Impacts of Portfolios on Students' Writing Performance: A Case Study at A University in Hanoi

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Abstract: This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of using writing portfolios to improve English language writing skills and students' perceptions of this practice at a university in Hanoi, Vietnam. The study adopts action research using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, namely questionnaires and writing assignment evaluations. The results of data collection from 50 second-year English majors shows notable gains in the participants' overall writing scores, as well as in each of the evaluation categories, including task achievement, coherence and cohesion, grammar, and vocabulary. Additionally, most of the students feel this practice has a positive influence on their writing skills, and adopting writing portfolios is something that should be continued in their studies. However, they do find this a time-consuming activity and the quality of some of their peers' reviews does not meet their expectations. This study's findings provide a reference for teachers and practitioners involved in teaching writing skills. Appropriate action for further application of this activity is suggested at the end of the paper.

1. Introduction

Writing is regarded as the most difficult skill for foreign language students because it necessitates a certain amount of lexical and syntactic knowledge, as well as organizational principles in the language that is being studied in order to produce a good piece of writing (Tangpermpoon, 2008). A variety of writing methods are available to stimulate students' writing. Using portfolios has captured the attention of instructors/teachers and researchers as one of the most effective methods to develop writing skills. Portfolios are not only useful for chronicling students' achievements but they also demonstrate the development of their skills over a period of time. Using them is the best technique to clearly convey the efficacy of a process-based approach since students may gradually enhance their

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writing skills and have more chances to complete their written work by refining a number of versions. They continue to improve on their first draft until they are satisfied with the final output; this, in turn, increasingly motivates them in future writing tasks.

The process-oriented approach to writing in education is strongly endorsed, and portfolios are one of this approach's prominent exemplars. They have been widely used in writing courses at the university where this research is being conducted. The target student group are second-year English majors who are familiar with this activity from the first year of study. However, at the time of conducting the research, writing portfolios are no longer employed officially for them. On the other hand, in their second year, students begin to develop a more formal writing style, which will cause them great difficulty if they do not have access to an effective writing tool. Moreover, even though a great number of academics are interested in the topic, no official study has been undertaken to examine how effectively this approach enhances students' writing abilities at the university where the researcher is working, and also how students perceive this method. All the factors mentioned have allowed the researcher to conduct this study titled "Investigation into the use of portfolios to improve students' writing skills at a university in Hanoi."

2. Literature review

2.1. Writing

Writing is a crucial language skill, and learning to write is not simple, especially for those studying English as a foreign language. Writing skills, as with speaking skills, are considered productive because they actively make use of the language rather than just passively receiving it. The process of writing is not as simple as one would assume. In 2002, Richard and Renandya state that writing is recognized as the most challenging skill compared to others when teaching and learning a language.

2.2. Process-based and product-based writing

Product-based writing refers to finished work employing certain productive writing skills (Silva, 1990). These skills are taken into account when assessing a student's completed work. According to Steele (2020), in this approach, students typically complete the following four steps: (i) reading model texts, (ii) conducting controlled practice of the highlighted features, (iii) organizing ideas, and (iv) selecting a comparable writing task in order to produce work using the acquired skills, structures, and vocabulary. On the other hand, process-based writing refers to the four writing processes that students must complete to produce a piece of text: (i) planning, (ii) drafting, (iii) editing, and (iv)

finalizing (Harmer, 2004). Later, Steele (2020) subdivided this strategy into eight distinct procedures - step one: brainstorming and discussion; step two: expanding ideas into note form; step three: organizing thoughts into a mind map, a spider graph, or in linear form; stage four: writing the first draft; stage five: exchanging the first draft with peer and review; stage six: returning the reviewed drafts and making improvements; stage seven: creating the final document; stage eight: exchanging and reading one another's work once again, and even writing a reflection. Thanks to the dynamic nature of this process during which the students attempt to reformulate their ideas, as well as the impromptu feedback from their peers and teachers, they have an opportunity to reflect on their previous drafts, which ultimately results in enhancing their writing abilities.

2.3. Writing portfolio assessment

2.3.1. Definitions of writing portfolio

According to Yang (2003), a portfolio is a collection of students' activities that documents their effort and progress in the learning process and their reflection on the materials. Brown (2008) offered portfolios as an alternate kind of evaluation. Later, Cheng and Fox (2017) advanced the use of portfolios as an assessment method for student work. The researcher of this study paper has chosen to adhere to Yang's 2003 definition since it is critical to consider the function of a portfolio in the learning process for a student to improve and advance in all abilities.

2.3.2. Writing portfolio assessment

There are three scoring methods: holistic, primary trait, and analytical (Brown, 2004). Holistic scoring is used to evaluate a student's written work by assigning a single, integrated score only after the educator has read the entire text. Although this method is convenient for the larger classroom setting, it is seen to undervalue the process through which students arrange their work. In trait scoring, teachers assign holistically based scoring on a certain feature of the writing that is being emphasized, such as the structure of the piece, the use of vocabulary, or the tone. In this type of writing, teachers need to know the extent to which the work exhibits certain traits that are essential to accomplishing a writing purpose (Perkins, 1983). Weigle (2002) describes the last type of scoring system as a tool to grade students' writing projects based on writing components such as content, organization, language use, and mechanics. The researcher of this study paper has chosen to use this scoring approach since it is regarded as more useful in identifying a student's writing ability than holistic and main characteristic scoring.

2.4. Research gap

A number of attempts to investigate the use of writing portfolios have been made, primarily to understand the effectiveness of this practice on the development of students' writing skills.

At the secondary education level, Boumediene, Kaid Berrahal, and Bava Harji (2017) examined whether a portfolio evaluation strategy assisted secondary-level students in improving their English language writing, the techniques and processes. The findings from the research point out that the writing skills of the students increased dramatically. Research shows that the portfolio evaluation paradigm supports English language writing by focusing on writing processes. In Vietnam, Nguyen (2010), Bui (2019), and Nguyen (2020) investigated the impact of writing portfolios on students' writing skills and perceptions of this approach in various high schools. The results share some common features. Students' vocabulary, creativity, fundamental grammatical comprehension, organization, and writing speed increased significantly, as did their overall writing scores. They also developed a greater appreciation for writing and increased awareness of their autonomy. However, they also reported facing difficulties with practice time, motivation, and revising drafts. Additionally, even though most of them thought that this activity positively influenced their writing skills, they are unaware of the specific benefits (Bui, 2019).

At tertiary level, the influence of portfolios and their correlation to other learning factors are of interest to researchers. Dinh (2016) explored the advantages of the writing portfolio method on the writing skills of second-year students and the difficulties they and teachers might encounter throughout the application process at university. Similar to the results of research carried out in the secondary education environment, findings of the study show that not only did the portfolio method improve students' writing abilities, particularly in vocabulary and grammar, but it also changed their attitudes towards writing, and helped them acquire other skills, such as commenting, editing, reading, and doing group work.

However, problems were also identified. For example, negative comments from their peers, in particular, demotivated students. When writing three drafts on the same subject, students reported feeling bored and drained. In addition, Nguyen (2017) and Doan (2019) examined students' perceptions of writing portfolios and their relationship to learner autonomy in writing classrooms at two universities, and the results are in line with those of the above research. Furthermore, the practice helped increase student autonomy. Students were reported to have increasingly become skeptical of information and begun to assess their strengths and weaknesses in order to determine their learning styles.

In education, technology has paved the way for using e-portfolios to improve the writing skills of language learners. Collin et al. (2017) investigated the early impacts of e-portfolios on elementary, secondary, postsecondary, higher, adult, and community education. The results demonstrate the significance of instructor and peer feedback in e-portfolio learning. Duong (2021) and Nguyen (2022) used e-portfolios to evaluate the

writing and independent learning skills of English majored students. The findings from this e-portfolio research show the same positive trend as those in traditional writing portfolios.

It is evident that the interest in writing portfolios is wide-ranging, from secondary to tertiary level education, and from traditional to electronic forms of portfolios. Moreover, all the research reviewed above is pretty much in line in terms of their findings. To some extent, writing portfolios play a crucial role in enhancing the writing skills of foreign language students. Additionally, second-year English majored students are an important group because they require a significant number of skills to produce a good level of academic writing. However, there is no formal research into the effectiveness of this learning tool on this particular group at the university where the researcher works. Therefore, intending to produce a response to this gap, the present research hopes to shed light on the effectiveness of using portfolios in writing skills, as well as students' perceptions of this teaching practice at the tertiary level. The current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

To what extent do portfolios help improve writing skills for second-year English majored students at a university in Hanoi?

What are students' perceptions of applying portfolios to their writing skills?

3. Method

This study is implemented as action research because it aims to improve the writing skills of second-year English majored students at a university in Hanoi by using portfolio assessment.

3.1. Pedagogical setting and participants

The research was conducted at a university located in the center of Hanoi, where the researcher has been working as an English language teacher for more than two years. The study was carried out in the first semester of the academic school year 2022-2023, and followed the school curriculum. The second-year English majored students at this university are required to develop the four foundational skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, along with integrated English skills.

The writing skills course materials used in this semester included a course book and a collection of handouts for internal use composed by lecturers. Regarding the core curriculum, the students have 30 study periods in class over 15 weeks, each period lasts 50 minutes. The number of students in each class ranges from 20 to 26 and their English language is A2 level (the second lowest rank of English proficiency, based on the criteria of ministry of education and training). The study focused on 50 students from two classes, who took part voluntarily.

3.2. Design of study

The study, carried out as action research on the part of language teachers, is seen as a way to bridge the gap between researchers and teachers, and to encourage the latter to take an investigative stance toward their own classroom practices (Gebhard, 2005).

According to MacIsaac (1995), a typical action research cycle involves four steps: planning, actioning, observing, and reflecting.

Step 1 - Planning: After a problem is identified, a plan is drawn up to change and solve it.

Identify a problem: Writing portfolios are part of the assessment in the curriculum for first-year English majored students, which accounts for 15% of the total scores. However, this practice has not been adopted for second-year English majors at the time of conducting the research. The researcher recognizes the unwillingness and inactiveness of students when revising their draft texts. Moreover, at the time this research was carried out, the students encountered a new type of writing - essay writing - which is challenging for most of them. Taking these issues into account, the researcher plans to use writing portfolios to address the students' poor performance, including the repetition of some mistakes. The effects of writing portfolio assessments will be evaluated to see how effective this method can be in helping students improve their writing skills.

Develop an action plan: In this stage, the researcher formulated an action plan to address problems relating to students' writing skills that were identified in the previous steps. A writing assignment plan was devised to span the 15 weeks of study as per the school schedule.

Step 2 - Action: The plan is implemented.

Writing portfolio assessment implementation: Students are introduced to the definition of writing portfolios and instructed on how to create their own. The writing rubric, which explains how their papers are evaluated, is supplied. Students must carefully study this and ask their teacher for clarification if needed. In class, the process of a writing lesson still follows the regular pattern. To be more precise, the writing topics are introduced first. Then students are assisted with generating ideas and the organization of the writing. In addition, they are given handy language and grammar hints relating to the topic to incorporate in their writing. Once the first draft is completed in class, students are required to draft a second version following feedback from their peers and teachers.

Step 3 - Observation: The process of implementation and results are observed.

In this step, the researcher gathers results of the actions, and begins by analyzing the writing scores of students' assignments from the first to the last topic to ascertain whether improvements have been made.

Questionnaire: To find out the response to the second study question, students were asked to complete a questionnaire with 13 Likert-style items. The questions focused on how they feel about using portfolios to improve their writing skills.

***Step 4 - Reflection*:** The research process and outcomes were assessed. During this phase, the researcher considered the teaching techniques, and the research procedure, and reviewed the study's results in line with broader literature that is available.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

In order to fulfill the objectives of this research, writing portfolios were used in two classes that the researcher teaches. The questionnaire was also distributed to evaluate the effectiveness of writing portfolios, as this is "a useful instrument for gathering factual information, data on attitudes and preferences, beliefs and predictions, opinions, behavior, and experiences - both in the past and in the present" (Cohen et al., 2011).

To answer the first research question, the final version of each writing topic was scored using the writing rubric adapted from the IELTS band descriptors (published version). The rubric was sent to students at the beginning of the action research to use as a checklist to determine if their writing met the criteria of the assignment. These included task fulfillment, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar. The grades, given to each criterion, represent the students' ability, based on: 1 for very weak, 2 for weak, 3 for average, 4 for good, and 5 for very good.

To find out the answer to the second question, the questionnaire, devised by the researcher, was also used to collect the students' opinions on using portfolios in learning to write. Students had to answer 13 questions in English (given they all are English majors). Twelve closed-ended questions were designed to investigate their opinions on how effective portfolios are, and the quality of their teacher's and peers' comments. The open-ended question is intended to elicit what difficulties, if any, students encounter while using portfolio writing as part of the learning process. The questionnaire was delivered directly to them at the end of the semester. The response rate was high, with 100% of participants returning their questionnaires.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. Effectiveness of writing portfolios on students' writing skills

4.1.1. Effects of writing portfolios on task fulfillment criterion

The first criterion to evaluate students' writing skills is task fulfillment. This criterion aims to assess whether or not they had covered the requirements of the task and if they had fully developed all the main ideas. The following table represents students' results for task fulfillment.

Table 1: Number of Students Arranged by Task Fulfillment

Assignment Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6
Very weak	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weak	8	9	7	5	2	2
Average	32	31	28	22	18	16
Good	9	8	11	17	20	21
Very good	1	2	4	6	10	11
Total	50	50	50	50	50	50

Overall, the whole class made progress in terms of task fulfillment. To be more specific, from week 3, no students recorded being weak in understanding the requirement and responding to the tasks. The other figures also witnessed a positive sign in which the number of students with average scores declines gradually from 32 in the first assignment to as few as 16 in the final assignment. The same phenomenon can be seen in the good and very good categories. The number of students who performed well in the task fulfillment criteria increased dramatically from nine to 21, doubling after a semester. Similarly, there was only one student with a very good performance but this number increases in the final assignment. Furthermore, it is noticeable that no students scored 0 for the task fulfillment criterion, which clearly shows their attempt to respond to the task.

4.1.2. Effects of writing portfolios on students' coherence and cohesion

The coherence and cohesion criterion refers to the organization of students' writing. It is applied in order to check whether or not students can use some cohesive devices, references, and paraphrases appropriately. This is also used to ascertain how well students can organize their ideas clearly and logically.

This line graph depicts the progress of students in terms of cohesion and coherence in their writing. Generally speaking, they improved well in this area over the period, even though the figures are not as impressive as those of the task fulfillment criterion. Specifically, the number of coherent and cohesive pieces of writing increased gradually from as few as five in the very first assignment to 18 in the final one. Even though the writing assignment falls to four, it quickly bounced back to 18 in the last assignment. Moreover, in the first assignment, the number of students with an average level of cohesion and coherence takes the lion's share of the students targeted. The number declines sequentially to 23 in their final assignment. Obviously, a large number of students can, to some extent, organize their ideas clearly and use cohesive devices pretty well. However,

even the good ones failed to use paraphrases sufficiently and they continuously repeated words instead. The three first assignments were to write narrative essays. The students were expected to use time adverbs and subordinating conjunctions to sequence their ideas. Fortunately, in the first assignment, they already showed the ability to incorporate these into their writing, despite making some common mistakes in terms of punctuation, position, and meaning of the linking words.

As previously mentioned, students seem to have had trouble with assignment 4, when the number who scored very good or good in writing declined, and the number who are weak in writing increased. This can be explained by the fact that students switched to a new type of essay - the opinion essay. This format requires a high level of critical thinking and the ability to organize ideas logically. They also need to follow a certain essay structure, which seemed to cause them a great deal of difficulty. The students tended to be unable to support the main ideas with convincing arguments. Moreover, in this type of essay, their ability to look at the problem from different perspectives by stating counterarguments and being able to refute an argument proved burdensome to the majority. Consequently, there is no very good student in assignment number 4, while the number of weak students suddenly climbs to 12. However, after receiving feedback from their peers and teacher, the situation improved significantly, and in the final assignment, only five students performed poorly in the organization of their ideas.

4.1.3. Effects of writing portfolios on students' vocabulary

When students are faced with a writing assignment, vocabulary is an indispensable element in the success of their performance.

The scores that students achieved for their vocabulary in their initial writings are mostly average, which means they included an acceptable number of words and expressions in their writing. However, the majority can only use basic words and expressions, with their word choices sometimes impeding the meaning of the product. In the first three assignments, the vocabulary used to describe and express sensory and emotional details is the highlight. However, in their first attempt only nine students showed enough ability to use vocabulary to express how they feel and sense. The situation improves significantly on the second attempt and is considered positive at assignment 3, with 16 good writers and only eight weak writers. Nevertheless, some students still made spelling mistakes, which affected their scores in terms of the vocabulary criterion.

Assignment number 4 saw a sharp drop in the number of very good and good students as well as a slight increase in the number of weak ones. This phenomenon can be explained by the change in the style of writing, from narrative- to opinion-focused essays. This new style of writing requires students to have a good range of vocabulary at an academic level related to the topic in question, and they also need to able to use expressions to show their opinions. However, after just one assignment, a lot of progress was made when the number

of weak writers fell sharply to four in the last assignment, and the number of good and very good rose from 10 to 19, and from 0 to 5 respectively. Many of the students demonstrated an effective use of academic vocabulary and the ability to adhere strictly to a formal writing style in their final assignment.

4.1.4. Effects of writing portfolios on students' grammar

Grammar is a fundamental aspect of writing assessments. In the semester reviewed in this research, students were expected to demonstrate adequate control of simple, complex, and compound sentences, as well as punctuation and capitalization. Minor mistakes were accepted as they do not impede understanding.

Even though grammatical mistakes are the most common ones made by the students compared to others when they practiced writing skills, the data shows they must have developed proficient grammar skills over the years as they showed a good command of this criterion. A large proportion belongs to the average group, with 25 students showing a moderate level of grammar ability in their writing. This number fluctuates in assignments 3 and 4 before dropping in the final assignment. Similarly, the number of poor writers increases slightly in the second assignment before gradually decreasing until it falls to five students. The majority of these students tended to make sentence mistakes such as run-ons, comma splices, or fragments.

At the other end of the spectrum, the number of very good and good writers rose steadily during the period. To be precise, starting at one and 12 in the first assignment, the number of students with very good or good grammar rose to 5 and 22 respectively in their final assignments. Improvements in grammar shows that the students learned from the feedback and their self-reflection.

4.1.5. Effects of writing portfolios on students' overall writing skills

Table 2: Percentage of Students Arranged by Overall Results of Writing Assignments

Quality	Assignment 1	2	3	4	5	6
Very weak	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weak	24	23	17	19	12	8
Average	58	56	49	51	44	40
Good	18	19	29	27	34	40
Very good	1	4	6	4	10	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

In general, as can be seen in Table 2, there is a rise in the total scores students obtained for their writing assignments. To be more specific, the number of students with good scores doubled from 18% to 40% after six writing assignments. This also leads to a reduction in the percentage of average and weak scores, with the figures falling from 58% to 40% and 24% to 8%, respectively. It can be seen that weak writers made a lot of progress, as this number reduced most noticeably. The improvement of students can also be markedly observed in the very good group. Starting at a very low level of 1%, this figure rose significantly to 13% in the final assignment, signaling the effectiveness of this writing method.

In conclusion, the increase in students' overall scores results from the improvement in their element scores for each criterion as analyzed above. When they are conscious of these criteria, including task fulfillment, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar, in their written work, their overall scores are more likely to be higher.

4.2. Students' perception of adopting portfolios in improving writing skills

The second research question aimed to discover students' perceptions of the effectiveness of portfolio application in writing lessons in class. As previously mentioned, in order to figure out the answer to this question, the researcher used a Likert-scale questionnaire to gather all the students' ideas on writing portfolios, including their perceptions of the benefits of writing portfolios in general. The questionnaire was also used to ascertain the students' opinions on marking criteria, teacher and peer feedback, the suitability of applying writing portfolios, and the clarity of the teacher's instructions.

4.2.1. Students' opinions about effectiveness and suitability of writing portfolios

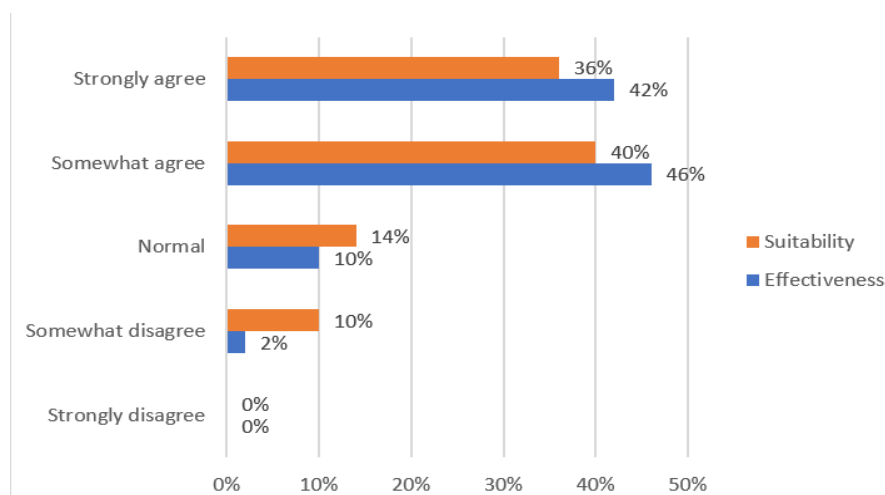Figure 1: Students' Opinions on Effectiveness and Suitability of Writing Portfolios

Figure 1 shows how students as a whole feel about how well writing portfolios work in their writing classes. It can be seen that the majority are very content with this method in enhancing their writing abilities. Specifically, approximately 90% responded positively to the statement: "I find that using writing portfolios is very useful in learning English writing skills." Only 10% thought that writing portfolios are effective at an average level. A very small number (2%) showed their dissatisfaction with using portfolios in their writing lessons. No student strongly disagreed with this method. A similar situation can also be observed in how students perceived the suitability of writing portfolios. However, more students found this method to be completely unsuitable for them, resulting in a decrease in the percentage who praised the appropriateness of writing portfolios.

Questions 3 to 6 are designed to collect information about how the students perceive the effectiveness of their writing portfolios on each writing criterion.

Figure 2: Students' Perception of their Improvement in Writing Criteria
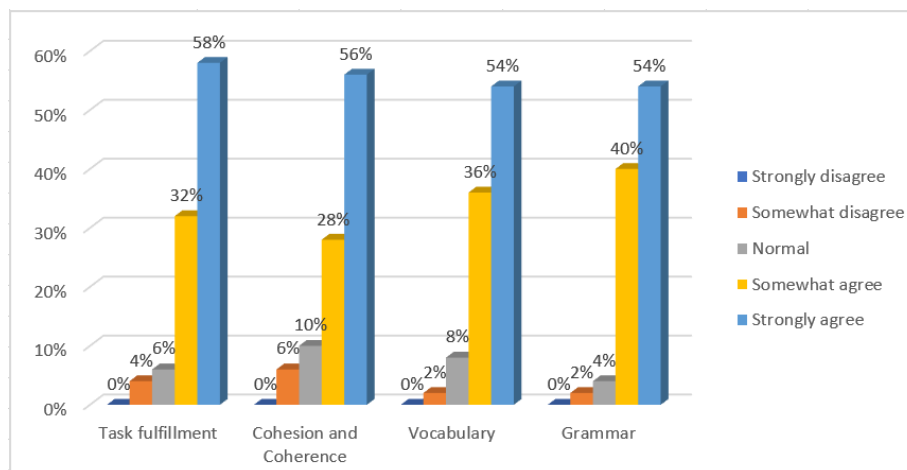
Most students agree, to varying degrees, that writing portfolios help them improve their writing skills. More than half strongly agree with their effectiveness in enhancing their writing task fulfillment, cohesion and coherence, vocabulary, and grammar. Among all the criteria, the students were most satisfied with task fulfillment (58%), followed by other skills at similar percentages. None of them strongly disagreed about the usefulness of portfolios in improving their writing skills; however, on average, about 7% of students somewhat perceived that portfolios do little to improve their writing skills.

4.2.2. Students' opinions about quality of their teacher's and peers' feedback

The following chart demonstrates the student's perceptions of the quality of their teacher's and their peers' feedback. Overall, students score the helpfulness of the comments from their

teachers and friends highly. To be precise, roughly half the students strongly agree that their teacher provides qualified feedback which significantly helps them improve their writing skills. Similarly, one-third of students hold their peers' feedback in high regard. None of the students considered either feedback to be meaningless to their improvement. Students also expressed a positive attitude to their teacher's instructions and explanation of the writing rubrics allowing them to fully understand how their work would be marked.

Figure 3: Students' Perceptions of Quality of Teacher's and Peers' Feedback
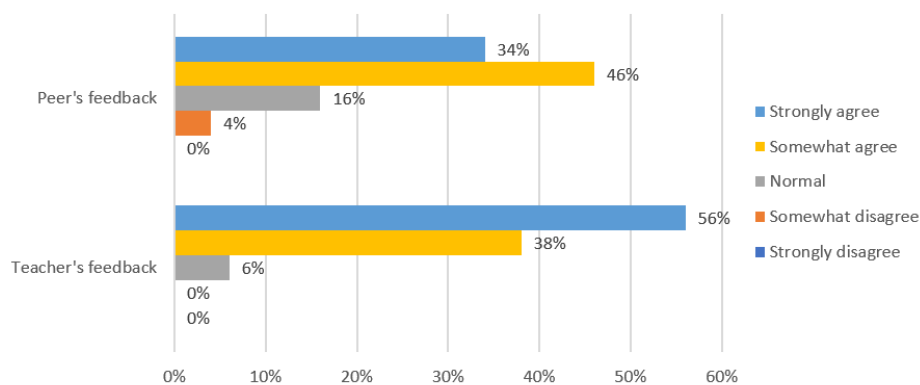
Thanks to the positive perception of the effectiveness of writing portfolios, a large number of the students prefer using this method in their lessons in the future. However, 15% of students either have the opposite point of view or have no strong opinions, which makes up a relatively high percentage.

In order to find out what difficulties the students encountered when using writing portfolios, question 13 in the questionnaire is open-ended allowing them to freely express their opinions. Most stated that even though they recognize the usefulness of writing portfolios in improving their writing skills, writing one topic over and over again is time-consuming. In addition, some of their peers do not take the peer review activity seriously; therefore, peer feedback occasionally does not meet expectations.

After summarizing the findings of this study, the researcher notices that there are considerable parallels between this study and previous ones. The results indicate that, due to using writing portfolios, students achieve significantly higher marks by the end of the semester. This study's findings are consistent with those of other research cited in the literature review. Specifically, the research of Nguyen (2010), Dinh (2016), Bui (2019), Nguyen (2020), Nguyen (2017), Doan (2019), Duong (2021), and Nguyen (2022), at both secondary and tertiary levels, reveals significant improvements in participants' overall writing scores and students' overall development of writing skills. Similarly, all areas of writing criteria, including task fulfillment, cohesion and coherence, vocabulary, and

grammar, improved among students in this study. Furthermore, when it comes to students' perceptions of this practice, the findings of this research are comparable with other studies, revealing that students regard using portfolios in a positive light. However, students frequently struggle with time management (Nguyen, 2017; Doan, 2019); they are demotivated by bad comments from peers, and are bored at having to write numerous versions of the same topic (Dinh, 2007; Nguyen, 2017; Doan, 2019). (2016). Similarly, students in this study were exhausted by the constant repetitiveness of writing on the same topic and expressed dissatisfaction with some of their classmates' remarks. Moreover, according to the research of Bui (2019), even while students perceive the immediate benefits of writing portfolios, they cannot comprehend the significance of writing progress in their language acquisition process. Therefore, they felt that using writing portfolios in the following year of their study would be superfluous. This outcome is in stark contrast to the findings of this survey, since the majority of students who took part believe that writing portfolios should be used in the future, recognizing the significance and efficacy of this practice in enhancing their writing skills.

5. Conclusion

This research sheds light on the positive impacts of using writing portfolios in writing activities at a university in Hanoi. The analysis of the data collected from six writing assignments and a questionnaire reveals significant findings. In general, using writing portfolios successfully improves students' writing skills. The students' scores in terms of four writing criteria: task fulfillment, cohesion and coherence, vocabulary, and grammar, significantly increased after their papers were reviewed by their peers and teachers. The level of improvement in these four aspects is relatively similar; however, writing portfolios is seen as being of the most help in enhancing students' task fulfillment skills. Regarding the perception of the effectiveness of using writing portfolios, it can be seen that the majority of students greatly appreciate this method and also expect to use it in the next academic year. However, they encountered some difficulties during the semester, such as a large amount of time consumed revising one assignment over and over again. They also express some dissatisfaction with the quality of some of their peers' reviews.

As the research looks into specific cases of participants from two classes at a Hanoi university, it is unable to address all other aspects of writing portfolios in higher education. Furthermore, as this study applies only two research instruments, deeper insight into students' perceptions has not been investigated. Therefore, to gain more detailed information and to increase the validity of the data, further research is needed by conducting interviews. As this study consisted of a single cycle, the effectiveness of action research has not been reinforced. To maximize the efficacy of action research, other cycles

must be implemented. In addition, the small scale of an article tends to downplay the influence of other independent factors on a student's writing skills.

It is recommended that further investigation is needed into other factors that contribute to a student's improvement.

Despite the above limitations, this study supplies useful information that helps acquire a better understanding of the effectiveness of using writing portfolios to facilitate students' writing skills as well as gain deeper insight into their perceptions of using this method. Thanks to this research, some suggestions can be made. The writing assessment should place strong emphasis on the process that students go through to produce their final written versions. Moreover, to improve the quality of peer reviews, teachers must provide students with a clear and detailed peer review checklist. The findings of this research serve as a solid background for future researchers by investigating the effectiveness of using portfolios for other skills such as listening, reading, and speaking.

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