* and *organization & presentation*.

Surface comments are comments on *grammar, vocabulary, and language usage*.

- 11.** Is there a balance in the types of comments, between **global comments** and **surface comments**? If there isn't, which type of comments do students paid more attention to? Do you think this preference will have any influence on the effectiveness of PR activity?

Conclusion

- 12.** Of all the problems mentioned above, which do you think is most serious? Besides those problems, are there any other problems that can affect the effectiveness of peer review activity?

Thank you for joining the interview!

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION FORMS

Round 1:

For mistakes identified by student reviewers

No. of drafts	Comments on mistakes in contents		Comments on mistakes in organization & presentation		Comments on mistakes in Language usage		Comments on mistakes in Language form	
	<i>Correc t</i>	<i>Incorrec t</i>	<i>Correc t</i>	<i>Incorrec t</i>	<i>Correc t</i>	<i>Incorrec t</i>	<i>Correc t</i>	<i>Incorrec t</i>
1								
2								
3								
...								
45								

For general comments

No. of drafts	General comments		
	Praising comments	Criticizing comments	Suggesting comments
1			
2			
3			
...			
45			

Round 2:

For mistakes unidentified by student reviewers.

No. of drafts	Mistakes in contents	Mistakes in org. & pre.	Mistakes in language usage	Mistakes in language form
1				
2				
3				
...				
45				