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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PEER FEEDBACK IN THE WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WRITERS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative-phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights encountered by the junior high school writers in the Division of Davao de Oro when it comes to peer feedback in improving their writing skills. The study was hinged from the information- processing perspective of feedback espoused by Kulhavy and Stock (1989). This study utilized phenomenological approach with 14 participants who were selected using purposive sampling. Data was gathered through focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview (IDI). The results show that the following are their experiences: receiving positive feedback; giving adequate feedback to peers; changing writing behavior after peer feedback; being shy to ask for help from peers; having difficulty in accepting feedback; and building a sese of trust with peers. The ways of coping of the participants were manifested in different forms: seeking clarification and support; managing negative reactions; adapting feedback to personal writing style; and doing extensive study to improve one's writing. The insights of the participants were also shown in various shapes: peer feedback as a learning tool; peer feedback can be disadvantageous; continue effective peer feedback practice; continue to be open and receptive; and encourage collaborative growth. Reflecting on these results, the study implied that peer feedback is a vital complementary tool for growth of struggling writers. However, it should be coupled with the expert guidance of teachers for peer feedback to be optimally effective; it should not be implemented in isolation. Results also implied that further studies can be conducted to explore the factors and effects of peer feedback among all writers in general.

KEYWORDS: *Peer Feedback, Writing Skill Development, Junior High School Writers, Qualitative Phenomenological Research, Thematic Analysis, Province Of Davao De Oro*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the skills that every student is required to possess, as it is the point of culmination when all the language macro skills are successfully mastered and refined by a learner. However, developing one's writing skills is no easy task, and undergoing such process requires a tremendous amount of time, effort, and guidance (Candelaria, 2023). This phenomenon is one of the major problems that teachers in my school, including myself, have noticed. As cited in Ramos and Rodriguez (2021) in conjunction to Wu and Schunn (2021), many students were stated to possess subpar writing skills and it was discussed that providing adequate guidance and quality feedback to the ballooning population of these students have become a major burden for public school teachers in the English department in schools, notwithstanding the fact that there are too many students to guide and there are only too few teachers that can give guidance and quality feedback to these students. Issues regarding student feedback have also been a subject of scrutiny in various recent literature globally.

In a Southeast Asian context such as Thailand, students and teachers were asked about their beliefs on writing corrective feedback (WCF). Many students and teachers believed that students would be disheartened whenever everything in their written outputs were marked with errors, and it only shows that providing quality feedback is a technical and critical process which could make or unmake the development of the writing skills of the learners. This further implies that providing feedback should take into consideration the affective side and the sensibilities of the learners, while staying objective about the feedback being given (Hopper & Bowen, 2023). In an English as a foreign language (EFL) university in China, students unveiled the negative aspects of feedback that must be addressed adequately to avoid the hampering of their writing skills development, social relationships, and learning emotions. These are the provision of low-quality feedback with lack of specification, unclear feedback criteria, and unclosed loop. Other concerns were also raised about the giving of inconsistent feedback as well as feedback being a one-way type of communication (Yu et al., 2021). In Netherlands, it was revealed and claimed that students may still struggle despite having peer

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feedback that is coupled with appropriate instructional strategies, as students have to engage in deep cognitive thinking skills during the process of peer feedback, which leads students to be less successful or even unsuccessful in improving their writing performance (Noroozi et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, college students in the campuses of Caloocan responded in a study that student feedback by teachers could become a troublesome process, given the overwhelming class size and the number of students who truly need proper guidance and feedback on their writing. It was mentioned in the study that the process of giving feedback can be uninteresting and inefficient for teachers who have to check voluminous written outputs, while keeping in mind to maintain the quality of the dispensed feedback for the development of the writing skills of the learners. Thus, it was believed that the feedback given by teachers is an aspect that is undeniably indispensable in English classes, and peer feedback can be used as a supplementary action to eradicate concerns about the adequacy of writing feedback received by the students (Lumabi, 2019).

In the Division of Davao de Oro, particularly in a secondary school in Maco North District, there was a need to recruit a new breed of journalists, since some of the campus journalists were already graduated. These aspirant writers still struggle in the composition of articles and still need writing practice and guidance not just from the coach but also, from the experienced journalists who have participated in several press conferences in the division, region, and national level. Many writers in junior high school were also found to be needing adequate guidance and quality feedback in their written outputs, which poses a major issue for English teachers and merits urgent research attention.

Numerous studies have been conducted about the struggles of writers when it comes to writing compositions and the role of feedback in these processes. Previous studies showed that struggling writers have experienced improvements after they received peer feedback which is much more accessible and easier to bear compared to teacher feedback (Ali, 2023; He & Gao, 2023; Lu et al., 2023). However, there are no relevant studies yet on the role of peer feedback in writing in the local context specifically, among the struggling junior high school writers and their lived experiences. There is yet a study to be introduced on the intricate documentation of the process on how peer feedback affects the writing skills of students, since previous studies nationally and internationally only focused on college students and the broad discussion of teacher and peer feedback in the context of students' writing endeavors.

Therefore, this study is considered novel and urgent, since it addresses a critical gap in the development of essential writing skills among struggling writers. Writing is a fundamental tool for academic success and effective communication, yet many junior high school writers face difficulties in expressing their ideas clearly and coherently. Peer feedback offers a potentially powerful, collaborative learning approach that can boost writers' confidence, promote self-awareness, and foster improvements in writing through constructive critique. As traditional teacher-led methods may not always provide sufficient individualized attention, exploring the impact of peer feedback is crucial to developing more effective instructional strategies that support struggling writers in their academic journeys. This research is anticipated to pave way in applying innovative pedagogical approaches in the classroom with peer feedback as its centerpiece that could empower learners to become more competent and confident writers, ultimately enhancing their writing skills in English.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights encountered by the junior high school writers in the Division of Davao de Oro when it comes to peer feedback in improving their writing skills. Specifically, it attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of struggling junior high school writers in the role of peer feedback on their writing skills?
2. How do struggling junior high school writers cope with the challenges they encountered on peer feedback's role in their writing skills?
3. What are the insights of struggling junior high school writers on the role of peer feedback in their writing skills that can be shared with others?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Nature and Definition of Writing Skills. Writing skills are defined as the activity of delivering messages through written language. In education, particularly in elementary school, writing is the final language skill to master, following listening, speaking, and reading, and is often the most challenging for students (Nuraeni et al., 2021). Moreover, this skill is defined as a creative and conscious outflow of ideas, reflecting mental ingenuity. It encompasses various types and genres, requiring advanced skills for effective communication, and is pivotal for academic and professional success, emphasizing the importance of audience and context (Gautam, 2019).

For Lubis (2022), writing skills are nonverbal communication tools involving composing narratives. They require a process of thinking and imagining to effectively convey meaning to readers, highlighting the importance of creativity and the ability to connect ideas in writing. Meanwhile, Garba (2022) described writing as to the ability to express thoughts and ideas through transcription. It is a complex skill requiring continuous training and practice, essential for effective communication and mastery in various educational contexts.

Certainly, writing is an opportunity to express one's ideas with the purpose of informing, persuading and entertaining the readers. It is undeniable that writing is an important productive skill which the students need to develop and master. In the context of English writing, this specific skill becomes instrumental in acquiring knowledge and sustaining communication (Aliyu, 2020).

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Challenges in Writing Skills among Learners. Recent literature pointed out the various afflictions of students regarding their efforts to improve their writing skills in terms of grammar, organization, mechanics, and structure. In terms of grammar, it is reported in one study that many students struggle with it, which limits their ability to write a piece of writing. They frequently struggle with grammar and make grammatical errors that weaken the content of essays (Hasanuddin et al., 2019). In a study, learners face challenges in understanding complex syntactic structures, such as qualifiers and adjuncts, despite grasping subject-verb agreement (Samarah & Nur Rasyidah, 2024).

In agreement to this idea, the study of Baguilat (2024) also mentioned that students in a junior high school in rural areas tend to commit writing errors, significantly showing their difficulties in writing different texts, including portfolios. In terms of mechanical aspects, the portfolios written by junior high school students showed fewer errors. However, there is an alarming extent of errors found in the same written outputs by the students, particularly in the proper use of verb tenses. Thus, it is accentuated that strategies in instruction must be realized, targeting the specific written errors commonly manifested by the students to reverse this problem.

Indeed, it is no less difficult and complicated to teach this one to the students. It was claimed by Solhi and Eginli (2020) that learning writing as a second language can be more troublesome compared to other language skills among learners. Writing taps different thinking strategies and ignites various background information about the culture, requiring teachers to teach numerous components to the students beforehand.

Role of Feedback in Addressing Struggling Writers. The role of feedback in addressing the struggles of student writers should not be understated. For instance, Dhanya and Alamelu (2019) conducted a study about factors influencing students' writing skills. The results were some key ingredients that were considered to enable students to write well. One of the results was positive feedback. It has been acknowledged that feedback is crucial for improving students' writing skills since it enables them to determine their areas of weakness and offers advice on how to do so. Without receiving any feedback, students would not know how to get better at writing, and their skills might slow down.

In consonance, students can use feedback to identify patterns in their writing and fix areas of difficulty. For instance, if a student repeatedly has trouble with paragraph transitions, they may use feedback to pinpoint this weakness and focus on strengthening it. Feedback may also inspire students to keep improving their writing skills and can make them feel more confident about their potential (Ali, 2023).

Peer feedback is frequently implemented with academic writing tasks in higher education. However, a quantitative synthesis is still lacking for the impact that peer feedback has on students' writing performance. The current study conveyed two types of observations. First, regarding the impact of peer feedback on writing performance, this study synthesized the results of 24 quantitative studies reporting on higher education students' academic writing performance after peer feedback. The nature of peer feedback significantly moderated the impact that peer feedback had on students' writing improvement, whereas only a theoretically plausible, though non-significant moderating pattern was found for the number of peers that students engaged with. Second, this study shows that the number of well-controlled studies into the effects of peer feedback on writing is still low, indicating the need for more quantitative, methodologically sound research in this field (Huisman et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore and lived experiences of the junior high school writers in terms of the role of peer feedback in their writing. Creswell (2019) and Ravitch and Carl (2020) described qualitative research as an endeavor of understanding how groups of people interpret their world through their experiences and the essence they attach to these experiences. Also, phenomenology, as a tradition of qualitative research, seeks clarification on how humans conceptualize their experiences in this plane of existence, seeking understanding from humanity's complex structures of consciousness. In other words, phenomenology entails the study on how a particular group of people experience a specific phenomenon, imparting invaluable information about the same group of people and the phenomenon, contributing to the comprehensive understanding of their lives as sentient beings (Creswell, 2019; Delmas & Giles, 2023).

Research Participants

The struggling junior high school writers in the public schools of Maco North District in the Division of Davao de Oro were the participants of this research. In selecting my participants, purposive sampling was conducted in which I recruited my participants based on a set of criteria that best represents what participants this study needs and what qualities of the participants are best in terms of their ability to provide rich, meaningful, and relevant research data. In support, Guetterman (2015) recommended that five to 25 participants are enough to pursue a qualitative research study. For this study, 14 participants were selected, which were divided equally for in-depth interviews and focus group discussion.

Thus, I identified and selected each participant using the following criteria: (a) must be junior high school students; (b) must be identified as a struggling writer from the identified public schools in Maco North District; (c) must receive corrective peer feedback sessions for at least three times; (d) must be endorsed by the writing coaches in campus journalism; and (e) must have the willingness to participate in the conduct of the study. According to Fearn and Farnan (2008), struggling writers are defined to be those writers who are deficient in both the skill and knowledge in writing, hesitant to engage in the writing process,

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and doubtful about their competence in writing. At the textual level, struggling writers, compared to the skilled writers, produce shorter texts that are poorly organized and weaker in quality (Saddler & Graham, 2007; Liberty & Conderman, 2018). At the sentential level, struggling writers construct shorter and simpler sentences in terms of syntax and word choice (Saddler et al., 2008). In this study, struggling writers refer to those learners who initially had immense difficulty in writing compositions for different topics. As to the exclusion criteria, students or writers from private schools were excluded from this research.

Data Collection Procedures

1. Prior to the conduct of this research study, the protocol was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for review.
2. Then, the REC will issue a certificate to conduct a study.
3. An endorsement is secured from the Dean of the Graduate School and that of Department of Education (DepEd).
4. The permission to conduct a study was obtained from the School Head/Principal.
5. A copy of the PICF/IAF was given to the prospective/identified participants for them to read. If they have questions in mind, they can ask those questions after the requisite consent form is explained to the participants during orientation. When all questions were satisfactorily answered, consent (i.e., by signing the PICF/IAF) was given.
6. The one-time interviews were scheduled and arranged for the convenience of the students; they were not disturbed in their class hours. Preferences of the participants were highly regarded, especially regarding the schedule and venue of the interviews.
7. The participants were notified beforehand that the interviews would be voice recorded; their consent to be voice recorded was sought first before the start of the interview, which spanned between 30 minutes to one hour.
8. Personal information was asked for the purpose of participant profiling; data pertaining to the identity of the participants was kept confidential upon the presentation of the findings of the study.
9. During the interviews, interview questions validated by the panel of experts were employed; this only covered the experiences of participants regarding peer feedback in writing.
10. After the interview, interview data was transcribed. Later, participants were asked to verify the truthfulness of their transcribed responses from the interviews. Once they attested to the truthfulness of the same, they were asked to sign the member checking certification.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to generate the themes from the interviews of the participants. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested a six-phase process in doing a thematic analysis. The first step is to become familiar with the data, while the second one is to generate initial codes. The third phase is to search for themes, and once themes are found, one can already proceed to the fourth step which is to review the generated themes. The last two phases involve the assigning of definition of each theme and finally performing the write-up to report all the gathered emerging themes from the rigorous process of analyzing the qualitative research process.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness in qualitative research articulates the necessary evidence that the findings of a qualitative work is of adequate significance, truthfulness, and substance. Four strategies such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability from the work of Shenton (2004) were adopted in this paper. Moreover, the study underwent a review facilitated by the SMCTI-REC prior to its implementation. In consonance, the study also used the ten elements of ethical research as outlined by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board [PHREB] (2017). This includes the following tenets: social value; informed consent; vulnerability of the participants; risk, benefits safety; data privacy and confidentiality; justice; transparency; qualification of the researcher; adequacy of facilities; and community involvement. The measures were put in place to ensure quality outcomes of any research endeavor, while maintaining the safety and well-being of the junior high school writers who were also the participants of this study.

RESULTS

Experiences of Struggling Junior High School Writers in the Role of Peer Feedback on their Writing Skills. The first section of the results discusses the notable experiences of the struggling junior high school writers in the role of peer feedback on improving their writing skills. This is summarized in the table below.

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Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Struggling Junior High School Writers in the Role of Peer Feedback on their Writing Skills

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Receiving Positive Feedback	• receiving positive feedback from one's peers who are also writers which boosts motivation • preferring to receive honest and negative feedback as it helps one to be enlightened on what to improve in one's writing • receiving compliments because of one's continuous progress in writing • using peer feedback as a platform to improve oneself in writing articles and to be the best • receiving helpful feedback from one's senior peers since they offer a wide variety of ideas and tips that they generously give to their juniors • receiving peer feedback from seniors which paved the way for improving one's skill as a layout artist • seeing the advantage of being able to compare one's work to that of the classmates who also offer suggestions for improvement
Giving Adequate Feedback to Peers	• having a senior writer who teaches and scaffolds the juniors with regards the standard structure and techniques in writing • giving general comments in terms of grammar and writing skills whether it is understood by readers or not • immediately giving feedback to peers even before they ask • occasionally giving pieces of advice in a nice manner where they learn from their mistakes • exchanging honest yet constructive opinions about each other's write-ups • seeing seniors point out points of improvement in terms of the structure and techniques in one's writing • seeing approachable peers give sensible feedback in a nice tone that does not sound offensive
Changes in the Writing Behavior after Peer Feedback	• applying the inputs every time one receives negative feedback • immediately incorporating the suggestions of one's peers in terms of grammar • internalizing in one's mind all the received feedback such as the positive ones • feeling happy for seeing improvements in one's writing and receiving positive feedback in return • getting happy for being complimented in one's improvements • getting happy and more motivated to intensify one's practice every time one receives positive feedback • revising one's writing every time there is feedback about it
Being Shy to Ask Help from Peers	• getting nervous and worried because one's peers might possibly give negative feedback about the written article • having difficulty in reaching out to others because of being introverted • having a personal preference of not letting other people read one's article except for a select few because of too high expectations in one's writing • not sharing everything that there is in one's writing resulting to receiving only limited feedback • having second thoughts of consulting one's peers because of their busy schedule and fear of being judged over one's written article • feeling intimidated to approach one's peers because of the wealth of their experiences compared to one who is still a struggling neophyte • being shy to approach one's peers in radio broadcasting except in gatherings because of the fear of being judged
Having Difficulty in Accepting Feedback	• getting upset because of one's grammar and credibility of one's article being questioned by one's peers • getting a feeling that one is being criticized and underestimated because of the feedback one receives from one's peers

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	• getting embarrassed because of the feedback received which is just meant for one's improvement all along • becoming frustrated because of committing mistakes repeatedly • feeling disappointed in oneself because one's squeezed ideas were still not enough for one's peers • Getting upset which latter changes to a realization that it is meant for one's improvements • getting offended because of their inputs which later on change to understanding the purpose of one's peers in doing so
Building a Sense of Trust with Peers	• preferring to receive comments from, connect with, and apply the suggestions of one's peers than that of the coach • feeling comfortable with one's approachable friends because of the strictness of the coach • not feeling embarrassed to close friends who also happened to be one's fellow writers in contrast to one's coach • seeing that peer feedback guides one on what to do next and boosts one's motivation as well • realizing that it is more okay to talk openly to one's friends because they can offer new ideas

Receiving Positive Feedback

The participants generally reported that they frequently received positive feedback from their peers. Consequently, this one boosts the motivation of the junior high school writers to improve in their crafts. The writers particularly noted that they received positive peer feedback from their seniors and classmates, which greatly improved their writing style and accuracy.

> *"Ang positive experiences ko po ay iyong nakakatanggap ako nang positive feedback nga galing mga peer writers. Kasi mas nagaganahan ako po nga magsulat kapag nakakatanggap ng po ako ng mga positive comments."* (IDI-03)
> (My positive experiences are when I receive good feedback from my peer writers. It really motivates me to write more whenever I get positive comments.)

Giving Adequate Feedback to Peers

In the peer feedback mechanism among junior high school writers, giving adequate feedback to one's peers is within expectations. As per the responses of the participants, senior writers tend to scaffold and guide their juniors in enhancing their writing skills through the use of peer feedback. The participants shared that as per their practice, they generally provide feedback in various aspects such as the standard structure, techniques, grammar, and readability of the produced write-ups. This practice encourages the participants to learn from their mistakes and improve their skills in the process.

> *"Usually ginagive nako sila and sila po nanghihingi ng feedback sa akin kay usually dili kaayo ko ga engage ug gawait lang ko nga ingnan ug unsay paminaw nako sa ilaha sulat. Naga-give nalang pud ko ug feedback."* (IDI-06)
> (Usually, I give them feedback when they ask me for it, since I do not really engage much. I just wait for them to ask what I think about their work, and then I give my feedback.)

Changes in the Writing Behavior after Peer Feedback

As a result of peer feedback sessions, participants observed changes in their writing behavior and style. The participants collectively agreed that they put into heart and mind all the input that they received from the feedback of their peers. By incorporating such feedback, junior high school writers started to see improvements in the way they craft their write-ups. The compliments they received as a result of their improvements made the participants happy and motivated to intensify their efforts to practice writing.

> *"Every time I receive feedback po Ma'am is I make somehow to put it in my own and try always to mabuhatan nako ug way nga maokay tung feedback nga negative gihatag."* (IDI-02)
> (Every time I receive feedback, I try to put it into my own writing and always find a way to turn even the negative feedback into something better.)

Being Shy to Ask Help from Peers

Since peer feedback requires a group effort, the participants admitted that they had reservations and second thoughts in asking for help from their peers with regards to their efforts to enhance their writing skills. Generally, the participants expressed that they were shy and nervous to tap the help of their peers out of fear of receiving negative feedback and judgments in return. Some participants also reasoned out that they were shy to reach out to their peers because of their peers' busy schedules, and they did not want to add more burden to their peers.

> *"Pressure ko and makulbaan ko kay mahadlok ko unsa ilaha iingon basin pangit akoa article kay kanang dili jud ko confident sa akoa article nga gihatag sa ilaha. Everytime nga magpasa ko, magduha-duha ko ug pasa*

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basin kanang dili satisfied ug idouble check akoa mga article. But, at least ma-improve pa nako before mapasa sa ilaha." (IDI-01)
(I feel pressured and nervous because I am afraid of what they might say, especially if my article turns out to be weak. I am not always confident with the outputs I submit, so every time I pass my article, I hesitate and double-check it first, worried that they might not be satisfied. But I remind myself that through their comments, I can still improve my work before submitting it to them.)

Having Difficulty in Accepting Feedback

Giving feedback entails both positive and negative facets. For the participants, they jointly bared that there were instances when taking in negative feedback was challenging for them. The participants felt negative emotions such as self-doubts, embarrassment, and frustrations upon receiving honest criticisms about their written outputs. Some participants mentioned that they felt underestimated, judged, or inadequate after receiving certain feedback from their peers. Meanwhile, there were others who noted that they became upset, at first, and realized that it was all meant for their improvement later.

"Nakatry ko ana sauna nga panan-aw nako sa feedbacks nila is they are pointing out sa akoa mali. So, I think gicritize nila akoa or ginalook underestimate akoa writing. Ana akoa mindset and lisod ko mo-approach sa ilaha or moduol because of that mindset nga dili good." (FGD-02)
(I experienced this before when I used to think that the feedback I received was only focused on my mistakes. Because of that mindset, I felt as if they were criticizing me personally or underestimating my writing. This way of thinking made it difficult for me to approach them or seek their help, since I saw their feedback in a negative light.)

Building a Sense of Trust with Peers

From the lens of the participants' take, the participants felt a deep sense of trust with their peers in providing them feedback. For some of the participants, they revealed that they were more confident and comfortable to receive feedback from their peers rather than their teachers and coaches. This one is due to the fact that they viewed their friends as approachable while they held impressions toward the coaches as strict. This notion explains the greater openness and trust of the junior high school writers to receive comments and criticisms from their peers than their teachers.

"Narealize jud nako, Ma'am, nga mas okay jud nga open ug makig-talk jud ko sa ilaha, Ma'am, ba kay naay idea gikan sa uban." (FGD-03)
(I really realized, Ma'am, that it is better to be open and talk with them because you can get ideas from others.)

Coping Mechanisms of Struggling Junior High School Writers as they Encountered the Challenges on Peer Feedback's Role on Their Writing Skills. The second section of the results discusses the distinguishable coping strategies of the struggling junior high school writers in terms of the challenges they faced on the role of peer feedback in improving their writing skills. The results in this section were summarized in the table below.

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms of Struggling Junior High School Writers as they Encountered the Challenges on Peer Feedback's Role in Their Writing Skills

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Seeking Clarification and Support	• mustering courage to seek assistance from one's seniors to improve oneself • resisting shyness by asking information from one's peers to improve oneself albeit being an introvert • asking for help to avoid getting stagnant and avoid the impression from others that one does not need help • writing and peer reviewing articles together • reaching out to a National Schools Press Conference qualifier for additional substantial inputs • asking help from peers if one has difficulty and confusions • seeking help of one's peers to untangle ambiguity in one's writing • seeking one's peer's feedback to improve more • having one's outputs checked by one's peers despite their busy schedule • being open to inputs and opinions since joining journalism
Managing Negative Reactions	• staying open-minded to all given comments and suggestions and using it as motivation not to get discouraged • using negative feedback as a motivation to pass another output • treating feedback as a motivation knowing that one still has a lot to learn • taking feedback in a constructive manner

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	• staying open-minded knowing that the given feedback is intended to improve one's writing • training oneself to treat feedback as a form of guidance for one's writing • listening to one's seniors knowing that they have a wealth of experience that can better one's article • being open and listening without interrupting to encourage reflection on one's received feedback
Adapting Feedback to Personal Writing Style	• applying one's peer advice to anchor one's editorial claims to facts instead of opinions • incorporating techniques to expedite collaborative desktop publishing taught by one's peers • showing one's article to seek opinions and apply the given suggestions afterwards • writing an article for checking whether the feedback was correctly addressed or not • showing one's peers that their feedback is fully incorporated in one's writing • attempting to apply the feedback of one's peers to one's written article
Doing Extensive Study to Improve One's Writing	• thinking always that one has to do more and improve more by getting all information for one's events by all means • being motivated to search and study on what to do to improve one's writing • searching tutorials in YouTube to figure out a difficult suggestion given • searching for ways to capture better pictures for one's entries

Seeking Clarification and Support

In facing the challenges related to peer feedback, the participants were unanimous in their way of coping, which was to ask for clarification and seek support from their peers or seniors to improve their writing skills. Despite the barriers that inhibit participants from reaching out to their peers, particularly seniors, such as being shy and recognizing their peers' busy schedules, the participants still muster courage to do so to untangle confusions in journalistic writing and ask useful inputs to improve one's work.

> *"Siguro reaching out kay kung magstay lang ka dili ka makareach ug people nga need nimo. Tapos, daghan man gud mo nga writer nga kung ikaw naghilom lang ka, feeling nilang okay lang ka."* (IDI-05)
> (I think reaching out is important because if you just stay quiet, you will not be able to connect with the people you need. Also, there are many writers who, if you remain silent, might assume that you are okay and do not need help.)

Managing Negative Reactions

Since feedback entails criticisms which may talk about the negative aspects of the write-ups written by the participants, they learned from their experiences to manage negative reactions effectively. Instead of viewing negative criticisms in the written outputs in a bad light, the participants showed progress by treating it as a constructive tool to motivate them to be better writers and to work more diligently on their weaknesses as student journalists. From the interviews, it can be gleaned that the participants manifested open-mindedness, indicating that they knew that feedback, especially from their seniors, can guide them on the right path.

> *"I will stay open minded po nga katong gihatag niya nga feedback is for my own writing."* (FGD-01)
> (I will remain open-minded, knowing that the feedback given to me is meant to help improve my own writing.)

Adapting Feedback to Personal Writing Style

As part of the progress shown or manifested, the participants typically adapt and incorporate the inputs they received from their peers. Interviews with the participants unveiled that the participants tend to follow the pieces of advice and comments made by their peers, incorporating such in their respective write-ups. In this regard, learning and writing skills development happens as the participants maintained openness in revising their writing style in accordance with the constructive suggestions and inputs made by their peers.

> *"Ginapakita nako sa ilaha, Ma'am, nga akoa jud gina-apply ang ilaha feedbacks."* (FGD-04)
> (I make it a point to show them that I truly apply the feedback they give me.)

Doing Extensive Study to Improve One's Writing

As part of the growth and journey of the junior high school writers, the participants shared that they extend extra efforts to improve their writing by doing extensive studies on how they can write better and properly. The participants opened in interviews that they gathered information related to their journalistic writing which could add knowledge into their repertoire of skills. Some participants even claimed that they search online and from other people to become better in their respective crafts and journalistic events.

> *"I always think po nga kailangan nako ni buhaton so that I can improve more and I can do more para dili kaayo ulaw po nga nag-enter nako ani dapat buhaton nako tanan by getting information para sa akoa event."* (IDI-01)
> (I always remind myself that I need to do this so I can improve more and do better. Since I already entered this

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field, I should give my best by making sure I gather enough information to prepare for my event and lessen my shyness.)

Insights of Struggling Junior High School Writers on the Role of Peer Feedback in their Writing Skills that Can Be Shared with Others. The third section of the results discusses the recognizable insights of the struggling junior high school writers in terms of the role of peer feedback in improving their writing skills. These insights were clustered and presented in the form of themes below.

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Struggling Junior High School Writers on the Role of Peer Feedback in Their Writing Skills that can Be Shared with Others

Themes	Core Ideas
Peer Feedback as a Learning Tool	• broaden knowledge as well as linguistic and social skills of writers • learn a great deal from one's friends' feedback • encourage notetaking and reflection of lessons taken from peer feedback • allow awareness of one's errors and double-checking of outputs through the help of fellow writers • permit growth, improvement, and motivation in writing through the noted comments • help in the betterment of one's writing through the study of one's received feedback • recognize that one has improved over time through the help of feedback • allow the transfer of ideas into another's article through the given opinions on one's writing • enable one to improve the design of pages by benchmarking ideas from others
Disadvantages of Peer Feedback	• experience contradicting feedback from one's peers • receive wrong feedback from one's peers • obtain negative comments that make one feel bad • receive wrong feedback from one's lose friend • refuse to follow wrong feedback from one's peers • feel down and upset because of receiving negative feedback • deliver feedback in a manner that hurt other people's feelings • provide feedback that are unrelated and too personal in one's writing
Recommendations for Effective Peer Feedback Practice	• do not be shy to engage with fellow writers for one's improvement • dedicate enough time for group study work to encourage exchange of ideas • assess and do fact checking on the feedback given by peers • check the credibility and expertise of the persons giving peer feedback • seek feedback from multiple people and apply such to one's writing • provide feedback not in a destructive manner but in a constructive one • discern whether the feedback given is correct or incorrect • be down to earth when giving certain feedback to peers
Encouragement to be Open and Receptive	• do not be discouraged and seek improvement from the given pieces of advice • be more motivated to work on negative and then positive comments • be a listener such that one does not take every comment personally • be open to both positive and negative feedback to improve one's writing • be open-minded and prepare for peer feedback when one enters campus journalism • use peer-feedback open-mindedly as a tool for guidance • be open-minded in receiving feedback to avoid getting upset and to improve
Encouragement of Collaborative Growth	• find new friends through open peer feedback • surround oneself with brilliant people to improve oneself • bond with other people who are focused and passionate in writing • learn teamwork and open-mindedness in group events such as collaborative desktop publishing • learn to rely on others to help one grow • not to be too independent because one can rely on one's team • not to be shy to approach a fellow journalist and seek their feedback as a motivation

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Peer Feedback can be Learning Tool

While sharing their reflections during the interviews, the participants noted that they regard peer feedback as an effective tool for learning. For the participants, they treat peer feedback as a platform to learn more about the broad scope of writing as a skill, and it allowed them to identify and examine their writing errors. Many participants agreed on the idea that peer feedback certainly helped them improve their writing, as it encourages growth, motivation, and improvement.

> *"Mas gumaling at nag-improve ako sa pagsusulat. Nakatulong ang peer feedback upang malaman ko na mas magaling pala ako ngayon at ang improvement ko compared dati."* (IDI-07)
> (I became better and improved in writing. Peer feedback helped me a lot because it made me realize that I am now better compared to before, and I was also able to clearly see my improvement.)

Disadvantages of Peer Feedback

While peer feedback is considered a tool for learning, certain limitations of this tool should also be kept in mind. The participants critically claimed that peer feedback, like any other strategies for writing skills development, has its fair share of merits and demerits. The participants recounted that it has disadvantages such as encountering contradicting feedback from one's peers; receiving wrong, confusing, irrelevant or counterproductive peer feedback; and dealing with hurtful comments from one's peers.

> *"Sa limitation po, Ma'am, is kung ang the way pag peer feedback is makasakit and personal na nga dili na sa article siguro, Ma'am."* (FGD-01)
> (As for the limitations, if the way peer feedback is given is hurtful and personal rather than focused on the article itself, that can be a problem.)

Recommendations for Effective Peer Feedback Practice

To maximize the effectiveness of peer feedback in enhancing the writing skills development of the participants, they openly shared some recommendations which are important points to ponder. The participants suggested that more time should be allocated for peer feedback sessions to encourage a more productive exchange of ideas among peers. It was also suggested that the participants should be more confident in seeking feedback, and peer feedback should center more on a culture that is constructive by nature. Credibility of the feedback and the people giving such must also be revisited to ensure quality peer feedback and learning experience.

> *"Kanang dapat tama lang ang pagstorya ug kanang dili ingon nga hawd na kaayo sila sa ilaha paminaw kay nagtahatag sila ug advice nga taas na kaayo sila sa."* (FGD-06)
> (Feedback should be given correctly and respectfully, without sounding too arrogant, since they are only offering advice based on their experience.)

Encouragement to be Open and Receptive

Openness to suggestions and corrections is a key to ensure effective peer feedback practice. This one is the common insight given by the participants while the interviews were ongoing. The participants relayed the message that improvement only comes after one opens himself or herself to both positive and negative criticisms. As such, it was relayed that the ability to listen to feedback without getting hurt or offended is vital in the overall success of peer feedback sessions. Hence, true learning can only be achieved, if junior high school writers are perceptive and receptive enough to suggestions and corrections in their written outputs.

> *"If makadawat ug feedback, be open-minded para dili masakitan and apply the feedback. Makatabang jud ang peer feedback nga ma-improve and naay mabag-o sa imoha pagsulat."* (FGD-05)
> (If you receive feedback, be open-minded so you will not get hurt and instead apply it. Peer feedback is really helpful because it allows you to improve and make changes in your writing.)

Encouragement of Collaborative Growth

Peer feedback sessions are not only a platform for technical assistance, but they are also a vehicle to encourage collaborative growth among peers through friendship, camaraderie and shared passion for writing. For the participants, peer feedback encourages them to make new friends whom they shared with the undivided and attention and passion for writing. It is a means to find brilliant people whom they can treat as a model or inspiration to strive to become better writers. Thus, the participants claimed that growing in writing is much more productive and meaningful if junior high school writers engage in writing in unison with their peers.

> *"Dili maulaw mag-approach sa kapwa journalist kay mao na makatabang sa imoha ug itake nimo ang mga feedback as motivations."* (FGD-04)
> (Do not be afraid to approach fellow journalists because that is what can help you, and take their feedback as motivation.)

DISCUSSION

Experiences of Struggling Junior High School Writers in the Role of Peer Feedback on their Writing Skills. The experiences of struggling junior high school writers reveal that peer feedback plays a multifaceted role in shaping their writing development, influencing both motivation and behavior. Participants commonly experienced receiving positive feedback, which boosted their confidence, persistence, and motivation to improve their campus journalism writing. This aligns with research showing that positive feedback enhances self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and engagement, reinforcing learners' willingness to revise and persevere in challenging writing tasks (Park et al., 2024; Stavropolou et al., 2025; Martinez et al., 2024; Hwang, 2025).

Additionally, participants actively engaged in giving feedback to peers, particularly guided by more experienced senior writers,

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which strengthened their awareness of writing conventions such as structure, grammar, and readability. Studies confirm that providing peer feedback deepens cognitive engagement, builds feedback literacy, and improves students' own writing performance by helping them internalize evaluative criteria and apply them in revision (Wu et al., 2022; Carless, 2022; Weng et al., 2024; Cheng & Zhang, 2024; Suaib et al., 2025; Nurkhamidah et al., 2024). These reciprocal feedback experiences contributed to noticeable changes in writing behavior, including increased motivation, reflective revision practices, and improved accuracy and organization, as documented in both secondary and EFL contexts (Wu & Schunn, 2021; Sholikah & Kusworo, 2025; Cen & Zheng, 2024; Hao & Razali, 2022; Kerman et al., 2024; Abo et al., 2025).

At the same time, participants reported challenges that complicated their peer feedback experiences, particularly shyness in seeking help, difficulty accepting criticism, and emotional discomfort when receiving negative feedback. Research on academic help-seeking and social-emotional learning explains that fear of negative evaluation, shyness, and social anxiety often inhibit students from requesting peer assistance, even when such support could enhance learning outcomes (Li et al., 2023; Black & Allen, 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2023; Sana et al., 2025).

Similarly, studies on affective responses to feedback show that critical comments can trigger embarrassment, frustration, and self-doubt, which may reduce feedback uptake unless learners can regulate emotions and reframe criticism as constructive (Lipnevich et al., 2025; Zhan et al., 2025; Nakata et al., 2025; Akolgo et al., 2025; Selvaraj & Azman, 2020). Despite these challenges, participants emphasized the importance of building trust with peers, noting that feedback from classmates felt less intimidating and more approachable than feedback from strict coaches or teachers. This perception is supported by research indicating that peer feedback environments foster psychological safety, relational equality, and trust, making students more open to dialogue and reflection when feedback comes from familiar peers within supportive and well-structured frameworks (Al-Khresheh et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2022; Biton, 2025; Senden et al., 2023; Lerchenfeldt et al., 2023; Senden & Coertjens, 2024).

Coping Strategies Struggling Junior High School Writers with the Challenges they Encountered on Peer Feedback's Role on Their Writing Skills. The coping strategies of struggling junior high school writers reveal how learners actively respond to the challenges of peer feedback to sustain their writing development. One prominent strategy involved seeking clarification and support from peers to resolve confusion and better understand feedback, despite barriers such as shyness. Research consistently shows that dialogic peer feedback—where students ask questions, negotiate meaning, and clarify comments—leads to more accurate interpretation and effective use of feedback in revision (Little et al., 2025; Nurkhamidah et al., 2024; Ardill, 2025).

Studies further indicate that clarification exchanges enhance coherence, accuracy, and confidence, while reducing frustration and emotional uncertainty during revision (Cahusac de Caux & Pretorius, 2024; Phillips, 2023; Parmar et al., 2025). In addition, participants learned to manage negative reactions by reframing critical comments as constructive rather than personal attacks, reflecting adaptive emotional regulation. This coping behavior aligns with research showing that students who perceive feedback as useful and adopt growth-oriented mindsets respond more productively to criticism, maintaining motivation and engaging in meaningful revision (Yang et al., 2023; Yeager & Dweck, 2020; Ji-Yoon Jin et al., 2025).

Another key coping strategy involved adapting peer feedback to personal writing style and engaging in extensive self-directed study to improve journalistic writing skills. Participants demonstrated openness by selectively integrating peer suggestions into their revisions while maintaining their own voice, a process supported by studies showing that peer feedback enhances metacognitive engagement and helps writers transform external comments into personalized revision strategies (Shulgina et al., 2024; Annisa & Gusnawaty, 2024; Cui & Schunn, 2024).

Systematic reviews further confirm that peer review fosters self-regulated writing behaviors, enabling learners to internalize evaluative criteria and refine stylistic choices over time (Wei & Liu, 2024; Waluyo & Panmei, 2024). Beyond feedback sessions, participants coped by conducting extensive study and gathering information independently, reflecting strong self-directed learning tendencies. Empirical research demonstrates that self-directed learning, extensive reading, and proactive resource use significantly enhance writing performance, vocabulary development, coherence, and content depth (Maryam et al., 2025; Abate et al., 2025; Rui et al., 2024; Taye & Teshome, 2025; Alemu et al., 2023). Together, these coping strategies illustrate how struggling writers actively transform challenges in peer feedback into opportunities for cognitive, emotional, and stylistic growth.

Insights of Struggling Junior High School Writers on the Role of Peer Feedback in Their Writing Skills that Can Be Shared with Others. Peer feedback emerged as a valuable yet complex learning tool for struggling junior high school writers. Participants viewed peer feedback as instrumental in helping them identify errors, expand their understanding of writing conventions, and remain motivated to improve, a finding supported by studies showing gains in grammar, organization, coherence, and metacognitive awareness through peer review (Putriani et al., 2025; Gonzalez-Torres & Sarango, 2023; Mahmud, 2024). Beyond technical improvement, peer feedback promotes critical thinking, self-regulation, and deeper engagement with revision as learners assess text quality and apply feedback meaningfully (Hendrikz et al., 2025; Irgin & Bilki, 2024; Abot et al., 2024).

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However, participants also cautioned against its limitations, including confusing, contradictory, inaccurate, or emotionally hurtful comments. These concerns align with research noting that peer feedback may lack depth, reliability, or clarity when students are insufficiently trained, potentially leading to confusion, reduced trust, or negative emotional responses (Wei & Liu, 2024; Sizo et al., 2025; Akolgo et al., 2025; Abrejo et al., 2022; Sepehrinia & Torfi, 2024; Ahmed, 2021).

To address these challenges, participants emphasized practical recommendations such as allocating more time for feedback sessions, ensuring a constructive and respectful tone, and strengthening the credibility of peer comments. Empirical evidence supports the importance of extended feedback cycles, explicit instruction, and scaffolding to enhance feedback quality and student confidence (Cheng & Zhang, 2024; Hornstein et al., 2025; Nurkhamidah et al., 2024), as well as strategies such as guided prompts, rubrics, and balanced critique to foster trust and usefulness (Xuan et al., 2024; Machost & Stains, 2023; Camarata & Slieman, 2020).

Participants also stressed openness and receptivity as essential to benefiting from peer feedback, echoing research that links positive feedback attitudes and feedback literacy with greater uptake of comments, self-regulated learning, and writing improvement (Greisel et al., 2025; Kerman et al., 2023; Zhan et al., 2025; Carless & Young, 2023; Keller et al., 2025). Finally, peer feedback was seen as a catalyst for collaborative growth, fostering camaraderie, shared purpose, and motivation among writers—an outcome widely documented in studies highlighting the social, affective, and community-building benefits of collaborative peer feedback in writing instruction (Chen et al., 2023; Herwiana, 2021; Wonglakorn & Deerajviset, 2023; Nguyen, 2025; Ramadan Elbaioumi Shaddad & Jember, 2024; Moxie et al., 2025).

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This academic venture about the experiences of struggling junior high school writers as regards the role of peer feedback in their writing skill enhancement quest opens opportunities and lessons for different individuals and agencies to reflect upon. One thing that is surely affirmed by this paper is the vital role of peer feedback in enhancing the confidence, skills, and writing technicalities of junior high school writers, which is surely helpful for teachers, writers, school administrators, and esteemed officials in the Department of Education to address the declining literacy of learners in this country.

For teachers, the study introduces another effective strategy in teaching writing in the classrooms. Aside from strengthening the exposure, fundamentals, and technicalities of each student in writing, teachers may also devise meaningful and realistic peer feedback opportunities in the class to enhance the critical thinking skills, social skills, as well as the writing skills of the learners. These sessions must also be built around a culture that is constructive by nature, as the study revealed that peer feedback best operates when it is done for the purpose of improving, not disproving the written works of the students. Moreover, peer feedback as a strategy must also be complemented with other strategies in teaching writing, as peer feedback is not a one-size-fits-all approach into enhancing the writing skills of learners.

For writers, the study promotes peer feedback, as it lets beginning writers tap into the wealth of experiences and wisdom of their peers in journalistic writing. It gives them the opportunity to receive meaningful writing feedback and input much more easily, as compared to being tutored by teachers and coaches, since students can easily approach and ask the help of their peers. In a way, peer feedback also allows them to share their ideas and knowledge about writing, cultivating a shared understanding and passion for campus journalism within the school community. While these premises are true, the study also forewarns writers to still be vigilant about receiving feedback from their peers, emphasizing the importance of quality and credibility in the given feedback, genuineness of the intention of giving peer feedback, as well as the overall discerning eye on which feedback should be followed and which ones should be ignored.

For school administrators, it is high time to show a more intensified support to language teachers in promoting peer feedback practice among junior high school writers. School administrators may send more language teachers, most especially the campus journalism coaches, to various training that improve their skills to facilitate and conduct meaningful peer feedback sessions in writing. They may also show support on the initiatives of language teachers in school which center on peer feedback sessions and training for students to maximize the potential of peer feedback as a learning tool to enhance the writing skills of junior high school writers. This initiative can be done by facilitating approval of relevant activities and appropriating more funds and moral support to the junior high school writers who will compete in campus journalism press conferences.

For the officials in the Department of Education, the study highlights the critical role and potential of peer feedback in addressing concerns related to the declining writing skills of learners, especially in the context of journalistic writing. Given these findings, the officials may consider supporting programs and initiatives that promote peer feedback in enhancing the writing skills of students in schools. The officials may also devise plans to capacitate more language teachers in conducting meaningful peer feedback sessions in their respective class, maximizing the benefits that peer feedback can bring to the junior high school writers in public schools. As the study informs the policy on the importance of peer feedback, the officials may use this study as a basis and reference in strategizing on how to combat the declining writing skills in basic education.

The study also supports the three theoretical lenses of the study, namely: Kulhavy and Stock's (1989) information-processing perspective of feedback; Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning theory; and Graves' (1981) writing process approach.

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First, the information-processing perspective of feedback was affirmed in the findings of this inquiry, as the participants pointed out that they were able to improve their writing skills through peer feedback, thanks to the honest feedback by their peers on the errors they committed in their writing. Second, self-regulated learning theory was confirmed to be true by the findings of the inquiry, as the study showed that the participants were able to direct their own learning through selecting the feedback that is helpful to them and applying this feedback voluntarily into their own writing to improve their skills. Third, the writing process approach was supported by the findings of this paper, as the study participants confirmed that they were able to revise their outputs in all the writing phases, thanks to the proper guidance that they received from their peers, particularly those who have more experience in writing journalistic articles.

More so, given that the study was limited to recollecting experiences of the participants that was carefully selected in only few schools within the Province of Davao de Oro, and there was only a limited number of research participants, it is proposed that more participants and more research locales may be added in similar future studies to effectively communicate a more generalizable result related to the crucial role of peer feedback in the writing skills of junior high school students. Different approaches may also be ventured which would not be limited to quantitative and mixed-methods research for the same purpose. Moreover, the scope of the future research may also be expanded from concentrating only on student journalism to focusing on the broad topic of writing and specific aspects to navigate the untapped potential of peer feedback in enhancing the overall writing skills of learners in English and Filipino languages.

CONCLUSIONS

The study opened a path to confirming the benefits and limitations of peer feedback as a tool for enhancing the writing skills of junior high school writers. With this in mind, it is worthy to note that peer feedback can be one of the viable solutions for language teachers and coaches to enhance the writing skills of junior high school students engaged in campus journalism. Given this importance that is identified in the study, language teachers, coaches, and administrators are encouraged to build a school culture that is founded on the notions of peer feedback to promote good writing practices among students, especially those who are not yet confident and are still beginning their journey into this field.

While the potential of peer feedback is starting to show, as per the results of this paper, it is still necessary that future studies be conducted and entrusted to validate the claims made in this paper. There is also the important reminder that limitations in peer feedback should be considered. Overall, this study only paves the way for a good beginning to investigate the full scope and potential of peer feedback in enhancing the writing skills of learners. It is hoped that this study inspires many future researchers to embark on this research topic, with the intention to devise solutions and to utilize research in addressing the declining written literacy in this country and beyond.

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