

Junior Secondary School Students' Perception of Peer Feedback on Essay Writing in Igbo-Etiti Local Government, Enugu State

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Abstract

This paper focused on the Junior Secondary school students' perception of peer feedback on essay writing in Igbo-Etiti Local Government, Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It was guided by four research questions. The population of the study comprised all the 2,500 Junior Secondary School Two (JSS II) students in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area. Using a simple random sampling technique, a sample of 200 students were drawn from 5 junior secondary schools two in the zone. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire prepared by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts. The instrument was trial-tested on 30 students randomly selected. The data was collated and analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Statistics and an internal consistency reliability index of 0.87 was obtained. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that students perceived that peer feedback improves essay writing skills. Also, peer feedback positively influences the overall quality of essay writing. The findings further showed that students face challenges when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments. However, possible solutions to these challenges students face when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments were highlighted. The researchers recommended among others that teachers should provide clear guidelines and structured training for students on how to give and receive constructive peer feedback effectively in essay writing tasks in junior secondary schools.

Keywords: Peer, Feedback, Teaching, English language, Essay writing Skills

Introduction

English language is taught as a second language in Nigeria. The primary objective of English language teaching is to ensure effective communication by citizens using all forms- oral and written, and outside the country. As a result, English is seen as a core subject at all levels of education in Nigeria (FRN, 2013). It is the medium of instruction from lower basic up to the tertiary levels of education as well as the language through which knowledge is imparted to students in all subjects including other languages. As such, students, therefore, gain knowledge and skills through this language (Muod-mogu & Unwaha, 2013).

Moreover, English language learning involves developing four essential skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening skill enhances comprehension and the ability to identify sound patterns, while speaking skill involves the articulation

of ideas using correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Reading skill enables the learner to decode written texts, improving comprehension and critical thinking abilities (Nation, 2022). Writing skill, a productive skill, plays a pivotal role in language learning and is discussed in detail below. Among the four major language skills, writing is unique in its ability to allow learners to express their thoughts clearly and logically through essay writing.

Essay writing is a deliberate process requiring planning, organization, and creativity. Essay writing is therefore the ability to convey ideas through written language effectively. It is a step-by-step process encompassing prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Brown & Lee, 2015). Prewriting involves brainstorming ideas and organizing them logically; during drafting, writers focus on translating



these ideas into sentences and paragraphs without concern for perfection. The revising stage involves refining the content to improve clarity and coherence, while editing focuses on correcting grammatical and structural errors (Harmer, 2020). Finally, the publishing stage ensures the work is ready for its intended audience.

Essay writing skill enhances learners' ability to think critically and communicate persuasively. Students' essay writing does not develop overnight; it requires consistent practice and constructive feedback. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding learners to improve their writing abilities by using models, scaffolding, and feedback (Hyland, 2019; Allen, 2023). Furthermore, the integration of technology, such as writing tools and applications, has significantly enhanced opportunities for learners to practice and improve their essay writing skills.

Despite the importance of teaching and learning of essay writing in junior secondary schools, there has been a poor performance of students in English language examinations, both internally and externally. For instance, Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Chief Examiner report (2025) noted that candidates displayed inability to express their thoughts clearly and logically. The implication of this report is that candidates had difficulties in expressing themselves clearly and meaningfully and that addressing the problem of not writing fluently is important among others and crucial to students' success in external examinations in English language. This report can be attributed to some factors such as poorly trained teachers, lack of instructional materials, and minimal practice opportunities in class (Nwogu & Ekwe, 2022). Also, Eze and Okonkwo (2011) opined that interference from students' mother tongues significantly hampers their ability to write fluently and correctly in English. As a result, this issue is compounded by limited feedback from teachers, who often struggle to address the individual writing needs of students due to large class sizes (Okeke & Onuoha, 2018). However, the authors argued that this problem can be caused as a result of poor peer feedbacks in improving essay writing skill amongst the students.

Peer feedback is a valuable pedagogical tool that fosters collaborative learning and enhances students' skills in various educational settings. According to Yu and Wu (2022), peer feedback involves students providing constructive comments on each other's work, promoting critical thinking and self-regulation. This process not only allows learners to

engage actively with the material but also helps them understand the criteria for quality work; thus, fostering deeper learning. Moreover, peer feedback encourages students to view their peers as resources, creating a supportive learning community. Furthermore, the reciprocal nature of peer feedback has been shown to benefit both the giver and the receiver. Providing feedback enables students to develop their evaluative skills, as they must critically analyze their peers' work against a set of criteria (Nicol, 2019). Simultaneously, receiving feedback offers an opportunity for reflection and improvement. The integration of these roles helps students become more autonomous learners, a critical goal in modern education (Panadero, 2016). Additionally, peer feedback can enhance motivation as students feel more accountable to their peers, which positively influences their engagement with learning tasks.

Peer feedback, as a potential powerful tool for improving students' essay writing skills is theoretically hinged on Feedback Intervention Theory (FTI) (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Kluger and DeNisi's theory posit that feedback can improve performance by focusing on specific aspects of a task and motivating learners to reflect on their work; thus, highlights the importance of task-related feedback, which directs attention to areas for improvement, and person-related feedback, which influences self-regulation and motivation. This theory is relevant to the present study because peer feedback can enhance students' essay writing by providing clear, actionable guidance and fostering self-regulation' as well as promotes motivation, encourages collaboration, and helps students identify and address specific weaknesses in their writing, making it an effective tool for improving students' essays in this educational context.

It has been observed by various empirical studies that peer feedback helps learners to become more aware of writing conventions, structure, and style, ultimately leading to enhanced writing quality as showed by researchers such as Van Zundert, 2018; Lai & Lin, 2019; MacArthur, 2020; Cho & MacArthur, 2020; Chukwu & Ekene, 2021; Bello, 2022. For instance, the result of Cho and MacAuthor (2020) who investigated on literature review on peer feedback in writing classrooms shows that peer feedback encourages students to focus on both content and form, providing them with a balanced perspective on how to improve their writing. Moreover, peer feedback is particularly beneficial for writing improvement because it promotes active engagement with the text, which

leads to deeper understanding and reflection. Also, the result of Van Zundert (2018) who investigated on the influence of anonymous peer feedback on the quality of students' performance and feedback shows that students who participated in peer feedback activities demonstrated more significant improvement in their writing when compared to those who received teacher feedback alone. This is because peer feedback involves an interactive process that requires students to analyze and critique others' work, which in turn enhances their own writing skills. This process not only helps students identify mistakes but also encourages them to think critically about their own writing, fostering greater self-awareness. This paper therefore, investigate Junior secondary school students' perception of peer feedback on essay writing in Igbo-Etiti Local Government, Enugu state. To carry out this investigation, the following research questions were posed:

1. What is the impact of peer feedback on students' engagement in essay writing tasks in junior secondary schools in Igbo Etiti Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of peer feedback in improving the overall quality of essay writing among junior secondary school students in Igbo Etiti Local Government Area?
3. What challenges do students face when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments in Igbo Etiti Local Government Area?
4. What are the possible solutions to the challenges students face when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments in Igbo Etiti Local Government Area?

Method

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted all the 2500 Junior Secondary School Two (JSS 2) students from 15 public secondary schools in Igbo-Etiti Local

Government Area, Enugu State. The sample was 200. 40 junior secondary school two English Language students from 5 schools were used using a simple random sampling technique to ensure that each respondent had a chance of being selected. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled: Questionnaire on Influence of Peer Feedback in Improving Essay Writing Skill (QIPFIEWS). QIPFIEWS has two sections: A and B. Section A is on personal data of the respondents. Section B has four clusters. Clusters one and two are on impact of peer feedback on students' engagement in essay writing tasks and influence of peer feedback in improving the overall quality of essay writing with five items respectively. Clusters three and four are on challenges students face when providing peer feedback on writing assignments and possible solutions to these challenges with five items respectively. The questionnaire was drawn on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree-SA (4 point), Agree-A (3 point), Disagree-D (2 point) and Strongly Disagree-SD (1 point). The instrument was face validated by three lecturers from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, it was trial-tested on 30 English language students randomly selected from Nsukka Local Government Area but the selected students have the same characteristics as those for the study. After the trial test, data was collated and analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Statistics which yielded a desirable reliability index of 0.87. The high index guaranteed the use of the instrument. The research instrument was finally administered and collected by the researcher on a personal hand delivery and face to face contact with the participants. For analysis of data collected, Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions raised. The bench mark mean was 2.50. Any mean below 2.50 was rejected while any mean above the bench mark was accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of peer feedback on students' engagement in essay writing tasks in junior secondary schools in Igbo Etiti?

Table 1: The impact of peer feedback on students' engagement in essay writing tasks

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D	Decision
1.	Receiving feedback from peers makes me more interested in completing essay writing tasks.	194	2.82	1.0	Accepted
2.	Peer feedback helps me identify areas I need to improve in my essay writing.	196	2.96	1.1	Accepted
3.	Discussing essay writing with classmates motivates me to put in more effort in future tasks.	197	2.87	1.0	Accepted
4.	I feel more confident in essay writing skills after receiving constructive feedback from peers.	191	3.61	.67	Accepted
5.	Peer feedback makes essay writing tasks more interactive and engaging for me.	198	2.05	.75	Rejected
Grand Mean			2.86		Accepted

Table 1 above revealed that the impact of peer feedback on students' engagement in essay writing tasks. The result showed that all the respondents agreed to all the items 1-4, with the mean ratings ranging between 2.82-3.61, and standard deviation ranging between 1.1- 1.1, as the impact of peer feedback on

students' engagement in essay writing tasks. However, the result also showed low responses to item 5 with mean score of 2.05 as well with standard deviation of .75. The grand mean of 2.86 indicated that peer feedback has a positive impact on students' engagement in essay writing tasks.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of peer feedback in improving the overall quality of essay writing among junior secondary school students?

Table 2: The influence of peer feedback on improving the overall quality of essay writing

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D	Decision
6.	Peer feedback helps me improve the organization of my essay writing.	197	2.05	.82	Rejected
7.	Suggestions from classmates help me correct grammatical errors in my essay writing.	199	3.33	.80	Accepted
8.	Receiving peer feedback helps me write more clear sentences.	188	3.55	.71	Accepted
9.	Peer feedback encourages me to refine my essay writing effectively.	196	3.30	1.0	Accepted
10.	Sharing feedback with peers enhances the overall quality of my essay writing.	196	3.54	.65	Accepted
Grand Mean			3.15		Accepted

Table 2 above revealed that the influence of peer feedback on improving the overall quality of essay writing. The result showed that all the respondents agreed to all the items 2-4, with the mean ratings ranging between 3.30-3.55, and standard deviation ranging between .65-1.0, as the influence of peer

feedback on improving the overall quality of writing. However, the result also showed low responses to item 1 with mean score of 2.05 as well with standard deviation of .82. The grand mean of 3.15 indicated that peer feedback has a positive influence on improving the overall quality of essay writing.

Research Question 3: What challenges do students face when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments?

Table 3: The challenges faced by students when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments.

S/N	Item statement	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D	Decision
11.	I find it difficult to give constructive feedback to my classmates' essay writing.	197	3.34	.93	Accepted
12.	Receiving negative feedback from peers makes me feel discouraged about my essay writing.	197	3.54	.71	Accepted
13.	Some classmates do not take peer feedback seriously, which affects its usefulness.	192	3.46	.82	Accepted
14.	I struggle to apply the suggestions provided by my peers.	196	1.85	.81	Rejected
15.	Time constraints during peer feedback activities make it challenging to give detailed comments.	197	1.87	.76	Rejected
Grand Mean			2.81		Accepted

Table 3 above revealed that the challenges faced by students when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments. The result showed that all the respondents agreed to all the items 1-3, with the mean ratings ranging between 3.46-3.54, and standard deviation ranging between .71-.93, as the challenges faced by students when providing peer feedback on

essay writing assignments. However, the result also showed low responses to items 4-5 with mean scores of 1.85-1.87, as well with standard deviation of .76 and .81. The grand mean of 2.81 indicated that the challenges students faced when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments.

Research Question 4: What are the possible solutions to the challenges students face when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments?

Table 4: Possible solutions to the challenges faced by students in providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments.

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D	Decision
16.	Providing clear guidelines on how to give constructive feedback can help improve the peer feedback process.	190	3.59	.73	Accepted
17.	Training sessions on effective feedback techniques would make it easier for students to provide useful feedback.	195	3.15	.99	Accepted
18.	Allowing more time for peer feedback activities would help students give and receive detailed comments.	199	3.08	.91	Accepted
19.	Encouraging a supportive classroom environment can reduce the fear of receiving negative feedback.	195	2.24	1.3	Rejected
20.	Using anonymous peer feedback could make students feel more comfortable sharing honest opinions.	190	2.91	1.6	Accepted
Grand Mean			3.00		Accepted

Table 4 above revealed that the possible solutions to the challenges faced by students when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments. The result showed that all the respondents agreed to all the items 1-3 and 5, with the mean ratings ranging between 2.24-3.59, and standard deviation ranging

between 1.6- .99, as the possible solutions to the challenges faced by students when providing peer feedback on writing assignments. However, the result also showed low responses to item 4 with mean score of 2.24 as well with standard deviation of 1.3. The grand

mean of 3.00 indicated that the responses provided by the respondents were similar and not far from the mean.

Discussions

The findings of the study showed that peer feedback have positive impact on students' engagement in essay writing tasks. This is as a result that peer feedback plays a crucial role in increasing students' interest in completing essay writing assignments, identifying areas of improvement, and motivating them to exert more effort in subsequent tasks. Moreover, the process significantly boosts students' confidence in their writing abilities. This finding is in agreement with Alshuraidah and Al-Qarni (2020), who highlighted that peer feedback fosters a reflective learning environment where learners critically assess their work and that of others, leading to improved writing performance and self-confidence.

Also, the finding of this study revealed that peer feedback plays a significant role in enhancing the overall quality of students' essay writing. This indicates that students find peer suggestions helpful in correcting grammatical errors, refining their sentence clarity, and improving their written expression. Moreover, the process of exchanging feedback appears to contribute positively to the general quality of students' written work. This finding corroborates with Yu and Lee (2019), who agree that peer feedback promotes writing development by encouraging learners to notice and correct errors, particularly in grammar and sentence construction. As such, students who engaged in peer feedback activities demonstrated improved accuracy and clarity in writing.

Furthermore, the finding of this study revealed the challenges students faced when providing peer feedback on writing assignments. This can be seen in that many students experience difficulty in providing meaningful and constructive feedback to their classmates, a challenge that could stem from limited confidence or inadequate training in peer assessment techniques. Also, students express that receiving negative feedback from their peers often leads to discouragement and diminished confidence in their writing abilities. This indicates that while the logistical aspects of peer feedback are manageable, the emotional and interpersonal dimensions pose greater challenges. These findings corroborate with Ajayi and Adeyemo (2022), who emphasized that peer feedback, though pedagogically valuable, can be emotionally challenging for students, especially when feedback is perceived as overly critical or insincere, which means that students

often lack the interpersonal and evaluative skills necessary to deliver feedback in a constructive and supportive manner, which can lead to discomfort and resistance in peer review activities.

Lastly, it is evident from the findings that all the students agreed that there are possible solutions to the challenges they faced when providing with peer feedback on essay writing assignments. Foremost, among these is the need for clear guidelines that help students understand how to give constructive and useful feedback, undergo training sessions to equip them with appropriate techniques for evaluating peer work, as well as allocating more time during essay writing sessions specifically for peer review activities. This finding is in line with Bader and Zyoud (2022) who argue that the effectiveness of peer feedback greatly depends on the clarity of instructional support provided to students, which means that when students receive well-structured guidelines and are trained on how to assess their peers' writing constructively, their feedback becomes more targeted, respectful, and beneficial.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that peer feedback has a generally positive influence on students' engagement in writing tasks. Also, the finding of the study revealed that peer feedback contributes positively to the overall quality of students' writing, particularly in areas such as grammar, clarity, and refinement. Again, the finding of the study revealed the challenges students faced when providing peer feedback on essay writing assignments. Finally, the finding of the study revealed the possible solutions to these challenges that students faced when providing peer feedback on writing assignments in junior secondary schools in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Teachers should provide clear guidelines and structured training for students on how to give and receive constructive peer feedback effectively.
2. Schools should allocate more time for peer feedback activities during essay writing assignments to ensure thorough and thoughtful reviews.
3. Educational policymakers should consider incorporating peer feedback practices into the

national curriculum to foster collaborative learning and critical thinking skills.

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