

# Exploring EFL Students' Perception in Peer Feedback Regarding Speaking Activities at Tertiary Education

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## Abstract

Peer feedback is a common practice used within EFL teaching and learning context, but research regarding students' perception of this teaching approach in speaking skills is still underexplored. This study investigates learner perception of peer assessment in speaking activities at tertiary education, including their perspectives on assessing their peers and their criteria when giving feedback for speaking tasks. A quantitative research design was employed with 120 non-English major EFL freshmen using 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire, exploring learner perception upon peer feedback in oral activities within classroom context. Findings of the study revealed that students prioritize pronunciation, clarity and fluency in giving feedback to their colleagues. While the students stated that they found peer feedback valuable and helpful, there remain other factors that might influence their perception upon receiving peer feedback, namely peer level of English proficiency, relationship among peers and preference of lecturer's expertise. The results in this study suggest that peer feedback is a useful pedagogical tool in speaking activities with proper learner guidance and considerations of external contextual factors.

## Literature Review

### Peer feedback in language learning

Peer feedback is a strategy where students give and receive comments on each other's work to improve productive skills, especially writing and speaking (Yu & Hu, 2017). In speaking, it includes praise for language use, pronunciation, constructive criticism on grammar and content, and suggestions for improvement (Banister, 2020; Iwashita & Dao, 2021).

- Theoretical Foundations
  - a. Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) – The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights learning through guidance and comments from more capable peers or instructors.
  - b. Interactionist Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) – Interactional feedback helps learners notice linguistic gaps, enhancing language acquisition.
  - c. Self-Regulated Learning (Zimmerman, 2002) – Emphasizes learners' ability to monitor and adjust their performance. In peer feedback, this increases awareness, autonomy, and initiative in learning (Nipaspong, 2020; Zhu & To, 2022).

### Learner perception of peer feedback

Learner perception is how students view and value peer feedback in developing their language skills (Nguyen, 2021; Yu & Hu, 2021). Studies report mostly positive results: improved writing (Nguyen, 2021; Termjai, 2024), better speaking skills with more confidence and less anxiety (Motallebzadeh et al., 2024; El Mortaji, 2022), and increased engagement and autonomy (Irgin & Bilki, 2024). However, challenges include limited credibility in mixed-proficiency classes (Cao et al., 2022) and cultural tendencies in Asia to avoid direct criticism (Tian & Li, 2018) or prefer teacher feedback for its authority (Nguyen & Pham, 2020).

### Previous studies in Vietnamese EFL context

In Vietnam, learner perception of peer feedback on productive skills—especially at tertiary level—has gained growing research interest. In writing, studies show that while students value peer comments, they often regard teacher feedback as more reliable (Nguyen & Pham, 2020; Dang, 2024). Regarding speaking, research is still limited. Nguyen (2021) found that giving peer feedback improved students' presentation confidence and openness to criticism, while Phuong (2022) noted that proper guidance can shift learners' initial skepticism towards peer feedback. Overall, speaking-related studies remain underexplored, highlighting the need for further research on how peer feedback supports confidence, critical listening, and skill development in Vietnamese EFL contexts.

## References

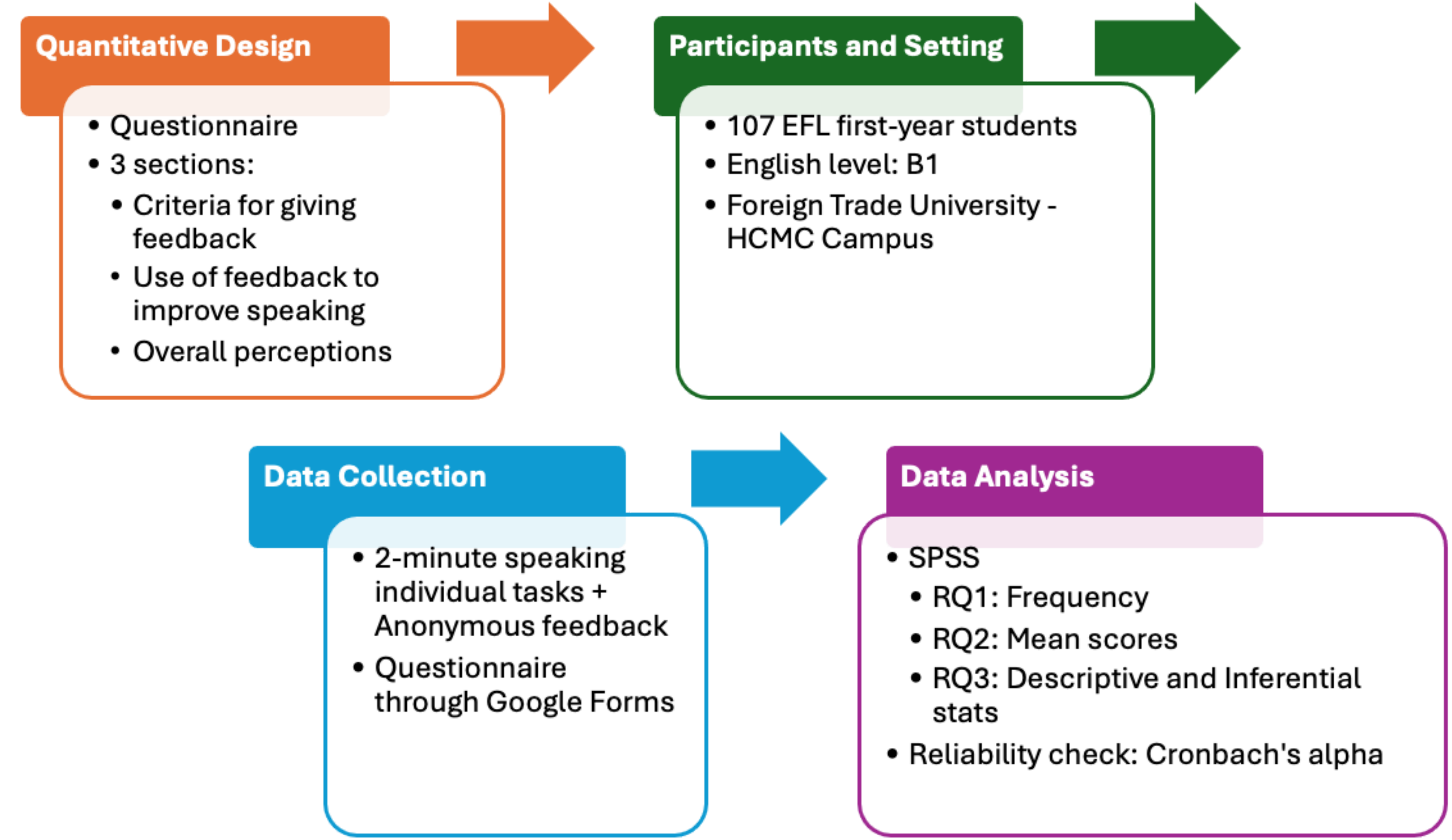
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## Research Questions

This study aims to explore EFL learner perception towards peer feedback in speaking activities at tertiary level. The following **research questions (RQs)** will act as guidance to direct the scope of the study, data collection, data analysis as well as the discussion of the findings:

- RQ1:** What are the criteria that students focus on when giving peer feedback?
- RQ2:** How do students use the feedback to improve their speaking skills?
- RQ3:** What is learner perception towards peer feedback in speaking activities?

## Methodology



## Findings and Discussion

Research Questions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean Range	Highest Mean Item	Lowest Mean Item
Criteria for giving feedback	7	0.82	3.72 - 4.35	Fluency and smoothness	Grammar and sentence accuracy
Use of feedback to improve speaking	7	0.91	3.90 - 4.10	Awareness of strengths/weaknesses	Prepare differently for next task
Student perception of feedback	8	0.90	4.19 - 4.45	Prefer teacher feedback	Trust accuracy

### Criteria for Giving Peer Feedback

Analysis of the seven items measuring criteria for giving peer feedback showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.820$ ), indicating that the items reliably assessed a common construct. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) scores revealed that students most frequently focused on fluency and smoothness ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), pronunciation and clarity ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), and content and ideas ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ). Attention to vocabulary and expressions ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), grammar and sentence accuracy ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ), non-verbal communication ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = \sim 0.80$ ), and use of rubrics ( $M \approx 3.9$ ,  $SD \approx 0.85$ ) was slightly lower. Smaller SD values for fluency and pronunciation suggest high consensus, while larger SD values for grammar and rubric use indicate more varied application among students.

### Use of Peer Feedback to Improve Speaking

Students' use of peer feedback in speaking showed excellent reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.911$ ). Mean scores were consistently high (3.90–4.10), with the strongest agreement for feedback improving self-awareness ( $M = 4.10$ ) and the lowest for changing preparation habits ( $M = 3.90$ ). Responses were generally consistent, though preparation changes showed more variation, suggesting a need for guidance on turning feedback into concrete action.

### Student Perception of Peer Feedback

Analysis of the eight items assessing students' perceptions of peer feedback in speaking tasks demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.911$ ). Mean scores were uniformly high ( $M = 4.19$ – $4.45$ ), indicating generally positive attitudes. The highest agreement was for "I prefer receiving feedback from the teacher rather than my peers" ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), suggesting that while students value peer feedback, teacher input remains the preferred source. Comfort in giving feedback ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ), perceived improvement in speaking skills ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), and increased confidence ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) also scored highly. Standard deviations were relatively low, reflecting consistent responses, though the preference for teacher feedback highlights a potential area for balancing peer and instructor roles in future activities.