TERTIARY EFL STUDENTS' PRACTICE
OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN WRITING SKILL

Huynh Ai*, Tran Quang Ngoc Thuy**

*Dong Nai University, No. 9, Le Quy Don, Tan Hiep Ward, Bien Hoa City, Dong Nai. ******University of
Foreign Languages, Hue University, 57 Nguyen Khoa Chiem St., Hue, Vietnam

* Correspondence to **Huynh Ai** <huynhai007@gmail.com>

Abstract: Self-assessment has garnered significant recent attention within the domain of learner-centered education, particularly in the context of English language education. It contributes significantly to improving educational quality by emphasizing the importance of students taking responsibility for their learning and actively participating in assessing their own progress and performance in language learning. This study delved into the practice of self-assessment among EFL students in the context of higher education in Vietnam, focusing specifically on writing skills development. Data for the research were gathered through a questionnaire distributed to 450 sophomores, coupled with focus group interviews involving 32 participants. The findings reveal that the majority of the participants actively engaged in self-assessment practice to enhance their writing abilities utilizing writing strategies and processes to self-assess their writing. Besides, this study discloses that EFL students carefully utilized reading strategies and assistive technology tools to assess their essays. However, a minority of the students displayed disinterest in self-assessment, illuminating noteworthy pedagogical considerations as outlined in the study's implications.

Keywords. self-assessment, practice, writing skill.

1. Introduction

Learner-centered instruction has been widely employed in global education over the past decades. Learner-centered classrooms prioritize students' active engagement in their learning process rather than the passive absorption of knowledge (Brown & Harris, 2013). Self-assessment has recently gained prominence as a pivotal element within this approach due to its incorporation of essential formative assessment components, which contribute to bolstering students' independent learning and assessing the quality of language education (Andrade, 2019; Butler, 2016). A substantial body of empirical research has recently demonstrated the positive impact of self-assessment on the learning progress of EFL students, as highlighted in numerous studies (Babaii et al., 2016; Ferry, 2020; Wang, 2017). Specifically, several studies have explored

the implementation of self-assessment to cultivate learner autonomy in exam-oriented contexts (Phan, 2021), while others have examined the potential of rubrics in fostering students' engagement and metacognitive development (Ferry, 2020; Xu, 2019; Wang, 2017).

Within the domain of writing, self-assessment plays a pivotal role in the development of writing skills, empowering students to harness their existing knowledge, employ effective writing strategies, analyze areas in need of improvement, and actively track their learning progress. As emphasized by Butler (2016), self-assessment activities in learning writing involve students reflecting on their writing process, pinpointing strengths and weaknesses, and monitoring their progress. Earl (2003) also supported the notion that self-assessment enables students to discern their strengths and areas for growth. This self-awareness prompts students to deploy appropriate writing strategies tailored to their specific needs, thereby fostering more efficient and targeted writing practices.

Despite the existing body of research on self-assessment practices and their potential benefits, a notable gap still exists in comprehending how tertiary EFL students engage in self-assessment activities to enhance their writing skills, particularly within the context of writing skills development in Vietnam. This study aims to bridge this gap by delving into the practice of self-assessment among EFL students during their writing learning process. Additionally, it is anticipated to contribute to the understanding of the current state of teaching and learning writing skills through self-assessment at the tertiary level. The research specifically addresses the following research questions:

(1) How do EFL tertiary students self-assess their writing strategies?

(2) How do EFL tertiary students self-assess their writing processes?

2.   Literature Review

2.1.   *Self-assessment*

On defining self-assessment, Andrade (2019) asserted that it was surprisingly challenging to define "*self-assessment*" precisely because it encompasses a variety of activities, including using a rubric or checklist to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, estimating the number of correct answers on a test, comparing scores between teachers and students, writing reflective journals, and more. Several terms have been used interchangeably to describe the process of students' assessment and reflection on their own learning, including notable terms such as "*self-assessment*", "*self-reflection*", "*self-monitoring*", and "*self-evaluation*". Moreover, a process of students' self-rating, self-grading, self-testing, and self-judging can also be seen as forms of self-assessment. Numerous definitions of the term may lead to confusion in

understanding the concept of self-assessment.

More explicitly, Harris and McCann (1994) defined self-assessment as the way learners self-assess their learning process and problems and then seek out solutions for improving them. This definition refers to learners' reflecting on their own learning processes and seeking out solutions for improving them. Harris and McCann implied that self-assessment is a valuable tool for promoting learner autonomy and for helping learners become more effective and successful learners. Additionally, Boud (1995) argued that self-assessment is not just an individualistic activity or a learning process of a learner, but involves many learners when he defined self-assessment as "the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgments about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards" (p.42). In this type of self-assessment process, students are encouraged to take an active role in defining the standards or criteria that will be used to evaluate their work. Once the standards or criteria have been established, students then use them to evaluate their own work and make judgments about the extent to which they have met these standards or criteria. This can help to promote self-awareness and critical thinking skills, as students reflect on their own learning and identify areas where they need to improve. Lately, a notable definition offered by Gregory et al. (2011) is that "self-assessment refers to learners' reflection on the quality of work to assess its reflectivity through explicitly specified goals or criteria, subsequent revision accordingly" (p.2). This definition emphasizes the process of students' reflection on their performance. According to Gregory and his colleagues, a key concept of self-assessment is "reflectivity", which refers to the level of reflection or critical thinking that students have put into their own work through self-assessment. As was previously discussed, the core of self-assessment is students' reflection or critical thinking on a learning process.

This research aims to investigate the EFL tertiary students' self-assessment in writing skill in Vietnam's higher educational context, which focuses on aspects of students' practice of self-assessment in writing skill. Therefore, it adopted Andrade and Du's (2007) definition as below:

> Self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise. (p.3)

This definition encompasses all of the criteria to be followed by the current research as it first emphasizes self-assessment as formative assessment which is an ongoing process aiming to provide feedback to students that can guide their learning and help them improve (Andrade, 2019; Brown & Harris, 2013). By engaging in self-assessment, students can gain a deeper understanding of their own learning processes and become more aware of their own strengths

and weaknesses (Andrade, 2010; Earl, 2010; Lee, 2017). Students can also develop important critical thinking skills as they evaluate and revise their work. Simply put, self-assessment is a valuable tool for promoting student learning and developing students' reflection thinking skills on the process of learning to become more effective learners.

2.2.   Self-assessment as a key strategy of formative assessment

Formative assessment has been widely accepted as a potent method of classroom assessment that focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning worldwide (Andrade & Cizek, 2010; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Lee, 2017). Formative assessment has received attention recently since it emphasizes self-assessment, which helps students in enhancing their learning and developing the capacity to take charge of their own learning (Andrade, 2010; Brown, 2003; Butler, 2016; Race, 2020).

According to Brown (2003), formative assessment offers several benefits. Firstly, it aids in the identification of students' strengths and weaknesses, providing valuable insights into their areas of proficiency and areas that require further development. Secondly, it assists teachers in planning their lectures effectively, enabling them to tailor their instruction to address specific learning needs. Thirdly, formative assessment empowers students by guiding their learning process and encouraging them to revise their work, fostering the growth of self-assessment skills. Lastly, it cultivates students' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in the educational journey. Other researchers concur with Brown's (2003) ideas about the potential benefits of formative assessment, including using self-assessment to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses during the learning process (Boud, 1995; Butler, 2016), foster students' independent learning, and enhance autonomous learning (Brown & Harris, 2013; Johnson & ShellyGelfand, 2013; Lee, 2017; Ratminingsih et al., 2018). The use of self-assessment is also considered to be able to empower students to become autonomous and self-regulated learners, develop students' ability to learn independently, and encourage learners to become more active during the process of learning (Andrade, 2010; Weigle, 2009). Therefore, self-assessment plays a core role as formative activities to foster learner-centered learning.

2.3.   The role of self-assessment in EFL writing classes

EFL writing classrooms offer an optimal environment for cultivating self-assessment skills among learners. This environment fosters a genuine learning atmosphere wherein students can harness their problem-solving capabilities, engage in social interactions and evaluations, and reflect on their learning experiences (Mahmud, 2013). In essence, the development of writing skills involves a meta-cognitive process (Lee, 2017; Weigle, 2009).

Within this process, students activate their existing knowledge, employ writing strategies and skills, self-assess their strengths and weaknesses, and closely monitor their learning process. It is thus logical to assert that self-assessment plays a pivotal role within writing classrooms, particularly in enhancing students' learning outcomes and empowering them to become self-regulated and autonomous learners (Lee, 2017).

Recent experimental studies have extensively explored the integration of self-assessment within EFL writing classes. Many researchers (e.g., Ferry, 2020; Javaherbakhsh, 2010; Phan, 2021; Wang, 2017; Xu, 2019) have highlighted self-assessment as a vital tool for nurturing language learner autonomy. It encourages students to assume greater responsibility for their learning and enables them to independently monitor their progress. Moreover, Johnson and Gelfand (2013) have advised that students should receive training on effectively utilizing self-assessment tools and comprehending strategies for improving their writing quality. It is worth noting that self-assessment training significantly aids students in monitoring their individualized progress (Gardner, 2000).

2.4.   *Previous studies and gap in the literature*

Numerous experimental studies have provided invaluable insights into the significance of self-assessment practice within language education in the world. These investigations have delved into various dimensions of self-assessment's importance, including its correlation with achievement (Ratminingsih et al., 2018), its alignment with different assessment methods (Ashton, 2014), and its association with self-regulated learning models (Panadero et al., 2016; Wang, 2017).

Key findings from prior studies underscore the multifaceted nature of self-assessment. Notably, self-assessment has been utilized as a form of summative assessment, involving comparisons between students' self-grading or self-tests and their teachers' assessments (Babaii et al., 2016; Brown & Harris, 2013). The results revealed a tendency for students to either overestimate or underestimate their scores compared to instructors' assessments. For example, Tejeiro et al. (2012) conducted a study in Spain to assess the accuracy and validity of self-assessment among two groups of first-year students. The findings indicated a tendency for students, particularly those with poorer results, to overestimate their abilities. Remarkably, this study revealed a lack of correlation between teachers' assessments and students' assessments.

Moreover, existing research on formative self-assessment suggests that enhancing consistency can be achieved by adopting instructional approaches similar to those used for teaching and supporting other skills (Lopez & Kossack, 2007; Panadero et al., 2016). Other studies have demonstrated that self-assessment improves with writing experience in

developing students' self-assessment abilities (Nagel & Lindsey, 2018), following guidelines and receiving feedback (Ferry, 2020), and establishing standards, potentially in the form of rubrics (Panadero et al., 2016).

Additionally, previous studies have provided evidence that the implementation of self-assessment practices can yield positive outcomes, particularly in formative contexts. Self-assessment has been shown to assist students in honing specific aspects of their language knowledge during writing instruction (Nielsen, 2011), resulting in enhancements in their writing abilities (Javaherbakhsh, 2010). The use of checklists has been found to contribute to students' clear comprehension of the self-assessment process (Liu & Brantmeier, 2019). Furthermore, the use of rubrics has been correlated with heightened writing quality, as it defines specific concepts clearly within learners' writing and influences their writing development (Ferry, 2020; Xu, 2019). Notably, the application of rubrics has the potential to enhance students' self-efficacy (Andrade, 2010). The incorporation of self-assessment checklists has been reported to elevate performance and encourage the utilization of self-regulatory learning strategies (Brown & Harris, 2013). Additionally, feedback plays a dynamic role in fostering accurate self-assessment among students (Mazloomi & Khabiri, 2016).

There is a dearth of research on self-assessment practice within the Vietnamese context, particularly concerning tertiary EFL students' writing skills. For instance, a study conducted by Lê and Bùi (2022) delved into the utilization of peer-review checklists among non-English majors engaged in writing learning. The outcomes indicated that EFL students who integrated the peer-review checklist exhibited improved writing skills, particularly in terms of task fulfillment and vocabulary utilization, when compared to peers in the control group. Additionally, Hồ (2017) conducted a case study on a tertiary-level translation course, exploring the dynamics among self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment. The findings revealed that peer and instructor assessments in EFL classrooms received more attention than students' self-assessments. In another study, Phan (2021) conducted qualitative research on the role of self-assessment in developing listening-speaking skills within higher education. The results indicated that self-assessment encourages foreign language learners to reflect on their learning accomplishments, progress, and assessment experiences.

More research is necessary to delve into students' self-assessment practice, particularly focused investigations into EFL students' self-assessment of their writing strategies and writing processes at the tertiary level in Vietnam.

3.   Methodology

3.1.   *Research design*

The mixed methodology design was selected for this study because both quantitative and qualitative approaches might provide insights into EFL students' practice of self-assessment in learning writing. This study intended to leverage the benefits of utilizing both a questionnaire and interviews through a mixed methods approach, aiming to maximize the reciprocal support provided by these methods while minimizing the limitations associated with relying solely on one approach (Creswell, 2014; McKim, 2017). According to Creswell (2014), the mixed methods approach offers superior reliability and validity compared to using each method individually. Data collection for this study involved the use of a questionnaire and focus group interviews.

3.2.   *Research context*

The present study focuses on the writing skill courses within the training programs for English majors at two distinct universities in southern Vietnam. In a non-public university, the curriculum consists of four courses in writing skills, commencing with fundamental sentence structures and progressing to research writing across Writing 1 to Writing 4. Conversely, a public university offers writing courses spanning five semesters, encompassing Writing 1, 2, 3, 4 (Advanced Writing), and 5 (Research Writing). Despite variations in syllabus design, both universities prioritize the process approach in teaching writing, encouraging students to engage in writing through pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing activities. Collaborative writing and scaffolded instruction methods are also employed to facilitate peer interaction and offer explicit guidance. In this study, the primary objective in selecting these universities was to investigate how second-year students practice self-assessment of their writing skill.

3.3.   *Participants*

The participants in this study are second-year English majors from two campuses located in the southern region of Vietnam, aged between 19 and 24. The selection of these participants allows the study to specifically target a group that possesses a foundational understanding of writing skills while also being receptive to further development. This makes them an ideal cohort for investigating self-assessment practices and their influence on the improvement of writing skills. They willingly participated by completing a questionnaire and responding to interview questions. The study involved 450 students in the questionnaire (230 students from the state university and 220 from the private one) and conducted interviews with 32 student participants (16 interviewees from each university).

3.4.   *Data collection instruments and data analysis*

To collect both quantitative and qualitative data on students' self-assessment practice in learning writing, a combination of a questionnaire and focus group interviews was employed. The questionnaire, consisting of 22 items (12 items for collecting students' self-assessment practice in writing strategies and 10 items for the writing process), was developed by amalgamating elements of assessment in writing from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (2001) and criteria in writing assessment from various academic writing textbooks (Davis & Liss, 2006; Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Savage & Mayer, 2005) to gather quantitative data. The questionnaire items were formulated using closed-ended items presented in a five-point Likert scale format, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Following this, a pilot study was conducted with 30 students to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire's clusters. The measurement's reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha coefficients calculation, resulting in α = 0.836 for self-assessment practice in the writing process and α = 0.812 for self-assessment in writing strategies, both meeting the required reliability standards. Post the pilot test, all questionnaire items were further reviewed to create an enhanced version that could accommodate both languages, English and Vietnamese, for data collection. This questionnaire was distributed to second-year English majors at two universities and collected a total of 450 samples. Descriptive analysis of all quantitative data was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program (version 20.0). Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to calculate the Mean (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for each item, assessing their respective levels.

The focus group interviews aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' self-assessment practices in learning writing. Utilizing open-ended questions, the interviews were conducted to complement the questionnaire data by collecting more intricate insights and information. There were a total of 8 systematically organized group interviews conducted at each university, with each group comprising 4 students who had previously completed the questionnaire. The interview data underwent qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, recognized approaches for interpreting textual data through systematic categorization of codes and identification of themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Due to the substantial and detailed nature of the collected interview data, the researcher meticulously reviewed and refined the data multiple times to extract the most pertinent information.

4.   Findings

4.1.1. Students' practice of self-assessment in writing strategies

As seen in Table 1, the student participants reported their self-assessment practice in writing strategies with a mean score of M=3.63. The overall mean score (M=3.63) and standard deviation (SD=0.993) indicate a moderate level of agreement about self-assessment practice in writing strategies among the students. The table reveals that twelve items of the questionnaire encompassed three themes related to the participants' self-assessment activities in writing strategies: self-assessment before, during, and after writing.

Table 1. Students' reported practice of self-assessment in writing strategies

No	Items	N	Mean	S.D
1	I consider selecting brainstorming activities to have ideas and write an outline before writing.	450	3.76	0.963
2	I make my own plan for when I do my writing.	450	3.71	0.997
3	I review my class notes, handouts, and assignment requirements before beginning to write.	450	3.92	0.981
4	I edit the organization of my writing while I am writing.	450	3.68	1.046
5	I edit the content of my writing work while I am writing.	450	4.08	0.853
6	I add more details to make my writing more interesting.	450	3.21	1.067
7	I use my own independent thinking during writing.	450	3.72	1.024
8	I pay much attention to detailed descriptions of complex contexts during writing.	450	4.14	0.766
9	I review my writing and whether to edit it after writing.	450	2.78	1.019
10	I go back to my writing to revise the content and make my ideas clearer.	450	3.58	0.986
11	I go back to my writing to identify problems and see what should be improved.	450	3.54	1.169
12	I make notes of the strong and weak points in my writing for later writings.	450	3.40	1.052
Total (Mean & Standard Deviation)			**3.63**	**0.993**

Regarding self-assessment activities before writing, a majority of the participants strongly agreed that they reviewed class notes, handouts, and assignment requirements (M=3.92), employed brainstorming techniques to create an outline (M=3.76), and made plans for their writing (M=3.71). For self-assessment during writing, most participants fully agreed that they paid great attention to providing detailed descriptions in complex contexts (M=4.14) and edited the content while writing (M=4.08). Additionally, participants indicated that they utilized independent thinking (M=3.72), revised the organization of their writing (M=3.68), and added more details to enhance the interest of their writing (M=3.21).Concerning self-assessment practice after writing, a large number of the participants reported going back to their writings to revise the contents and make ideas clearer (M=3.58), as well as identifying areas for improvement (M=3.54). However, there was less agreement among the participants regarding two items: making notes of strong and weak points for future writing (M=3.40) and considering revisions after completing the writing (M=2.78).

The standard deviation (SD) values presented in Table 1 signify the extent of variation among participants' responses concerning self-assessment practices in writing strategies. The overall mean (M=3.63) and SD=0.993 indicate a moderate level of variability. The range of SD values, spanning from 0.766 to 1.169, underscores significant diversity across the self-assessed practice. More specifically, Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10 exhibit SD values below 1, pointing to a higher level of agreement in areas such as content editing, attention to detailed descriptions, and revising ideas. Conversely, items 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12 have SD values above 1, suggesting greater diversity in practices related to organizing edits, incorporating details, employing independent thinking, reviewing and editing, identifying areas for improvement, and noting strengths and weaknesses.

Besides data from the questionnaire, insights into EFL students' self-assessment activities in writing strategies were obtained through focus-group interviews with 32 students. The majority of the interviewees emphasized the importance of setting goals and creating outlines before writing. They believed that establishing specific goals motivated them to put forth their best efforts, such as gathering information and selecting appropriate ideas for their writing. These goals enabled them to effectively measure and track their writing progress. For instance, the interviewees expressed the significance of specific goals in their motivation and learning process, with one participant stating, "*Setting clear objectives helps me write better and faster by planning a clear outline*" (Int-5.S.19). Another student mentioned, "*I always set a clear objective, like focusing on correcting verb tenses and subject-verb agreement. I set both short-term and long-term goals during a writing course*" (Int-6.S21).

In addition, a majority of the interviewees emphasized their attentiveness to class notes, handouts, and assignment requirements before writing. They carefully selected relevant information from these resources to align with their goals and writing tasks, showcasing their ability to apply reading strategies in written communication. This finding highlights the students' understanding of using reading strategies to establish criteria for self-assessment. For example, several students mentioned,

> "I always read the teacher's notes and other sources before writing. I then choose suitable information for my own writing based on the notes" (Int-8.S32).

> "Reading assignment requirements and handouts helps me understand the topic and narrow down my writing. I frequently refer back to vocabulary and language structures before writing, always clarifying my writing purpose. In particular, I have a habit of editing and revising my writing after I finish writing." (Int-5.S19).

The interview findings highlight the significance of students' self-assessment in enhancing their writing process. The interviewees demonstrated a conscious effort to self-assess their own writing through strategies such as rereading the teacher's notes, selecting relevant information, and referencing vocabulary and language structures. Additionally, their practice of editing and revising their work reflects an effort toward self-improvement and the pursuit of higher quality writing. These findings emphasize the importance of self-assessment as a valuable tool for students to monitor their progress, identify areas for improvement, and enhance their overall writing proficiency.

In summary, the results indicate a moderate level of agreement among participants, as revealed through a combination of a questionnaire and focus-group interviews. Self-assessment activities were observed before, during, and after the writing process. Participants reported engaging in various self-assessment activities such as reviewing class notes, brainstorming, making plans, providing detailed descriptions, editing content, and revising organization. Furthermore, the interviews underscored the importance of goal setting, creating outlines, and utilizing class notes and assignments. These findings underscore the significance of self-assessment in improving writing skills, with specific goal-setting, resource selection, and editing playing vital roles in enhancing overall writing proficiency.

4.1.2. Students' reported practice of self-assessment in the writing process

As depicted in Table 2, the findings from the questionnaire regarding students' self-assessment practice in the writing process indicate a moderate level of agreement among the EFL students, with a mean score of M=3.42 and a standard deviation of SD=1.035. The mean scores for each item unveil varying levels of agreement among participants, ranging from

M=2.80 to M=3.90, encompassing self-assessment practices before, during, and after writing activities. The overall mean score of M=3.42 indicates that the participants demonstrated a relatively low degree of agreement about self-assessment activities in the writing process.

Specifically, items 13 to16 of the questionnaire subjected the participants to an evaluation of their self-assessment practice before writing activities. Findings from this section revealed that a large proportion of respondents attested to meticulously selecting ideas from the outline (M=3.90) and verifying the definitions of unfamiliar vocabulary using a dictionary (M=3.68). Moreover, a sizeable number of participants reported examining the logical organization and ideas of the outline before proceeding to write (M=3.20) and setting goals for their writing (M=3.03). Regarding students' self-assessment practice during the writing process, most of the participants confirmed that they corrected grammar, vocabulary, and spelling errors (M=3.80), eliminated unnecessary or redundant details (M=2.82), and consulted a grammar book to resolve any doubts related to grammatical rules or structures in their writing (M=2.80). Moreover, a significant proportion of the respondents agreed with undertaking post-writing activities such as reorganizing and refining their writing (M=3.86) and editing vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation (M=3.63). Nevertheless, a few participants emphasized self-assessing their written work independently (M=3.49).

Table 2. Students' reported practice of self-assessment in the writing process

No	Items	N	Mean	S.D
13	I consider selecting ideas from my outline carefully before writing.	450	3.90	0.967
14	I check the logical organization and ideas of the outline of my own writing before starting to write.	450	3.20	1.015
15	I check my writing whether the goals have been reached (e.g. organization, grammatical structures, vocabulary, clear introduction, body and conclusion, etc.).	450	3.03	1.032
16	I use a dictionary to check the vocabulary I am not sure about before I write.	450	3.68	0.985
17	I use a grammar book to check grammatical points/structures I am not sure about while I write.	450	2.80	1.089
18	I correct grammar, vocabulary, and spelling errors in my writing while I am writing.	450	3.80	1.000

19	I eliminate unnecessary or redundant details in my writing work while I am writing.	450	2.82	1.052
20	I go back to my writing to revise and improve its organization and content.	450	3.86	1.026
21	I reread my own writing to edit vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	450	3.63	1.083
22	I assess my own writing independently.	450	3.49	1.099
Total (Mean & Standard Deviation)			**3.42**	**1.035**

The standard deviation (SD) values presented in Table 2 offer insights into the spread of responses among participants for each self-assessment practice item. The overall mean (M=3.42) and SD = 1.035 for all items indicate a moderate level of variability in participants' responses across the self-assessment practices. The range of SD values, ranging from 0.967 to 1.099, highlights a notable degree of variability in participants' responses across the self-assessment practices, specifically in the context of the writing process. Remarkably, items 13 and 16 exhibit SD < 1, indicating relatively higher agreement among responses. This suggests a stronger consensus among participants regarding the consideration of ideas from outlines, assessment of logical organization, consultation of dictionaries for uncertain vocabulary, correction of errors during the writing process, and revision for improving organization and content. Conversely, items 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, and 22 have SD > 1, implying varied approaches in assessing goals, using grammar, eliminating details, editing, and self-assessment.

Most of the interviewees emphasized the importance of considering and reviewing the information in their essay outlines before starting to write in order to maintain control over their writing. They highlighted actions such as "*selecting and rearranging ideas based on the outline*" (Int-2.S5) and "*orienting their essay writing and self-editing by referring to the outline*" (Int-6.S24).

Another finding of this study is that a majority of the interviewees incorporated the criteria from their writing textbook to self-assess their essay content while writing. They focused on adding relevant details and eliminating unnecessary information in each paragraph of the introduction, body, and conclusion. Some interviewees mentioned "*checking requirements such as the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph*" (Int-1.S1 & S4), "*correcting topic sentences in body paragraphs*" (Int-2.S8), "*considering details in body paragraphs related to reasons*" (Int-8.S30 & S32), and "*removing redundant ideas from their essays*" (Int-4.S16).

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A significant number of the interviewees stated that they always reviewed the organization of their essays after completing the writing process. They invested considerable time and effort in enhancing their essays by adding information, incorporating transition signals and connectors, and ensuring coherence. For instance, one interviewee mentioned "*checking paragraph lengths and essentials, such as the use of transition words and supporting details, as well as editing grammar mistakes*" (Int-6.S22). Another interviewee highlighted "*the practice of rereading the essay to edit punctuation, grammar, and run-on sentences, relying on a bilingual dictionary for spelling and vocabulary checks*" (Int-2.S7).

Furthermore, a few students reported utilizing assistive technology tools for essay editing. They mentioned using Microsoft Word for spell-checking and basic grammar corrections, while others recommended various writing checker apps to identify mistakes and enhance their writing skills, for example, "*using Microsoft Word for spell-checking*" (Int-4.S13) and "*relying on the Grammarly App for essay editing and improvement*" (Int-2.S8).

However, a small number of the students admitted that they only briefly skimmed their essays for mistakes after completion, without paying much attention to editing and self-assessment. For example, one interviewee stated that "*I rarely revise my essays, considering them good enough as they are*" (Int-5.S17), while another claimed to "*seldom edit my writing*" (Int-4.S15).

In summary, the findings provide an overview of students' self-assessment practice in the writing process. Combined data from the questionnaire and interviews show moderate agreement among participants, with variations in mean scores for different self-assessment items. Practices are categorized into before, during, and after writing activities. While there is agreement on some aspects, like selecting ideas and revising content, less consensus exists on independent assessment and grammar book use. Standard deviation values indicate diverse perspectives and practices. Interviews highlight the importance of considering essay outlines and technology tools for editing. Overall, findings reveal a range of self-assessment practices and diverse participant perspectives during the writing process.

5.   Discussion

As analyzed in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, the results from both the questionnaire and interviews underscore the active engagement of EFL tertiary students in self-assessment practices to enhance their writing skills. These findings highlight the utilization of writing strategies and processes by EFL students for self-assessment purposes in learning writing.

A majority of students recognized the significance of thoroughly examining reading assignment requirements, class notes, and handouts to construct a comprehensive outline. This

finding aligns with previous studies (Brown & Harris, 2013; Butler, 2016; Ferry, 2020) which emphasized that self-assessment fosters students' independent learning and encourages them to seek suitable strategies for their own learning process. However, the results of this study demonstrate a higher level of efficacy, highlighting the pivotal role of reading strategies in assisting EFL students in conceptualizing ideas, expanding vocabulary, and gathering pertinent details during the prewriting phase. Additionally, this practice contributes to the establishment of assessment criteria based on reading strategies. Significantly, this finding sheds light on the students' understanding of the value of using reading strategies to scrutinize their written tasks.

Furthermore, a noteworthy finding pertains to the level of autonomy exhibited by EFL students during self-assessment activities throughout the writing process. Similarly, Wang (2017) and Xu (2019) emphasized self-assessment as a vital tool for students to assume greater responsibility for their learning and enable them to independently monitor their progress. A substantial proportion of EFL students engaged in activities such as incorporating detailed descriptions, revising content and organization, and enhancing coherence by adding intricate details. The results of this study underscored the details related to EFL students frequently revisiting their work to identify potential areas for improvement and making necessary revisions accordingly.

The results obtained from the questionnaire and interviews reaffirm the commendable overall performance of the majority of EFL students in self-assessing their writing process. These findings share similarities with previous studies, such as Liu & Brantmeier (2019) and Nielsen (2011), which found that self-assessment aids students in regulating specific aspects of their language knowledge during the writing process and improving their writing. However, the results of this study offer a more focused insight into the assessment aspects of students' writing. Specifically, most students diligently reviewed and selected information from their outlines before beginning to write. This involved consulting dictionaries for uncertain vocabulary, evaluating logical organization, and establishing writing goals. Participants in this study actively reflected on their strengths and weaknesses through the self-assessment process, engaging in these practices proactively. They critically examined their essay's content, organization, and language skills, referencing criteria outlined in writing textbooks and drawing from their own knowledge and experience. Notably, students demonstrated proficiency in editing vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Furthermore, they dedicated substantial effort to incorporating additional information, utilizing transition signals and connectors to enhance the quality of their essays.

Moreover, this study further unveils specific self-assessment practices in learning writing that Vietnamese students employed in their writing strategies and processes. Notably, a

substantial number of students resorted to assistive technological tools, including Microsoft Word and other writing checker apps, to edit their essays, identifying spelling, punctuation, and grammar mistakes, thereby enhancing the quality of their writing output. This discovery underscores technology's significant role in proofreading students' writings and improving their writing skills, as Lee (2017) recommended the role of technology in learning writing. While integrating technology into self-assessment and writing is advantageous, it's crucial to acknowledge that writing involves thinking, and self-assessment involves reflection (Boud, 1995; Earl, 2003; Lee, 2017). This combination can activate students' ability to apply knowledge to solve complex writing issues, reflect on assessments and learning activities, recognize strengths and weaknesses, and independently revise, as proposed by Mahmud (2013).

However, a few students' lack of enthusiasm for self-assessment, even after completing their writing, raises concerns. This disinterest could arise from misconceptions about the role of self-assessment in the writing process, viewing it as merely a perfunctory task rather than a tool for growth. These students may be more focused on completing assignments rather than actively engaging in reflective practices. Furthermore, this indifference towards self-assessment might stem from a misperception that it merely fulfills a formality, rather than recognizing its pivotal role in enhancing writing skills and fostering a deeper understanding of one's own learning process.

6.   Implications

Self-assessment holds a significant role within EFL writing, making it imperative for writing instructors to offer students increased opportunities for self-assessment of their written work. To this end, writing instructors should guide students in seeking feedback to compare their assessments against other evaluation sources. This aids them in pinpointing their writing's strengths and weaknesses in alignment with assessment criteria. Encouraging students to embrace self-assessment practices can empower them to take charge of their learning process, as highlighted by Boud (1995) and Harris & McCann (1994). By engaging in self-assessment, students can identify areas for growth, thus motivating proactive learning and deeper engagement. While technology aids in structuring self-assessment, over-reliance may stifle reflective thinking. Additionally, writing instructors should encourage students' active involvement in self-assessment activities, allowing them to recognize the inherent value of self-assessment in refining writing strategies and processes. Therefore, self-assessment propels students' introspection, nurtures responsibility, and fosters independence in English writing learning.

7. Limitations and suggestions

One of the limitations of this study is the relatively small sample size, encompassing participants from only two universities in southern Vietnam. This might restrict the applicability of the findings to a wider EFL student population, diminishing the generalizability of the results. Another limitation lies in the potential incomplete analysis of the interview data. The study could have solely focused on key interview findings, resulting in potential gaps in the overall data coverage. Consequently, valuable insights from certain participants might have been overlooked, thereby limiting a holistic comprehension of self-assessment practices among EFL students. Moreover, due to its cross-sectional design, the study captured a snapshot of data at a specific point in time. To delve deeper into the evolution of self-assessment practices, longitudinal research is recommended. This would offer a more nuanced understanding of how such practices evolve and adapt over time, enhancing insights into students' writing development. Lastly, the study did not gauge participants' English language proficiency in writing. Disparities in language proficiency could have impacted the efficacy and depth of self-assessment, warranting attention in future research endeavors.

8. Conclusion

In summary, the results demonstrate that the majority of students exhibited strong self-assessment practice. They displayed competence in implementing writing strategies for self-assessment, including goal setting, goal selection and monitoring, and the use of reading strategies.

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