

ÁP DỤNG HOẠT ĐỘNG XEM LẠI BÀI VIẾT ĐỂ CẢI THIỆN VIỆC VIẾT LUẬN TẠI MỘT LỚP HỌC ANH NGỮ CỦA TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LẠC HỒNG

Trần Võ Thanh Tùng

Trường Đại học Lạc Hồng, Số 10 Huỳnh Văn Nghệ, Bửu Long, Biên Hòa, Đồng Nai, Việt Nam

*Tác giả liên hệ: tungtran@lhu.edu.vn

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận: 15/9/2024	Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm xác định tính hiệu quả của hoạt động xem lại bài viết đối với việc viết luận của sinh viên và phản ứng của sinh viên đối với hoạt động này. Đối tượng tham gia là những sinh viên Anh ngữ của lớp 19NN202, thuộc Khoa Ngôn ngữ Anh, Đại học Lạc Hồng. Để thực hiện nghiên cứu này, tác giả dùng phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính với ba công cụ thu thập dữ liệu là nhật ký, phỏng vấn trực tiếp cá nhân và phỏng vấn trực tiếp theo nhóm sinh viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu thể hiện rằng hoạt động này có thể giúp sinh viên cải thiện việc viết luận bằng cách khuyến khích họ dành nhiều thời gian hơn cho việc luyện tập với ngôn ngữ mục tiêu, và quan trọng hơn nó cũng giúp làm tăng nhận thức của người học về tầm quan trọng của hoạt động này đối với việc viết luận. Hoạt động này cũng nhận được phản hồi tích cực từ sinh viên khi tất cả sinh viên tham gia khẳng định rằng họ sẽ tiếp tục hoạt động này trong những khóa học viết tiếp theo. Với những kết quả tích cực trên, bài nghiên cứu sẽ là một cơ sở lý thuyết quan trọng đối với những giáo viên quan tâm đến việc giảng dạy viết luận nói riêng cũng như giảng dạy kỹ năng viết nói chung.
Ngày chỉnh sửa: 15/10/2024	
Ngày chấp nhận: 19/11/2024	
Ngày đăng: 8/12/2024	
TỪ KHÓA	
Xem lại bài viết; Viết luận.	

APPLYING REVISING ACTIVITY TO IMPROVE ESSAY WRITING AT AN EFL CLASS OF LAC HONG UNIVERSITY

Tran Vo Thanh Tung

Lac Hong University, No. 10 Huynh Van Nghe Str., Bui Long Ward, Bien Hoa, Dong Nai, Vietnam

*Corresponding Author: tungtran@lhu.edu.vn

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Sep 15 th , 2024	This study seeks to determine how essay writing can be improved through revision practice and how students respond to this practice. The research participants are students from 19NN202 who are currently majoring in English at the Faculty of the English Language at Lac Hong University. The author conducts this research in a classroom setting using qualitative research methodology and action research method. In addition, to ensure the accuracy of the data collected, the researcher employs the triangulation principle by utilizing three distinct data collection instruments, including student diaries, face-to-face semi-structured individual and group interviews, and a semi-structured individual interview. The results of the data analysis indicate that revising activity can help students improve their essay writing by encouraging them to spend more time practicing with the target language and, more importantly, by raising students' awareness of the significance of revising practice for improving writing skill. In addition, students respond positively to revision practice, with all participants affirming that they will continue this practice in future writing courses. With these desirable findings, this research becomes a significant theoretical foundation for those interested in essay writing instruction in particular and writing skill instruction in general.
Revised: Oct 15 th , 2024	
Accepted: Nov 19 th , 2024	
Published: Dec 8 th , 2024	
KEYWORDS	
Revising; Essay Writing.	

Available online at: <https://js.lhu.edu.vn/index.php/lachong>.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a factual matter, students at private universities have lower input and self-study awareness than those at public ones. Zhou, Bach and Bach (2019) stated, "Public universities end up with the higher academically-achieving students, while private institutions remain "second chance" options for those accepted elsewhere." The similar problem affects Lac Hong University, a private university in Vietnam's southeast Dong Nai province. This unfavorable trait of learners directly adds to a more focused issue at Lac Hong University's English Department: the issue of English majors' subpar essay writing, since they consistently make grammatical, coherence, and cohesion mistakes. This is clearly demonstrated by students' disrespect for teachers' feedback on their work, which demonstrates a lack of self-study awareness. Based on a survey by a lecturer at Faculty of English Language of 120 English majors from the batch of 2007 regarding their attitude toward teachers' feedback on students' writings, only 31.7% of the participants surveyed were found to review the teacher's remarks and editing on their essays. When students turn in their work, they assume that their duties are fulfilled, and they just need to wait for their grades. As a result, when students receive written assignments from their teachers, they only think about getting a good score rather than revising their work to figure out what and how they will do better. Accordingly, the researcher conducts this research to raise learners' awareness on the importance of revising activity.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical background

Skinner's behaviorism, publicized in 1938 and Piaget's Cognitivism, proclaimed in 1952 are the two theoretical foundations of this research. The first theory suggests that a behavior is more likely to reoccur if it is followed by a positive stimulus. This principle is also affirmed by Ertmer & Newby (1993), "The goal of instruction for behaviorists is to elicit the desired response from a learner who is presented with a target stimulus" (p.47). This theory can be clarified that when students revise their essays more frequently, they are able to produce essays with fewer errors and receive higher grades from their teachers, which serve as positive stimuli. This is likely to cause them to maintain this good behavior (revising) as a habit when writing essays. Additionally, Cognitivism of Piaget is an important foundation for this study. This theory "focuses on the conceptualization of students' learning processes and addresses issues of how information is received, organized, stored, and retrieved in the mind" (Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p.51). This can be inferred that the process of considering how to improve a piece of writing when revising will increase learners'

cognitive ability and help them become more critical thinkers. This skill is essential for all individuals.

2.2 Literature review

It is clear from the aforementioned theories that editing is essential to the process of writing. The benefits of editing on writing and cognitive skills in particular have been well-covered by numerous researchers. According to Saddler, Befoorhooz, and Cuccio-Slichko (2014), when revising, writers edit their texts in an effort to address any potential inconsistencies between what they wanted to say and what the text really says. They reconsider, re-evaluate, re-consider, and explain their texts on various levels. (p. 129). According to Christiansen (1990), learning how to self-evaluate and self-critique, how to strengthen their writing, and the connection between success and self-respect are all things that revision teaches students. According to Paz & Sherma (2013), revision can aid students in increasing non-surface adjustments, such as those pertaining to coherence and cohesion in a piece of writing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To answer the two research questions of how revision activity can help improve students' essay writing and how they respond to the application of this activity to improve their writing ability, the researcher collects data using qualitative research methodology and action research with three instruments.

3.1 Rationale for the use of action research

There is a variety of situations to be resolved in life. Undoubtedly, various circumstances necessitate a variety of approaches. Therefore, action research is widely utilized. Following is a detailed explanation of why action research is so widely used by researchers.

Action research assists in solving real-world issues, advances knowledge in the field, and strengthens the skills of the involved parties. With the aim of developing a greater understanding of a particular social system, it is carried out collaboratively in a real-world context using data feedback in a cyclical process and is done so within an ethical framework that is acceptable to all parties. (Hult & Lennung, 1980:247)

In the quote above, two noteworthy benefits of the action research approach are mentioned. First off, a specific researcher can tackle a specific problem in a specific setting employing this strategy. Participants' relationships and field-specific knowledge can both be improved through this process of cooperative and ethical problem solving. Action research is frequently used in study because of its many benefits. The researcher also encounters a unique issue in his classroom as a teacher of English paragraph writing at Lac Hong University. As a result, using action research to solve the problem makes

sense. Regardless matter whether action research is effective or unsuccessful, both the researcher and the participants gain from it. The researcher will gain more research information, and additional writing experience will help the writer's writing skills to some extent.

3.2 Data collection instruments

The researcher applies the triangulation concept by using three different data collection techniques, including student diaries, in-person semi-structured group interviews, and individual interviews, to assure the accuracy of the data acquired for the study. The former is employed to look at the experiences and actions of pupils when engaging in revision practice. According to Snowden (2015), because students regularly reflect on their personal experiences, their journals can aid researchers in gathering accurate, detailed, and current data. Furthermore, because they may be written anywhere and at any time, diaries are particularly practical for students. The second option was used to find out how the learners felt about having revision activity applied to them. In addition to the controllable feature and flexibility of the interview, the interviewer in a face-to-face semi-structured group interview also has social cues from the interviewees, according to Opdenakker (2006). Semi-structured interviews benefit from being flexible and controllable because the questions are planned in advance, but more can be asked if the researcher feels it essential. Face-to-face interviews provide interviewers the chance to see the candidates' facial expressions and body language, which are also reliable indicators of their attitude. The researcher chooses a group interview to get information from a larger number of participants and to make the interview mood relaxed, which betters the reliability of the collected data.

3.3 Data analysis procedure

From the 18th of March to the 10th of June, 2020, a total of 13 weeks were devoted to collecting data from four randomly selected sophomore English majors from Lac Hong University's night classes. When participants completed their revisions each week, they were given five structured questions to answer in their journals about their experiences and behaviors during the revision process. In the final week of the duration, semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted in person. Ten open-ended questions were used to conduct five interviews, four with individuals and one with a group. Each interview took approximately 10 minutes. After data was collected, it was grouped, coded, synthesized, and explained prior to being reported. The appendix contains all of the questions for the students' diaries and interviews, as well as the data collected from them.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Taylor-Powell & Renner (2003) proposed five steps in analyzing the data they collected including knowing the data", "focusing the analysis", "categorizing information", "identifying patterns and connections within and between categories", and "interpretation-bringing it all together". Following this, I read the data several times in the first three steps to ensure that I fully understood it. Then, I made an effort to organize the information by concentrating on the references to the same broad categories and giving them names. Open coding is the name of this procedure. In the next two phases, I used axial coding to identify the connections between the categories so that I could give insightful findings and discussion. In addition to using three different tools to assure data triangulation, the researcher combined the data from all three sources with the goal of presenting it theme-by-theme rather than analyzing the data obtained from each tool independently. The two tables that follow list the outcomes of axial and open coding the information obtained from the three sources.

Table 1: Major themes and sub-themes from data open coding

Major themes	Sub-themes
Background	acquaintance of revision activity, students' degrees of difficulties in the activity, students' types of difficulties in the activity
Engagement	have "how to do" knowledge in the activity, finished tasks in reality, how often for revision , how long for revision, how to resolve difficulties during the activity
Awareness	the mindfulness on the significance of revision, learners' recommendations for better effectiveness of the activity, self-consciousness of continuing the activity, the essential of boosting learners' consciousness of the significance of revision activity
Effectiveness	fields of enhancement in the skill, degrees of enhancement, consciousness betterment

Table 2: Relationship among the major themes

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Background	Low	Medium	Low	High
Engagement	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Awareness	Above Medium	Below Medium	Above Medium	High
Effectiveness	Low	Above Medium	Low	High

Four major categories and fourteen subcategories were extracted from the data, as shown in Table 1. The four key themes include background with three sub-themes, engagement with five sub-themes, awareness with four sub-themes, and effectiveness with three sub-themes. The final three groups are preset themes because I was able to identify them before classifying the data. It is possible to make this particular case. When I help my pupils practice revision, they'll spend more time honing their paragraph-writing skills. They will get better at a skill the more they use it. Effectiveness is denoted by improvement, and practice connects to the engagement idea. Students will understand the value of revision practice once they can enhance their work. As a result, theme awareness might be foreseen before data analysis. During the data analysis process, only the first theme, background, is identified as an emergent category.

Theme 1: Background

Three subcategories of this subject include experience with updating practice, levels of practice difficulty, and types of practice difficulty. While the other two can help the researcher determine the participants' overall English backgrounds, the first is the background of learners for revision practice. Students who solely battle with developing their ideas-the consequence of non-surface revision-have a stronger foundation in English than those who simply focus on grammatical problems, which is the result of surface revision. The background of students plays a significant role in the success of implementing a new practice with students, so this is the main focus of this evaluation. In fact, based on the interview data, the researcher determined that only one of the four interviewees had previously engaged in the practice of revising, and two of them, including the interviewee who had previously revised her writing, admitted to having difficulty improving ideas. In addition, these two participants revealed that they benefited more from this exercise than those who were only concerned with grammatical errors. Specifically, the response of the participant with a better background is, "My essay writing skill has improved significantly because times of revising have taught me how to outline an essay and develop ideas logically, allowing readers to catch them easily," whereas the response of the participant with surface revising is, "My essay writing skill has improved slightly because the number of times I have engaged in this practice is not remarkable."

Theme 2: Engagement

Any qualitative data analysis must include this idea as a necessary component. Due to its importance, it has the most sub-themes, five in all, including knowing what to do during practice, tasks accomplished, the frequency and duration of revision, and strategies for overcoming practice challenges. For the most part, participants'

answers to these subcategories are the same. A perusal of the instructor's feedback and a rewrite of the paragraph in accordance with his suggestions took the majority of students about an hour each revision. Additionally, they revealed to me how they overcame obstacles during revisions by looking for better ideas and writing styles in books, the Internet, family members, and friends. Their ability to think critically, which is essential to their current and future learning and work, can be strengthened through the process of seeking out more convincing arguments or rearranging them in a more logical order. The researcher finds the most enjoyment in this area of his innovation because motivating students to actively engage in their education is what education is all about. Students are encouraged to spend more time outside of the classroom on self-study and writing practice using this revision technique. They will undoubtedly get something from this interaction. The researcher does note one illogical element of the students' revising strategy, though. One hour is insufficient since there are numerous responsibilities to finish each time a paragraph is rewritten, including consulting multiple sources of information to increase its coherence, which can impair the quality of the rewrite. This is most likely a result of the night-class participants in this innovation not having a lot of time for independent study at home. Future inventions must take this issue into account.

Theme 3: Awareness

Awareness is important because it affects how someone behaves. So, the only way to change someone's conduct is to change their consciousness. Therefore, it is necessary to identify awareness as a major theme in this qualitative data analysis. Four sub-themes, including the requirement of raising students' knowledge of the relevance of revising practice, their ideas for the practice's quality improvement, and their self-consciousness of future practice, help to clarify this main subject. Regarding the first question, all four participants say they are aware of the significance of writing practice for improving writing ability, specifically that it can help writers identify their paragraph-level defects, remember them, and avoid them in subsequent works. However, just because something is important doesn't mean that doing it will be done for no real reason. Faculty students hardly ever undertake non-surface revisions unless the teacher specifically instructs them to do so because their knowledge of the need of revising practice is not strong enough to inspire them to rewrite with self-awareness. To increase their awareness in this situation, the teacher's responsibility must be emphasized the most. Positively, after putting my pupils through thirteen weeks of revision practice, I am able to reaffirm their understanding of its importance. This conclusion is supported by the fact that all four participants stated their intention to continue this practice in future writing courses due to the practice's value in improving their writing

skills, and one participant asserted that it was necessary to raise students' awareness of the importance of revising practice. This, according to the researcher, is the innovation's most important advantage. The rest sub-theme of awareness, the suggestions made by the participants for the practice's quality improvement, which originate from just one of the four participants and is also the most qualified, is equally noteworthy. This participant said that this practice should be carried out in the classroom and that the teacher should give the students the opportunity to correct their own errors before offering detailed editing (when this activity is applied to the learners, surface correction and hints for non-surface correction were provided before they were asked to revise and rewrite the essay). This finding well supports the educational idea that the most engaging and fruitful learning activities are those that require students to demonstrate a greater understanding of a subject. This is also a challenge for teachers, particularly in classrooms with students of varying abilities.

Theme 4: Effectiveness

Three sub-themes make up this category: levels of improvement, aspects of writing ability improvement, and awareness improvement. Revision practice, which can be characterized as an accuracy component in terms of improvement aspects, is said to assist participants study and employ grammatical rules, word choices, and punctuation more accurately. The claim that this method aids in improving and arranging thoughts also contributes to the paragraph's coherence and cohesion, which can be classified under the phrases coherence and cohesion. The amended and rewritten paragraphs were typically superior to the originals, according to what each participant recorded in their diaries, with one person noting a slight improvement and another noting a significant improvement. Additionally, all participants came to the conclusion that practicing revision is helpful to them, with two interviewees claiming that this practice was particularly helpful. Another sign of the success of this key theme, which was covered in detail in the paragraph before, is the increase in students' awareness. It is reasonable to draw the conclusion that this innovation merits adoption based on evidence of increase in the correctness and fluency of learners' essay writing as well as improvement in learners' awareness. The researcher can see the most remarkable relationship pattern between the primary themes in table 2, which is the fact that a learner's background has a greater impact on the success of revising practice than participation. In particular, even if a student only has a medium degree of involvement, he can nevertheless attain a high level of effectiveness (student 4). The effectiveness of a student's revising exercise, however hard he may try, may be limited if he comes from a low-level background (student 3). This is understandable because in order to have a strong

background in any subject, such as English, one must have previously engaged in that field at a high level for an extended period of time. This finding suggests that before applying something to a learner, teachers or practitioners should take their background into consideration.

5. CONCLUSION

After completing the most difficult step of data analysis, the researcher can now collect the evidence necessary to answer the two research questions. For the first question, the activity of revising can help students improve their essay writing by encouraging them to devote more time to self-study and raising their awareness of the significance of revising practice. Regarding the second question, the participants indicate a positive attitude toward this practice, with two of them suggesting ways to make revising more beneficial for themselves, and they all intend to continue this practice in the future. However, the final effectiveness of the participants' revision is not particularly remarkable due to the mixed-ability nature of night class students and the limited number of opportunities for revision throughout the course.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] Christiansen, M. (1990). The Importance of revision in writing composition. *The Education Digest*, 56(2), 70.
- [2] Ertmer, P. A., & Newby, T. J. (1993). Behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism: Comparing critical features from an instructional design perspective. *Performance improvement quarterly*, 6(4), 50-72.
- [3] Hult, M. & Lennung, S. A. (1980). Towards A Definition of Action Research: A Note and Bibliography. *Journal of Management Study*, 17(2), 241-250.
- [4] Opendakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. In *Forum qualitative sozialforschung/forum: Qualitative social research* (Vol. 7, No. 4).
- [5] Paz, S., & Sherman, C. K. (2013). Revising Strategy Instruction in Inclusive Settings: Effects for English Learners and Novice Writers. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 28(3), 129-141.
- [6] Piaget, J., & Cook, M. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children* (Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 18-1952). New York: International Universities Press.
- [7] Saddler, B., Saddler, K., Befoorhooz, B., & Cuccio-Slichko, J. (2014). A National Survey of Revising Practices in the Primary Classroom. *Learning Disabilities-A Contemporary Journal*, 12(2).
- [8] Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The behavior of organisms*. New York: Appleton-Century.
- [9] Snowden, M. (2015). Use of diaries in research. *Nursing Standard*, 29(44), 36-41.

[10] Taylor-Powell, E., & Renner, M. (2003). Analyzing qualitative data.

[11] Zhou, L. L., Bach, A., & Bach, V. (2019). Private universities in Vietnam: Reflection and proposition. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 18(12), 280-301.

7. APPENDIX

Questions for students' diaries

1. How often have you practiced editing your essays so far?
2. How long did it take you to revise your essays each time?
3. Did you encounter any challenges during this activity?
4. How did you get beyond those challenges?
5. How has your essay been edited and rewritten (in terms of structure, concepts, language, word choice, punctuation, and format) since the original?
6. Do you think that essay is superior to the first one? Why?

Questions for group and individual interview

1. Are you aware of the objectives of rewriting an essay after the teacher has already made corrections?
2. Have you previously engaged in this activity?
3. What were your responsibilities for this activity?
4. What actually did you do?
5. What are the advantages and restrictions of this activity, in your opinion?
6. What should be changed, in your opinion, to make it more effective?
7. Do you find this activity useful? Why is that?
8. Have you noticed an improvement in your essay writing abilities? If so, what particularly are they?
9. Will you carry on with this exercise in the upcoming writing classes? Why is that?
10. Do you have any more information to provide about this activity? If so, what is it/are they?

An illustration of data open coding

Student 1

Diary

- I have five revisions total for my writings (one for each type). (number of revising – engagement)
- I invested one hour for each revision and rewrite of an essay. (time amount for revising – engagement)

- I have a lot of trouble with this because I've forgotten a lot of what I was taught. (level of difficulty – background)

- My essays are typically irrational in terms of idea organization because I am not accustomed to the structure of an English paragraph and I just write what I think. (kind of difficulty – background)

- I get through the challenges by reviewing prior knowledge, consulting sample paragraphs, and paying attention to the teacher's suggestions. (ways to overcome difficulty – engagement)

- Comparing my edited and rewritten essay to the original, it has slightly improved. (level of improvement – effectiveness)

Interview

- Recognizing and fixing errors are the goal of revision practice, which enhances writing abilities. (the importance of revising – awareness)

- I am unaware of the repercussions because I have never engaged in this activity before. (familiarity with revising – background)

- In this activity, I was required to read the teacher's comments on the errors, consider them, and then rewrite the essay. (knowing what to do – engagement)

- I actually followed the teacher's instructions. In particular, I had to consult the thoughts of my classmates, look for material on the Internet, or consult sample essays to help me better my ideas. (done tasks in fact – engagement)

- The benefits of this activity include helping me review grammar principles and enhance my writing abilities. (aspects of improvement – effectiveness)

- This has the drawback that I can only modify one essay at a time, thus I recommend having my work checked more than once so that I can do so. (students' suggestions for quality improvement of the practice – awareness)

- This exercise is really helpful to me since it reminds me of grammar rules, teaches me how to convey thoughts, and helps me become a better writer. (aspects of improvement – effectiveness)

- Because of the limited amount of revision, my writing skills have marginally improved. (level of improvement – effectiveness)

- In the upcoming writing courses, I'll keep doing this activity. (self-awareness of future practice – awareness)