VIETNAMESE TERTIARY EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN WRITING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore Vietnamese tertiary EFL students' perceptions of self-assessment in academic writing within a learner-centered framework. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 223 second-year English majors at a state university in Southern Vietnam through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed generally positive attitudes toward self-assessment, with students recognizing its role in clarifying writing goals, enhancing critical thinking, and fostering motivation. However, challenges such as difficulty using rubrics, low confidence in judgment, and anxiety about discrepancies with teacher assessment were also reported. These findings highlight the need for structured training and pedagogical scaffolding. The study offers implications for integrating reflective practices into writing instruction to promote learner autonomy and engagement in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Self-assessment, learner-centered learning, writing skills, perceptions, EFL students, Vietnamese higher education

1. Introduction

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most cognitively demanding language skills for tertiary students. It requires not only linguistic proficiency but also higher-order thinking skills such as organizing arguments, developing coherence, and revising effectively (Hyland, 2019; Phuong et al., 2024). In Vietnam, many EFL students struggle with academic writing due to limited exposure to authentic English input, inadequate practice with academic conventions, and a lack of clarity in structuring ideas logically (Huynh & Tran, 2023; Nguyen & Tran, 2020). Although writing is a core component of university EFL programs, instruction often remains product-oriented and teacher-centered, providing few opportunities for students to reflect on or assess their own work.

In response to global shifts in higher education, learner-centered pedagogy has gained traction, positioning students as active participants in their learning. This approach emphasizes autonomy, critical reflection, and self-regulation (Boud, 2013; Phan, 2021). Within this framework, self-assessment is viewed as a valuable tool that enables students to assess their performance based on explicit criteria, identify areas for improvement, and revise accordingly (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). When integrated into writing instruction, self-assessment can increase students' awareness of writing standards and promote sustained engagement with the composing process (Harris & Brown, 2018; Phuong et al., 2024).

Despite its documented benefits, enhanced writing performance, metacognitive development, and increased motivation (Panadero et al., 2016), the adoption of self-assessment in many Asian contexts, including Vietnam, remains limited. Traditional classroom hierarchies and the cultural emphasis on teacher authority often undermine students' confidence in self-evaluation and restrict the meaningful use of learner-centered practices (Nguyen & Habók, 2021). While a few studies in Vietnam have explored self-assessment in speaking or in broader self-regulated learning contexts (Ngo, 2019; Phan, 2021), little is known about how EFL university students perceive and experience self-assessment specifically in academic writing.

To address this gap, the present study explores Vietnamese tertiary EFL students' perceptions of self-assessment in academic writing, aiming to identify both the perceived benefits and the challenges associated with this practice. By capturing students' experiences, this study offers insights for more culturally responsive and pedagogically sound implementation, contributing new empirical evidence to the Vietnamese context, where learner-centered approaches are still emerging. It also supports the integration of self-assessment as a core component of academic writing instruction. The findings are expected to create informed writing pedagogy, curriculum design, and teacher training programs, ultimately fostering learner autonomy and engagement in EFL classrooms. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1) How do Vietnamese tertiary EFL students perceive self-assessment in writing classes?

2) What benefits and challenges do Vietnamese tertiary EFL students associate with self-assessment?

2. Literature review

2.1. Writing skills in EFL contexts

In higher education, academic writing presents significant challenges for students due to its complex cognitive and linguistic demands. In this context, students are required not only to possess knowledge of grammatical accuracy and appropriate vocabulary use but also to demonstrate the ability to organize ideas coherently and express meaning with clarity and precision (Hyland, 2019). These requirements can be particularly taxing in Vietnamese university settings, where teacher-centered instruction and limited access to authentic input may hinder the development of writing autonomy (Nguyen & Tran, 2020).

Huynh and Tran (2023) identified four interrelated factors – accuracy, planning, clarity, and confidence – that capture the core dimensions influencing writing quality and learner experience. Accuracy refers to language control, planning pertains to structural organization, clarity addresses precision of meaning, and confidence reflects learners' emotional readiness to write. When these demands are not adequately supported, they can overwhelm students and lead to writing anxiety or disengagement.

Moreover, writing in EFL settings often lacks the scaffolding necessary for risk-taking and reflection. Without

guided opportunities for revision and feedback, students may produce surface-level texts rather than engage deeply in the composing process. This gap emphasizes the need for instructional strategies that empower students to take ownership of their writing development.

2.2. Self-assessment in writing instruction

In light of the cognitive, linguistic, and affective challenges inherent in EFL writing, self-assessment emerges as a pedagogically sound strategy to empower students and promote learner-centered writing instruction. Andrade (2019) defines self-assessment as the deliberate evaluation of one's own work against defined criteria, fostering learner responsibility and deeper engagement with the learning process. Within the context of writing, self-assessment encourages students to actively reflect on their performance, identify areas of strength and weakness, and make informed revisions to improve their work independently.

Self-assessment in EFL writing typically manifests in two primary forms: formative and summative. Formative self-assessment is conducted during the writing process and emphasizes revision, goal-setting, and skill development. In contrast, summative self-assessment is typically employed after the completion of a task to facilitate judgment or grading (Panadero et al., 2016). Among these, formative self-assessment is particularly valuable in EFL contexts, where ongoing support for metacognitive growth and learner autonomy is critical.
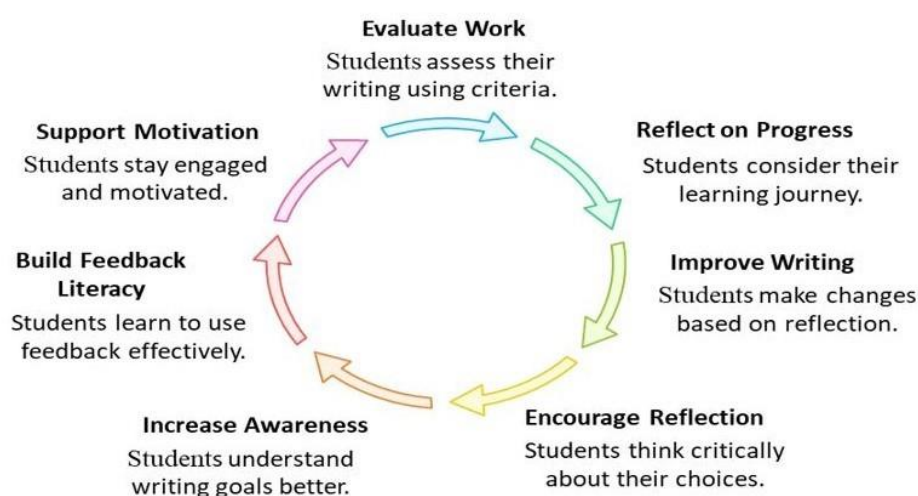

Figure 1: *Cycle of Self-Assessment in Writing (Huynh & Tran, 2023)*

Figure 1 highlights four interrelated pedagogical functions that underpin the use of self-assessment in writing instruction. First, encouraging reflection enables students to engage in critical thinking about their writing decisions, particularly regarding the clarity, coherence, and logical organization of their ideas. Second, increasing awareness helps students develop a clearer understanding of writing objectives and performance standards, thereby supporting their ability to internalize assessment criteria and monitor their

progress more effectively. Third, supporting motivation emphasizes the role of self-assessment in fostering a sense of ownership and active participation in the learning process, as students begin to view themselves as autonomous contributors to their academic growth. Finally, building feedback literacy enhances students' capacity to interpret and act upon both teacher and peer feedback, making them more responsive to external input and more capable of self-directed improvement. Collectively, these functions illustrate how self-assessment can transform writing instruction into a more reflective, goal-oriented, and learner-centered practice.

In EFL writing classrooms, where traditional instruction often limits student participation, integrating such cyclical and reflective models can shift assessment from a teacher-dominated activity to a dynamic, student-centered process (Harris & Brown, 2018). As such, the self-assessment cycle provides not only a practical instructional tool but also a conceptual framework for rethinking how writing is taught, supported, and internalized in tertiary EFL settings.

2.3. Students' perceptions of self-assessment

Students' perceptions are critical to the successful implementation of self-assessment practices in EFL writing instruction. A growing body of research indicates that students are more likely to engage productively with self-assessment when they perceive it as purposeful, relevant, and accessible. According to Andrade (2019), students' acceptance of self-assessment increases significantly when they are equipped with clear rubrics and explicit training, enabling them to

evaluate their work with greater confidence and clarity. This view is echoed by Huynh and Tran (2023), who report that structured scaffolding enhances students' sense of agency and encourages deeper engagement with the writing process.

Self-assessment is often approached with caution or skepticism in Vietnam, where teacher-centered paradigms predominate. Nguyen and Habók (2021) found that Vietnamese university students often lack confidence in their evaluative abilities and tend to play greater trust on teacher feedback. This trend is partly due to cultural norms rooted in traditional academic hierarchies that prioritize external assessment. Phan (2021) noted that while students appreciate the opportunity to assess their own work, they require explicit guidance to implement self-assessment effectively.

These findings underscore the need to understand students' cognitive and emotional orientations toward self-assessment. When educators take student perceptions into account, acknowledging both their receptiveness and reservations, they can design self-assessment activities that are culturally responsive, pedagogically sound, and psychologically supportive. In doing so, self-assessment can be framed not as an evaluative burden but as a meaningful strategy for student growth and independence in academic writing.

2.4. Benefits of self-assessment in writing

The pedagogical value of self-assessment in writing instruction lies in its capacity to foster metacognitive development, strategic thinking, and greater learner engagement. As students

assess their own work, they gain awareness of writing conventions and performance standards. Panadero and Romero (2014) show that self-assessment improves organization, cohesive device use, and self-monitoring when combined with feedback and instruction. Boud and Falchikov (2007) emphasize its role in goal-setting, progress tracking, and independent revision, key skills for writing competence.

The Cycle of Self-Assessment in Writing (Figure 1) frames it as a process of reflection, awareness, feedback literacy, and motivation. Reflection encourages critical engagement; awareness helps internalize criteria; motivation and feedback literacy support meaningful revision and response to input.

In Vietnam, Huynh and Tran (2023) found that students practicing self-assessment reported higher confidence, clearer task understanding, and stronger motivation. These results suggest that with appropriate instructional support, self-assessment improves writing quality and students' attitudes toward revision and self-regulation. It offers cognitive and affective benefits aligned with learner-centered education.

2.5. Challenges of self-assessment in writing

Despite its benefits, self-assessment also presents several challenges that must be acknowledged and addressed. One major concern is that students may lack the skills or confidence to assess their own work accurately. Harris and Brown (2018) note that EFL students often struggle to interpret rubrics or to judge their work objectively, especially if they have little prior experience with self-

directed learning.

The aforementioned challenges of clarity, confidence, planning, and accuracy, are particularly relevant in Vietnamese higher education, where students often rely heavily on teacher correction and may be unfamiliar with criteria-based evaluation. Phuong et al. (2024) found that some students either underestimated or overestimated their writing abilities, which affected their motivation and willingness to revise. These findings highlight the importance of providing students with appropriate training, scaffolding, and opportunities to practice self-assessment in a supportive environment.

2.6. Theoretical frameworks underpinning self-assessment

The pedagogical foundation of self-assessment in writing instruction is anchored in three interrelated theories: learner-centered teaching, self-regulated learning, and constructivist-reflective learning. As Weimer (2002) posits, learner-centered approaches reposition students as active participants in the learning process, fostering autonomy and responsibility, both of which are reinforced through self-assessment practices. Zimmerman's (2000) model of self-regulated learning further explains the internal dynamics of this process, highlighting how planning, monitoring, and reflection enhance learners' metacognitive awareness and revision strategies. Complementarily, constructivist and experiential learning theories (Dewey, 1933; Kolb, 1984) emphasize that knowledge is best constructed through reflection and active engagement with tasks. In this view, self-

assessment becomes not merely evaluative, but transformative, enabling learners to interpret their experiences, make informed decisions, and internalize quality benchmarks in writing. Collectively, these perspectives conceptualize self-assessment as a strategic, recursive, and learner-driven mechanism that cultivates deeper cognitive and affective involvement in academic writing.

2.7. Previous studies and research gaps

Over the past two decades, a growing body of empirical research has explored the effects of self-assessment on writing development in EFL contexts. Internationally, several studies have emphasized the positive impact of self-assessment on learners' writing performance, metacognitive awareness, and learner autonomy. For instance, Andrade and Du (2007) demonstrated that students who used self-assessment with clear rubrics showed significant improvements in both content and organization in their essays. Similarly, Panadero and Romero (2014) reported that students who regularly engaged in formative self-assessment became more strategic and reflective writers, capable of identifying weaknesses and revising their work effectively.

Beyond performance, researchers have also investigated students' perceptions of self-assessment. Andrade (2010) found that many students perceived self-assessment as a valuable learning tool that promoted autonomy and responsibility, provided that it was accompanied by training and teacher support. These findings are reinforced by Eswaey and Ihmoumah's (2024)

systematic review, which concluded that self-assessment, when implemented within a learner-centered framework, not only enhanced writing quality but also fostered students' confidence and engagement.

In the Vietnamese context, however, research remains relatively limited. Ngo (2020) conducted an exploratory study on promoting learner autonomy through self-assessment in writing classes and found that students gained a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses after applying self-assessment practices. Nevertheless, the study focused more on pedagogical implementation than on students' subjective experiences or challenges. Similarly, Phan (2021) examined the relationship between self-assessment and autonomy but did not investigate in detail how students perceived or reacted to the process.

A notable exception is the work by Nguyen and Habók (2021), which investigated Vietnamese students' attitudes toward self-regulated learning, including elements of self-assessment. The authors reported mixed perceptions, with many students expressing low confidence in assessing their own performance, often due to cultural norms that associate evaluation with teacher authority.

Despite these contributions, few studies in Vietnam have directly examined self-assessment from a learner-centered perspective, especially regarding how students themselves interpret its benefits, difficulties, and relevance to their writing development. Most research has focused either on

outcomes (e.g., improved writing scores) or on instructional implementation, rather than capturing learners' voices.

This lack of attention to students' perceptions represents a significant gap. As self-assessment is increasingly promoted in EFL classrooms aligned with learner-centered instruction, it is crucial to understand how learners view the process, what they find helpful, what obstacles they encounter, and how it influences their writing motivation and engagement. Such understanding is necessary to inform pedagogical practices and ensure that self-assessment not only improves outcomes but also empowers learners within their socio-cultural learning context.

The present study seeks to address the gaps by investigating Vietnamese EFL tertiary students' perceptions of self-assessment in academic writing. It aims to explore how students experience the practice, what benefits and challenges they associate with it, and how these perceptions relate to their writing engagement and development. These findings are expected to provide meaningful implications for writing pedagogy in Vietnam and comparable EFL contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. As Creswell (2018) suggests, exploratory mixed-methods designs can identify trends through quantitative data while also exploring in-depth perspectives via qualitative inquiry. In this study, the quantitative component offered an overview of students' perceptions through a questionnaire, while the qualitative component provided more detailed insights via semi-structured interviews.

3.2. Participants

The participants were 223 second-year English majors enrolled in the English Language program at a public university located in southern Vietnam. These students were selected because they had completed foundational writing courses in their first year, including paragraph development, descriptive writing, and argumentative essays. By the second year, they had progressed to more complex writing tasks such as cause-effect, comparison-contrast, and opinion essays, making them appropriate subjects for investigating perceptions of self-assessment in academic writing.

The participants were recruited from four intact classes within the Faculty of Foreign Languages. The sampling strategy was purposive, as the research specifically targeted students who had sufficient exposure to formal writing instruction and had been introduced to writing rubrics and peer/self-assessment strategies as part of their coursework. All participants had experience completing writing assignments that included opportunities for teacher and peer feedback, although not all had received structured training in self-assessment. The institutional context reflects a semi-traditional EFL setting, where writing is assessed through both process-based tasks and timed essays, and where learner-centered approaches are

gradually being adopted within a more conventional teaching framework.

3.3. Research instruments

3.3.1. Questionnaire

To explore students' perceptions, perceived benefits, and challenges of self-assessment in writing, a structured questionnaire was developed based on the Cycle of Self-Assessment in Writing adapted from Huynh and Tran (2023). The instrument consisted of 17 Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), organized into four thematic clusters aligned with the two research questions.

For Research Question 1, two clusters were constructed: Overall Perceptions (Items 1–4) gauged students' general understanding of and stance toward self-assessment, while Attitudes toward the Process (Items 5–7) assessed their motivation and emotional engagement. For Research Question 2, the Perceived Benefits cluster (Items 8–12) reflected the core functions of self-assessment (e.g., goal clarity, reflection, motivation, feedback literacy), while the Perceived Challenges cluster (Items 13–17) explored learners' difficulties, such as applying criteria and anxiety.

The initial version of the questionnaire was reviewed by two EFL writing instructors for content validity. It was then piloted with a sample of 15 second-year English majors at the same institution. Following the pilot, minor linguistic adjustments were made for clarity and cultural appropriateness. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating a high level of internal consistency across the instrument. The validated questionnaire was subsequently administered to the full sample, and results informed both the quantitative data analysis and the selection of interviewees for follow-up exploration.

3.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

In accordance with qualitative data collection principles adapted from Creswell (2018), semi-structured interviews were employed to explore students' perceptions of self-assessment in greater depth. A purposive sample of 12 EFL students was selected from the survey population, representing varying levels of self-reported engagement. They participated in four group interviews (three students each) to encourage dialogue while keeping analysis manageable.

The interview guide included open-ended questions about students' experiences, perceived benefits, and difficulties with self-assessment in writing. Questions also addressed its influence on revision habits, motivation, and interpretation of teacher feedback. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese for clarity, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for thematic analysis. This qualitative method complemented the quantitative data and captured the complexity of learner perspectives.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

The study adhered to ethical research guidelines, with prior approval from the university's ethics board and informed consent obtained from all participants. Data collection occurred in the second half of the academic semester, after students had engaged in self-assessment activities in their writing classes. The questionnaire was administered during scheduled class time, followed by semi-structured interviews conducted a week

later with a subset of 12 volunteers.

A mixed-methods approach guided data analysis. Quantitative data from Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) to identify overall trends in student perceptions. Qualitative data from open-ended responses and interviews were subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model. This facilitated the identification of core themes related to perceived benefits (e.g., reflection, goal clarity), challenges (e.g., rubric use, anxiety), and learner engagement. Coding reliability was enhanced through dual coding and consensus resolution. This integrative approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how students perceive and experience self-assessment in academic writing.

3.5. Instrument validation

To ensure the credibility of the research instruments, both the questionnaire and interview protocol underwent a multi-step validation process. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study with 25 second-year English majors, yielding high internal consistency (α = 0.87). Items were revised for clarity based on participant feedback.

Content validity was established through expert review and alignment with established theoretical frameworks, including the self-assessment cycle (Figure 1), and models by Boud (2013) and Zimmerman (2000). Two specialists in EFL pedagogy evaluated item relevance and clarity, resulting in further refinement. For the interview protocol, trial administration and expert feedback ensured clarity, thematic relevance, and contextual appropriateness.

4. Findings

4.1. Students' perceptions of self-assessment and attitudes

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean score of 3.98 (SD = 0.77) suggests that students generally held positive views regarding the role of self-assessment in their writing development. Although this mean score does not indicate complete agreement, it reflects a constructive orientation toward the integration of learner-centered practices in EFL writing classrooms. The moderate standard deviation implies that while most students tended to agree, there were variations in individual responses, potentially influenced by their previous exposure to self-assessment or confidence in writing.

With regard to students' perceptions of self-assessment (items 1–4), the highest mean was reported for the belief that combining self-assessment with teacher feedback is preferable (M = 4.35, SD = 0.62), reflecting students' desire for balanced evaluation and guidance. A similarly high score was observed for understanding the purpose of self-assessment in writing classes (M = 4.21, SD = 0.68), indicating that students generally grasp the rationale behind its implementation. The perception that self-assessment is helpful for improving writing was also affirmed (M = 4.12, SD = 0.71), suggesting students recognize its potential to enhance their performance. However, confidence in conducting self-assessment was notably lower (M = 3.46, SD = 0.92), highlighting an area of concern.

Table 1: *Overall students' perceptions and attitudes*

No	Items	Mean	S.D
1	I understand the purpose of using self-assessment in writing classes.	4.21	0.68
2	I find self-assessment helpful for improving my writing.	4.12	0.71
3	I feel confident when assessing my own writing.	3.46	0.92
4	I prefer having both teacher feedback and self-assessment.	4.35	0.62
5	Self-assessment helps me become more responsible for my learning.	4.08	0.75
6	I take self-assessment seriously when it is part of the writing task.	3.94	0.81
7	I feel that self-assessment allows me to express my own judgments about writing.	3.67	0.87
Total		**3.98**	**0.77**

In terms of students' attitudes toward the self-assessment process (items 5–7), responses reflected moderate but meaningful levels of endorsement. A notable proportion of students agreed that engaging in self-assessment helped them assume greater responsibility for their learning (M = 4.08, SD = 0.75), indicating a perceived link between self-assessment and learner autonomy. Furthermore, the mean score for taking self-assessment seriously when embedded in writing tasks (M = 3.94, SD = 0.81) implies that students' commitment may depend on how such practices are contextualized within course requirements. Meanwhile, the perception that self-assessment enables learners to express independent judgment (M = 3.67, SD = 0.87) received comparatively lower support, suggesting a degree of uncertainty – likely influenced by traditional educational norms that prioritize external validation over self-directed evaluation. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of sustained support and explicit instruction to help students engage more critically, confidently, and reflectively in self-assessment.

4.2. EFL students' perceptions of benefits of self-assessment in writing

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean score of 4.02 (SD = 0.71) across all benefit-related items reveals a generally favorable perception of self-assessment among students. This suggests that learners recognized self-assessment not only as a revision tool but also as a metacognitive strategy that enhances awareness, reflection, and autonomous learning. The relatively moderate standard deviation indicates consistency in responses across the sample.

Table 2: *EFL students' perceptions of benefits of self-assessment in writing*

No	Items	Mean	S.D
8	Self-assessment helps me understand my writing goals better.	4.18	0.69
9	It helps me think more critically about my writing.	4.05	0.73
10	I feel more motivated to revise my writing after assessing it.	3.92	0.76
11	Self-assessment helps me know how to use feedback more effectively	4.02	0.71
12	I can clearly identify what needs to be improved in my writing after assessing it.	3.95	0.74
Total		**4.02**	**0.71**

The highest-rated item was the belief that self-assessment helps students understand their writing goals (M = 4.18, SD = 0.69), highlighting the role of awareness-building and aligning with Andrade and Valtcheva's (2009) "Increase Awareness" phase. Students also strongly agreed that self-assessment promotes critical thinking about their writing (M = 4.05, SD = 0.73), supporting Dewey's (1933) view of reflection as key to learning and Boud's (2013) concept of internal feedback.

Notably, Self-assessment's perceived effect on using feedback effectively received strong support (M = 4.02, SD = 0.71), indicating that students became more responsive and strategic in interpreting teacher or peer feedback, a key aspect of feedback literacy (Panadero et al., 2016). Students also agreed it helped them identify specific areas for improvement (M = 3.95, SD = 0.74), highlighting its practical value in guiding content and structural revisions, particularly when teacher feedback is limited. Although still rated positively, the statement on increased motivation to revise had the lowest mean score (M = 3.92, SD = 0.76), suggesting that while motivational benefits were present,

further instructional support may be needed to reinforce revision as a self-directed, meaningful process.

To enrich the survey findings, interview data offered further insight into how students personally experienced the benefits of self-assessment in writing classes. For instance, Student 10 reflected that "*When I assess my writing, I become more aware of what I want to say and how to say it more clearly. It makes me plan better because now I know what a good paragraph should look like.*" This supports the quantitative finding that students better understood their writing goals through self-assessment. In addition, Student 3 emphasized how the process stimulated critical thinking: "*It forces me to read my writing from the reader's point of view. I start to see if I gave enough examples or if the ideas are too general.*" Her response highlights the reflective and evaluative nature of self-assessment, reinforcing its function as a metacognitive strategy.

The motivational dimension also emerged during interviews. As Student 5 explained, "*Before, I would stop after one draft, but now I feel that editing is part of the writing. I know I have to*

improve something each time I read my own work." This narrative illustrates the internalization of revision as a self-driven task, rather than merely a response to teacher comments. Altogether, these qualitative insights lend depth to the numerical trends, confirming that students not only recognize the theoretical benefits of self-assessment but also experience them in their actual writing process.

4.3. Students' perception of challenges in self-assessment

The total score across the five items in Table 3 concerning challenges (M = 3.98, SD = 0.83) indicates that while students generally accepted the use of self-assessment, they also encountered notable difficulties during the process. This duality, of recognition and hesitation, is typical in learner-centered innovations introduced in teacher-dominated educational environments (Nguyen & Habók, 2021). The standard deviation suggests some variation in perceived difficulty, hinting at differences in learner preparedness, self-efficacy, and exposure to structured assessment practices.

Table 3: *EFL students' perceptions of challenges in self-assessment*

No	Items	Mean	S.D
13	I find it difficult to assess my writing accurately	3.84	0.88
14	I am not sure how to apply the assessment criteria.	3.91	0.85
15	I worry that my self-assessment might not match the teacher's judgment.	4.12	0.78
16	I need more training or guidance to self-assess effectively.	4.25	0.72
17	I feel anxious when I have to evaluate my own writing.	3.76	0.91
Total		**3.98**	**0.83**

The most reported difficulty was the need for more training or guidance (M = 4.25, SD = 0.72), suggesting students may have lacked sufficient scaffolding to internalize evaluative standards (Andrade, 2010). Another common concern was misalignment between student and teacher evaluations (M = 4.12, SD = 0.78), reflecting tensions between learner autonomy and teacher authority. This may undermine students' trust in their own judgments, particularly in academic cultures where teacher feedback is seen as the primary standard of quality (Panadero et al., 2016).

Students reported difficulty applying assessment criteria (M = 3.91, SD = 0.85) and judging their own work accurately (M = 3.84, SD = 0.88), reflecting low confidence in their evaluative judgment, consistent with earlier findings. Feelings of anxiety during self-assessment (M = 3.76, SD = 0.91) further highlight the emotional strain some students face when responsible for evaluating their own work. These findings stress the need for explicit instruction, modeling, and repeated practice to help students internalize self-assessment as a manageable and meaningful part of the writing process.

Interview data provided further insight into the specific difficulties students encountered. Several participants emphasized their uncertainty in using rubrics or criteria effectively. As Student 9 explained, "*Even though the teacher gave us the criteria, I still didn't know exactly how to use them. Sometimes I think my paragraph is good, but it turns out I misunderstood the organization part.*" This indicates a gap between students' awareness of assessment tools and their ability to apply them meaningfully, an issue also reflected in the relatively high mean score for this challenge.

Concerns about discrepancies between teacher and student evaluation also emerged during interviews. Student 5 noted, "*I try to be honest when I grade myself, but sometimes I give a lower score than the teacher because I'm not sure what is good enough.*" Such responses suggest that some students lack confidence in their writing ability or in their interpretation of quality, possibly due to limited prior practice with formative self-evaluation. Others feared overestimating themselves. As Student 8 stated, "*I worry that if I give myself a high score and the teacher gives a low one, they will think I'm overconfident.*" These anxieties reflect the psychological pressure involved in transitioning from dependent to self-directed learners, particularly in cultures that place high value on teacher authority.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study generally indicate a cautiously positive orientation toward self-assessment, reflecting students' awareness of its pedagogical potential alongside a continued reliance on teacher-led evaluation. This duality underscores the transitional nature of learner-centered practices in Vietnamese higher education, where innovation is met with both curiosity and caution.

One key insight is students' strong preference for combining self-assessment with teacher feedback rather than using it in isolation. This reflects a desire for instructional scaffolding, resonating with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) model of dialogic feedback. Rather than complete autonomy, learners value shared responsibility, where their evaluative voice complements - not replaces - that of the teacher. This dynamic highlights the need to design writing instruction that integrates self-assessment as a formative process within guided pedagogical structures.

The findings also reaffirm the theoretical relevance of self-regulated and reflective learning models (Zimmerman, 2000; Dewey, 1933). Students reported gains in goal clarity, self-monitoring, and motivation to revise – key metacognitive competencies developed through reflective cycles. These outcomes are especially salient among learners with stronger English foundations and more developed critical thinking habits, who appeared to benefit most from the self-assessment process. For these students, self-assessment enhanced their ability to analyze writing from the reader's perspective and take greater ownership of their revision strategies.

Despite these benefits, significant barriers persist. Students expressed difficulty in interpreting rubrics and applying evaluative criteria consistently.

This challenge, common among novice assessors, reflects limited assessment literacy and reinforces the need for explicit training in using rubrics effectively. Moreover, emotional concerns, such as anxiety about discrepancies with teacher scores, suggest that affective support is as important as technical instruction. These concerns are intensified in cultural contexts like Vietnam, where teacher authority remains dominant and self-evaluation may feel intimidating or inappropriate (Nguyen & Habók, 2021).

Importantly, the study highlights that effective self-assessment does not emerge organically; it depends on sustained teacher support. Students are more likely to engage meaningfully in self-assessment when they are guided through modeled examples, formative feedback, and iterative practice. This finding has critical implications for curriculum design: rather than treating self-assessment as an optional add-on, writing courses should embed it as an integral component, accompanied by orientation sessions, feedback training, and reflective prompts.

By positioning self-assessment within a learner-centered - not merely autonomous - framework, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how Vietnamese students navigate shifts in classroom roles. It suggests that learners do not resist agency but require pedagogical environments where structured autonomy is supported, emotional risks are acknowledged, and evaluative competence is explicitly developed.

6. Conclusion

This study examined Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions of self-assessment in academic writing. The findings indicate generally positive attitudes, especially when self-assessment is paired with teacher support. Students valued its role in enhancing clarity, motivation, and reflection, though challenges such as rubric use and confidence in judgment were noted. The study highlights the importance of structured guidance and culturally responsive implementation. It confirms that self-assessment, when properly supported, can foster metacognitive growth and learner autonomy. These insights offer practical implications for designing academic writing courses that integrate self-assessment as a formative, learner-centered strategy.

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NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ ĐẠI HỌC VIỆT NAM VỀ HOẠT ĐỘNG TỰ ĐÁNH GIÁ TRONG KĨ NĂNG VIẾT

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu nhận thức của sinh viên Việt Nam học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ về hoạt động tự đánh giá trong viết học thuật, trong khuôn khổ phương pháp giảng dạy lấy người học làm trung tâm. Sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp, dữ liệu được thu thập từ 223 sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học công lập ở miền Nam Việt Nam thông qua bảng hỏi và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên nhìn chung có thái độ tích cực đối với hoạt động tự đánh giá, đồng thời nhận thức được vai trò của nó trong việc làm rõ mục tiêu viết, nâng cao tư duy phản biện và thúc đẩy động lực học tập. Tuy nhiên, một số thách thức cũng được ghi nhận như khó khăn trong việc sử dụng bảng tiêu chí đánh giá, thiếu tự tin trong việc tự đưa ra nhận định, và lo lắng khi kết quả tự đánh giá không trùng khớp với đánh giá của giảng viên. Những phát hiện này nhấn mạnh sự cần thiết của việc đào tạo bài bản và hỗ trợ sư phạm phù hợp. Nghiên cứu đưa ra một số hàm ý về việc tích hợp hoạt động phản tư vào quá trình giảng dạy kĩ năng viết nhằm thúc đẩy tính tự chủ và tăng cường sự tham gia của người học trong bối cảnh dạy học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ.

***Từ khóa**: Tự đánh giá, học tập lấy người học làm trung tâm, kĩ năng viết, nhận thức, sinh viên học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, giáo dục đại học Việt Nam*